



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

WHEN WE ARE FEARFUL

KEY PASSAGE: Isaiah 41:10 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES:** Proverbs 1:33 | Isaiah 43:1-3 | Acts 18:9
Philippians 4:6-7 | 2 Timothy 1:7 | Revelation 1:17

► SUMMARY

It's natural to be afraid at times.

However, deep-seated anxieties can hinder us from pursuing excellent opportunities. They can ruin the joy and peace that should accompany God-given blessings. Believers can learn to identify the fears that control us and keep us from His will. As we turn our gaze to the steadfast anchor of God's Word, and reject lies that lead to insecurity, we will rise above the fears that keep us from enjoying abundant life in Christ.

► SERMON POINTS

The Lord knows that humans tend to be afraid. The prophet Isaiah recorded this encouraging word: "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (41:10).

In the first documented conversation between God and Adam after the fall, Adam admitted to being afraid (Gen. 3:10). The New Testament tells how angels had to reassure Mary, Joseph, and Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. Jesus encouraged the multitudes in the Sermon on the Mount not to be fearful, and told the apostles more than once not to be scared, even in the middle of a storm. When the apostle Paul got discouraged, the Lord told him, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking" (Acts 18:9). John wrote how frightened he was in the presence of Jesus, and how the Lord comforted him (Rev. 1:17).

Everyone feels fear at times, but our lives should not be characterized by apprehension. As believers, we can know that "God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (2 Tim. 1:7). We must not give in to anxiety, which can be defined as fear about the future. Instead, Christians should "not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving let [our] requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard [our] hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7).

Six Basic Fears

Some fears are common and don't usually hamper our ability to fulfill the will of God in our daily lives. These include the fear of death, poverty, illness, loss of a loved one, old age, and criticism. However, many times, people have developed subconscious or controlling fears in addition to these natural ones. These crippling doubts play a powerful role in our decision-making and often interfere with the abundant life God has planned for us.

Root Causes of Fear and Anxiety

- **Fear of being inadequate.** We may struggle with self-doubt and poor self-image. Fear of failure causes us to shy away from opportunities and promotions. We may reject others before we can be excluded. Discouraging situations can seem like isolated events but the pattern will crop up over and over.
- **Unrealistic standards for ourselves.** Sometimes we put undue pressure on ourselves and end up failing as a result. But God doesn't hold us to standards

we can't meet. He sees us as His beloved sons and daughters.

- **Sense of guilt.** Some have decided they don't deserve to succeed. They don't feel worthy, often because of statements their parents made about their potential, or because they carry guilt from their past. Remember that our Lord is gracious, not because anyone deserves it, but because of His character.
- **An erroneous idea of God.** Perhaps they see Him as a harsh taskmaster, or one who is keeping score on religious activities to see if they are doing enough. These people live in fear that if they don't achieve a certain man-made standard, God will remove blessings.
- **Attitudes from childhood.** Sometimes even well-meaning parents contribute to a sense of fear or insecurity by the way they run the household or how they instruct children to serve God. Also, if Mom and Dad are too busy for them, kids can unintentionally receive the message that they aren't worth much.

What are the consequences of these fears?

- **Clouded judgment.** It's hard to make decisions when we are reasoning in fear.
- **Lack of productivity.** Indecision, poor judgment, and fear of failure can complicate issues.
- **Persecution attitude.** Fears can contribute to a person perceiving rejection or unfair treatment where there is little or none.
- **Drug and alcohol abuse.** Constant anxiety can become an excuse to misuse substances that lead to addiction.
- **Hindrances in their relationship with God.** They may believe the lie that they don't measure up spiritually, so He wouldn't want a relationship with them.
- **Attempts to blame others.** Insecure people often attack others for their problems instead of seeking emotional healing.

How can we deal with fear?

- **Recognize it.** Identify what is triggering the problem so you can deal with the source of it.
- **Relationship to Christ.** Make sure you have accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. If so, you are kept by His grace and not your performance. God has your circumstances under control: "He who listens to me shall live securely and will be at ease from the dread of evil" (Prov. 1:33).
- **Recorder.** Notice what thoughts are causing anxiety and determine their source. Often, something a parent said is the root, but there can be other sources, such as a spouse or teacher. Reject the lies of that repetitive thought.
- **Rebuke it.** As God's child, you can rebuke the spirit of fear, knowing it is not from God (2 Tim. 1:7).
- **Refocus your attention.** As you reach for the anchor of the Scripture, your attention shifts from your circumstance to God's goodness and sovereign control. Fears disappear in the presence of the Lord.

► RESPONSE

- Remember a time you felt insecure or afraid, changed your thinking to agree with biblical truth, and saw good fruit from that decision. What happened? What might have gone differently if you had given in to doubts?
- Do you struggle with feelings of unworthiness or guilt? Remember that you are God's beloved child and He desires to give you an abundant life in Christ. Choose one lie that holds you back and seek to identify its source. Ask the Father to break that thought pattern and give you peace and success in that area of your life.
- What verse can encourage you when old fears rise up to discourage you from trusting God and walking in confidence?

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