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33: HOW TO DEAL WITH FEAR

William P. Young, the author of the book *“The Shack”*, captures an important point on page 142, where he is talking about the character Mack:

“He [Mack] spent a lot of time fretting and worrying about the future, and in his imaginations it was pretty gloomy and depressing, if not outright horrible. And Jesus was also correct in saying that **in Mack’s imaginations of the future, God was always absent.**”

The big point is that God is absent from most peoples fearful thoughts about the future. That is why the thoughts are so gloomy, depressing and horrible.

Lets look at fear and see what the dictionary has to say about it. Fear is described as a feeling that is a response to a current threat or danger, or is a construct that is projected into the future and represents an imagination of a future possibility.

The Standard College Dictionary describes the following variations of experience:

FRIGHT is the sudden onset of fear.

FEAR is an agitated feeling aroused by awareness of actual danger or the feeling that something may happen contrary to one’s desires.

DREAD is fear of future events and suggests helplessness

TERROR is the most extreme fear, especially where one’s own safety or well-being is concerned.

HORROR is fear combined with abhorrence and frequently refers to something that is seen visually

PANIC is a wave of terror suggesting an unreasoned or senseless fear.

In this paper, I am focusing on the thoughts in the mind that project into the future and do not relate to a real and imminent danger.

“As Mack said in *The Shack*, “*I suppose I would have to say that I spend very little time in the present. For me, I spend a big piece in the past, but most of the rest of the time, I am trying to figure out the future.*”

The author responds in the book, “*It is impossible for you to take power over the future because it isn’t even real. You try to play God, imagining the evil that you fear becoming reality, and then you try and make plans and contingencies to avoid what you fear.*”



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As you can see, there are three ways that we can use our minds. We can think about what has happened in the past. We can focus on the present. Or we can look to the future and imagine what might happen. If you were to assess how you use your mind, what percentages would you put beside each category;

1) Past memories and experiences	=	%
2) Present thinking	=	%
3) Future imagining	=	%
		<hr/>
		100 %

It is clear what scripture says about the future. In **Matthew 7:25-34** you find:

“Do not worry about tomorrow. Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his/her life. O you of little faith. So, do not worry, but seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.”

Seek Jesus’ truth, His words that are right and we will be free to live in the present with Jesus.

As a counselor, I have often encouraged people to invite Jesus into **past memories** in order to deal with painful experiences of the past.

As well, I have often encouraged people to invite Jesus into **present thoughts** to cope with addictions, compulsions and troubling thoughts.

But I had never really put it together that Jesus can just as effectively be invited into **future thoughts**, especially the negative thoughts of fear, dread and terror. Why not invite Jesus into the fearful thoughts of the future? Why keep Jesus out of future thoughts and allow ourselves to be upset, harassed and agitated?

As it says in 1 John 4:18, *“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment.”* Why do we punish ourselves with fearful thinking when we have the power of Jesus’ love and truth to help us drive the fear away?

In **The Shack**, Mack says, *“So why do I have so much fear in my life?”* God answers, *“Because you don’t believe. You don’t know that we love you. To the degree that those fears have a place in your life, you neither believe that I am good nor know deep in your heart that I love you. You sing about it; you talk about it, but you don’t know it.”*



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Now I get it—*We of little faith*. It is because of our lack of knowing and believing that Jesus loves us so much that keeps us from turning to and asking Him for help. We try to do it all in our own strength. But, Jesus is willing and able to help us heal our minds and emotions - past, present and future. When we choose, as an act of faith and free will, to invite Jesus into our future fearful imaginations, he will be there. When we invite him to reveal His truth, He will help change our perspectives and take the fear away. When his loving truth is there, fear is driven away.

So don't be like Mack. Start inviting Jesus to come into your future thoughts that are fearful and ask him to reveal His truth to you. Then, listen and receive the loving truth that he wants you to receive. He will take the fear out of the thought and replace it with loving truth. He will change your perspective. But, more importantly, He will replace your agitation with peace. The Prince of Peace does not want you to live in fear. He wants you to live in peace. So, the next time you experience fear, panic, dread or terror choose with your faith and your free will to invite Jesus into the thought – past, present or future, and ask Him to reveal His truth to you. Then, listen and appropriate the truth that He wants you to receive. As you live out of His truth you will be free. The truth of Jesus Christ will set you free of fear.
