

“Fear-less”

(Lynley Horlock 17/09/17)

Knowing a life positioned in faith not fear

Introduction

- Wife and mother to 3, studying in the area of health and nutrition.
- Moved to Manji 8 years old. Born and bred baptist, raised in church.
- First personal encounter with God at ~11yo at Serpentine Camp.
- 13yo attended YFC camp, started attending youth group at WVCC.
- Part of a great friendship circle who all joined the youth group along with me and who also become Christians.
- Did well at school, thrived in my new faith, involvement in youth group & transition to leadership.
- Ended up leading Revolution Youth for 10 years at 18yo.
- At 15 I met the boy who 5 years later I would marry.
- Had two Christian parents who modelled a healthy marriage & gave us a comfortable life that provided all that we needed and wanted.

Your best life

When asked to speak on ‘Your Best Life’, I began to consider my own.

-What had enabled me to live my best life? Or, what had so far inhibited me from living my best life?

-I think of two answers I may have had at different times in my life:

-If asked at 15 what I considered prevented me from living my best life, my response would have been: Me.

-As a child I had a strong personality which was often the source of my shortcomings.

-Truth was I had yet to learn how to grow into my strength and harness my weaknesses but for me that which (in me) caused displeasure to others I considered a flaw I grew to dislike such parts of myself.

-I was not okay with me. I was in the way of me living my best life.

-These things led me to a place where it became important to me to obtain & maintain sense of acceptability amongst people. I didn't want to stand out, but was happy to fly under the radar if it meant I wasn't noticed for my imperfections.

-If asked at the age of 19 what I considered prevented me from living my best life, my response would have been: My circumstances

-I was considered to be the one amongst my friends who had “the good life”. It was. However this good life also led me to unwittingly find security in the certainty of my comfortable, untroubled circumstances.

-At 19 Dad unexpectedly killed in an accident 6 weeks before my wedding.

-It was not okay, I was not okay and it was not going to be okay.

-This circumstance had stolen from me my best life.

Now

-I can recognise now that that neither myself or my circumstances were never really what were inhibiting me from my best life.

In my life what has consistently been..

a single greatest inhibition to taking risks & dreaming big
a distorter of self perception and circumstance,
a subtle influence to where I go, what I do, who I meet & how I interact
a threat to overcoming endless grief and despair.

-The answer is FEAR: fear of not being good enough, fear that I will not be okay.

What do we fear?

1) Within: vulnerability, rejection, failure, judgement. "I am not enough"

-Inhibits how we engage with people, whether we allow ourselves to be really seen by other people.

-Fear that drives feelings like envy, inadequacy & invokes comparison & perfectionism. It speaks the talk of I need to be better, I need to be more and ask the questions will they think I'm okay? do I measure up?

-It defines how we perceive ourselves and enslaves us to the opinions of others.

-It stifles dreaming big and loving deeply and can make us ineffective and unproductive in the Kingdom of God.

2) Response to unpleasant circumstance: danger, pain, loss of control within circumstances, presence of disorder & unpredictability, unplanned pressures/ diversions to our plans for the future.

-Internal dialogue with this fear is that in the midst of unpredictability, disorder, loss of peace & control "It will not be okay", "I will not be okay."

-Fear that believes joy, peace, hope cannot return unless that circumstance which was wrong is made right, danger removed, control regained.

-It leads us to be consumed by feelings of panic, trepidation, agitation, dread, dismay, worry, anxiety or depression. Stuck in a perpetual state of grief, anger or inner turmoil.

Illegitimate fear

-Fear can look & feel like many things but we need to acknowledge that this kind of fear (restrictive & oppressive) does not come from God.

-Based on untruths about ourselves and God- "I am not enough" or "its not going to be okay."

-Fear is birthed in lies. Lies come from the devil

*44 ...He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.
John 8:44*

The truth

-We are enough

*"Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God."
2 Corinthians 3:5*

-With Him, we will be okay

*"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."
Psalm 46:1*

*"When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul."
Psalm 94:19*

- We all have experiences of being afraid. If we were not careful it can become not just a 'moment' or 'experience' but rather a *position* from which we do life- regard ourselves ourselves & navigate our lives.
- The effects of a life positioned in fear is insidious, pervasive & toxic.
- God knows that.

Fear not

- The bible mentions the expression of many emotions including- joy, delight, sorrow, grief, laughter & anger, but never once tells us to be afraid, worried or anxious.
- In fact there are 365 fear nots in the bible and the command in the new testament that is given 21 times, 3 times as much as the one in second place is some form of '**don't be afraid, don't panic, don't let your hearts be troubled.**'
- These statements are not just suggestions but rather commandments.
- Many of the commands in the OT to not fear will also be followed on with a secondary command to not be '**discouraged**', '**loose heart**', '**be troubled**', '**be dismayed**'
- Amongst other things these words associated with fear give us insight into the by-products of a fearful life.

Fear less/ faith full

- What is the antidote to fear? Faith.
- In other words experience life that is not based on untruths about ourselves and God but rather truths.
- Life transformed by truth is a life identified by one having a confidence, trust & dependence on God.

When I consider that fears-less/ faith-filled life I believe there are two fundamental truths which we need to be grounded in.

Two truths that promote faith-fullness and fear-lessness:

• Believing in His goodness/ love.

- God IS love.
- If we don't believe in His love for us we cannot trust His intentions toward us.

"For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations." - Psalm 100:5

*"Taste and see that the Lord is good.."
Psalm 34:8*

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."
John 3:16*

- If His love and goodness was enough to extend to death on a cross in order that we as sinners might gain salvation, then surely His "**goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life**"

• Acknowledging his sovereignty

- omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent
- That He knows all, understands all, sees all, is above all & is all powerful.

-At the very end of the day He is in charge & makes the final call- for us this can be perplexing as it is comforting but it doesn't make it any less truth.

*“Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand,
or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens?
Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket,
or weighed the mountains on the scales
and the hills in a balance?
13 Who can fathom the Spirit[a] of the Lord,
or instruct the Lord as his counsellor?
14 Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten him,
and who taught him the right way?
Who was it that taught him knowledge,
or showed him the path of understanding?”
Isaiah 40:12-14*

*“Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.”
Isaiah 40:28*

*“I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?”
Jeremiah 32:27*

-There is no one who has something more significant, insightful or relevant to offer us in this life. He is the pinnacle of instruction, council, enlightenment, knowledge & understanding.

-He is sovereign.

-Love: convinces us of His reliability enabling us to trust His intentions and sovereignty: reminding us of His capability.

-Two aspects of love & sovereignty work hand in hand in underpinning the truths associated with faithfulness and exposing the lies of fearfulness.

-A faith filled life is one that acknowledges our inadequacy and recognising His sovereignty, believes in his love for me & goodness toward me & so our response is to surrender our limited ability to His complete sufficiency.

-Faith is not a misplaced trust in the invisible, its a well placed trust in the infallible.

Freed in faith

-We can either experience *either* a life bound by fear or a life free'd in faith.

-Thats why we are given the reminder in 2 Timothy that *“God didn't give us a spirit of fear but of power, love and sound mind.”*

-He chooses freedom for us, will we choose it for ourselves.

-In the bible the first time fear was mentioned was in the garden of Eden and it led to disconnection with God.

-Fear caused Adam to flee, Abraham to lie, Saul to disobey, Israelites to become disinherited.

When we are positioned in fear we:

- **Are robbed of inheritance**

-When fear is sovereign in our lives God cannot be and when God is no longer in charge we find ourselves experiencing a sub-standard experience of the Christian life.

-Romans 8 & Galatians 3 speak about us (as believers) becoming “heirs of God”/ his children. Phil 4:19 reminds us that He supplies all our needs.

-When we allow fear to dictate, when we stop trusting in His provision, acknowledging His promises, leaning in to His love.

-We too can disinherit ourselves from the plans & blessings He has for us, just as the Israelites did.

-It's not that He ‘renegs’ on that which He has given us, but rather we either

a) unintentionally miss it (distracted by the demands of fear) or

b) we choose a different way altogether that (according to our estimation and sub standard judgement) is better way than His.

- **Walk in disobedience**

-A distrust that that causes us to walk in disobedience.

-When we position our lives in fear and not faith, we risk losing the standard for governance in our lives.

-As believers we are to acknowledge the truth that His way is absolute (plumb line for living).

-Our faith is the implementation of that in our everyday lives.

*The law of the Lord is perfect,
refreshing the soul.*

*The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.*

*8 The precepts of the Lord are right,
giving joy to the heart.*

*The commands of the Lord are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.*

Psalms 19:7-8

-So what is to be our standard for governance? law, statutes, precept, commands

-Why? perfect, trustworthy, right, radiant.

-To achieve what? Refresh the soul, make wise the simple, bring joy to the heart, bring light to the eyes.

-What happens when we let fear rule? Position ourselves in fear?

-We reject His standards and we seek out other ways that will fulfil the demands of fear-control, order, predictability, acceptance, success.

What does God say?

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

What does fear say?

- Gain control, avoid failure, be successful, become acceptable, stay self sufficient, through whatever means possible eg -David kills Uriah the Hittite
- We lie, cheat people, walk on others in order to promote ourselves, we shelve our integrity & hide away our faith, we conform to the world & live for personal gain, we see people pursue the deceptive promise of peace through suicide and abortion -We live lives justified by "I know what He says but..." "there was no other option" "you don't know what my situation is like" "I had to make a decision that was right for me" "It wouldn't have worked that way."
- Sometimes the beauty of God is found in the most unexpected places, only when we allow His ways to remain firm in our lives (often in the face of fear), that we then experience the 'wonders of His love.'

*21 Praise be to the Lord,
for he showed me the wonders of his love
when I was in a city under siege.
Psalm 31:14, 21*

Blind faith

- The problem is, the quest for what fear requires- control, order, acceptance is a fruitless quest because it can never truly be obtained through the means of man.
- People are trying to find solutions to problems they don't have the answers too and its leading us away from God and toward destruction.
- Fear wants to figure it all out. Faith realises on our own we cant. Fear leads to disobedience and faith is found in obedience.
- Fear assaults our hearts (discouragement, trouble, dismay) and disorders our steps.
- Faith refresh the soul, bring joy to the heart & light to the eyes.
- We instructed to walk by faith & not by sight. We are blind.
- Fear fights blindness. Faith surrenders to the one who can lead us through it.

*I will lead the blind by ways they have not known,
along unfamiliar paths I will guide them;
I will turn the darkness into light before them
and make the rough places smooth.
These are the things I will do;
I will not forsake them.
Isaiah 42:16*

- His laws, statutes, precept & command are perfect, trustworthy, right and radiant when you see how it will turn out and when you don't.
- When we stop leaning in to what we can see, understand & control & start leaning into our knowledge that He can see, understand & control we become free from fear and experience the fruit of faith .

Faiths fruit

- Experience a life that is not thrown about by circumstance *"like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind"* James 1:6
- Life that is able to be content in all circumstances.

-Knows a peace that is not of this world- peace in this world is found through the absence of conflict but peace with God is the confidence and calm *within* the conflict.
-Experience a joy even in the toughest of times & experience fruitful growth in the most unpleasant situations.

*“3 You will keep in perfect peace
those whose minds are steadfast,
because they trust in you.”
Isaiah 26:3*

-This life of trust in God is defined by the fruit of faith, not by the discouragement of fear- that is where I want to be.

My story

-Im sure there are people here today who are in the midst of some very fearful situations- you didn't ask for you didn't invite into your life.

Two 1/2 years ago just a few days before his 2nd birthday, my son Brodie was diagnosed with a rare condition caused by a mutation in his gene. To put in in a basic way, it means his body cannot process fats. Excess fats that are thought to destroy the protective barrier around the brains neurons. Neurons are particularly important in our brain because they allow us to think & control every part of our body. So damage to neurons would effectively result in an inability to think and control any part of the body. The problem is that this condition is variable in nature, rare so not comprehensively understood, incurable and most volatile in childhood. For him it means a strict diet and intensive monitoring of neurological change regular MRI and other testing. For us it means a lifetime of uncertainty and the presence of (by medical standard) an irremovable adversity.

-I don't know about you but fear hits hard when your child is involved
-To deal with the possibility of not knowing your child's future or quality of life takes a lot more than positive thinking to deal with.

-After finding out I remember the distinct feeling that I was on a sinking ship and I had two choices:
1) Go down with the boat
2) Learn how to swim

-I didn't blame God for this condition or accuse Him for not caring. I could look to God and see that He is good and loving and I knew that He loved Brodie more than I did.
-My fear was in doubting my own ability/ capacity to deal with what may lay ahead.
-I knew that He was faith full but I wasn't sure how faith-filled I was- how well prepared was I to travel the road that may lay ahead?

SIDE NOTE

-We know that God never promised an easy free road, it warns us about trouble and suffering, as we learn from Sue the other week that trials are necessary and inevitable in life, but have we really considered what that means for us?
-We can overlook those verses and create what we consider a more pleasing picture and in doing so we can neglect to build the foundation of faith in our lives.
-But then what happens WHEN that trial/ suffering comes?
-If faith is not your foundation then fear will most certainly bring about great destruction your life. That is not Gods insufficiency, that is our ignorance.

Building faith

-During this time following His diagnosis I became acutely aware that I needed to position myself in faith or fear was going to take over.

-We can say they we trust God that we have faith, but the presence or absence of that faith is really made known when we are face to face with fear.

-I found myself facing this question 'do I just believe *in* God' or 'do I believe.. God'- his words, his promises, his provision, his protection, his sovereign plan.

*So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.
Isaiah 41:10*

-Do I just believe "in" God or do I believe.. God

Some things I've learned about faith

1. Faith is not positivity or wishful thinking- it is not imagining all is right and turning a blind eye to reality. Nor is it bossing God into conceding to our desires/ plans to fix the situation.
2. Conversely faith is not pessimism, resigning ourselves to worst so that we can be grateful for anything that exceeds a baseline expectation.
3. Faith is not inactivity or ignoring our contribution to the situation. We bring what we can & leave it in God's hands.
4. Faith is also not necessarily professing understanding. Sometimes understanding is given, sometimes its not. You may be no more seeing at the end than you were at the beginning. Faith will probably not have you saying "Oh sure God, I see what you're doing here!"

*"For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,"
declares the Lord.
9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts."
Isaiah 55:8-9*

-Faith is also not an act of the will but rather is a gift that is given (Rom 12:3) by God and grown in God- through His word & relationship with Him.

-If our knowledge of Him is small and our relationship lacking then accordingly our faith too will be small and we will be more susceptible to the rule of fear in our lives.

How does faith fight the good fight against the influence of fear?

• Faith pray's

*"6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
Philippians 4:6*

-Faith brings it all to God all the time- petition means insistent and persistent. Faith asks the big questions, absolutely dares to ask for healing- we can do that.
-Faith pray for wisdom in knowing what my responsibility is in navigating this and when I need to leave it in His hands.
-We also pray for a deeper trust, we pray that we will not miss what He is wanting to do in today, because we know that will position me for what tomorrow holds.

Faith stands on the Word

-Get the word into your spirit
-Know the truth so you can recognise the untruth of fear

• Faith praise's

16 Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

*I will extol the Lord at all times;
his praise will always be on my lips.
Psalm 34:1*

*I will tell of the Lord's unfailing love.
I will praise the Lord for all he has done.
I will rejoice in his great goodness to Israel,
which he has granted according to his mercy and love.
Isaiah 63:7*

-Recognising, remember, remind His presence, acts of mercy/ grace.
-When we bring prayer and praise to God, when our lives are defined by gratitude of all He has done, for all He has promised, for all He is..we are building our faith/ deepening trust- when we are faith full we are fearless.

Conclusion

I cannot change the presence of affliction in my path but it can surely change me.

-I don't want to be changed by the trouble in my life but I will allow God to change me through it.

-When we face our trials from a position of fear- it is a discouraging, hopeless & fruitless.

-When we face a trial from a position of faith, though we may not like the outcome, we have an assurance that our circumstance still lies in the hand of our good good father and that means we are never beyond joy, hope & new life.

-Don't get me wrong, the battle is real and we are reminded every time that we go for a test, MRI, engage with the many different specialists that I have a good reason to fear.

-But while indeed the battle is real, but the fight for faith is worthwhile

- fear has no plan for you,
- fear does not know your name
- fear has not made a place for you or written you in the book of life
- fear has not adopted you as His child and given you a great inheritance in this life and the next.
- fear does not guard your life or direct your steps

-While I experience moments of fear I refuse to settle there.

-When I feel inadequate/ unworthy, I don't allow myself to become positioned there.
-We need to be persistent with swapping out the untruths for the truths & pursuing 'God led' personal growth.

-We have a reason to fear but we also have the most wonderful reason to have trust, to hope, to rejoice.

-Right now Brodie is a perfectly happy & healthy 4 year old boy and we are believing that God has a future of goodness in store for him.

-But this has very a pertinent reminder to me that God numbers our days and while we have an obvious reminder of that truth, in reality, his future is no more uncertain than any one of us.

-You may feel like you're on a sinking ship right now & you can choose to sink or you can learn how to swim. Maybe you've never even considered the state of your faith because you've never experienced the assault of fear.

-My experience over the last two years has really caused me to question my faith- it's position in my life, its purpose and its true value.

-You cannot magically make great faith appear in your life, but you can choose the road that will enable you to grow your position in faith and disable the influence of toxic fear in your life.

-So me? I choose to position myself- where faith may grow so that my fear may find no home in me. Where His standards are those chosen to govern my life so that I may not walk in disobedience and relinquish the inheritance and goodness He has for me, in each and every season.

-I choose to position myself where my children can see and know that as He has been for me, He can be for them also.

-And so my trust in Him deepens

22 Because of the Lord's great love we are (I am) not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.

23 They are new every morning;
great is your (His) faithfulness.

24 I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion;
therefore I will wait for him."

Lamentations 3:22-24

For

"But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose confidence is in him.

8 They will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.

It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.

It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit."

Jeremiah 17:7-8

Close