



Thank you for the opportunity to share with you for the next couple of weeks, my family and I have been attending now for the past eight months and have come to appreciate the ministry God is doing here. I was raised in the NAB conference; my family actually was part of a church plant in Winnipeg MB, Fort Richmond Baptist. I was Associate Pastor at Thornhill Baptist here in Calgary for 9 years, and a church planter for 7 years at Lifespring Community. For the last three years I took on a position that even required more time on my knees than Pastoring, floor installer!

So let me begin this morning by asking you a question... what do you think is the most common command found in Scripture? In other words what is it that God asks or expects most from us? Now according to a few conversations I have had with people over the years, you would assume it was "Thou shalt have no fun?" Now I'm not quite sure where they picked this up, but it surely wasn't from watching my life, but for those of us who know a little better, we might assume something more along the lines of, "Be more loving", a good idea, in fact right at the core of God's will for humanity, but...not the most frequent request.

A lot of the biblical authors write about our struggle with pride, how this seems to be at the heart of human fallenness, but yet the most common command doesn't have to do with fighting pride or cultivating humility. In fact it's not about sexual integrity or walking in the truth, although these are real important things, but the most common command given in all of Scripture is summed up in two words: "**Fear Not**" with countless related commands like, "**Don't be afraid**", "**Be strong and courageous**" and "**You can trust Me**".

Now we know fear itself is a universal deal, who in their lifetime hasn't experienced this emotion at some moment, especially these days...anyone looking at traveling to Mexico? If you haven't heard a unique strain of the swine flu, never seen before, has appeared killing dozens with no known vaccine to protect against it, Mexico City is shutting down...specialists fearing this could lead to a global pandemic. The most notorious flu pandemic was thought to have killed at least 40 million people worldwide in 1918-19.

More great news for a world gripped in a recession, tensions building in the Middle East and Nuclear threat becoming a reality again with the likes of Iran wanting to go nuclear. If we could monitor global fears, I'm pretty sure we would record some of histories highest scores. We live in fear filled days for countless millions of people...Google the word "fear" and just watch the response...fear is real, and it is having some powerful effects. In fact I just read about another high profile CEO for Freddie Mac who committed suicide, adding to the countless others in the past months that gave in to their fears...and ended their lives. Fear is a powerful reality!

In fact according to one author, he wrote. "*The most powerful forces known to man are not nuclear weapons, nor nature's awesome wonders, such as the might of an earthquake, the power of the sun, or mastery of a hurricane, but the thoughts and ideas of the mind*" with many, as we have seen, of those powerful thoughts or ideas being closely related to fear, anxiety, concerns, worries and even dread.

We will all wrestle with this one guaranteed, because were all born with a set of instinctive fears, fears that reality shows and writers of horror flicks prey upon. The fear of falling, the dark, slimy creatures, bugs, speaking in public, heights, the first day of school or first dates, or even the fear of the words, "*Some assembly required.*"

Now we do recognize that not all fear is bad. There exists a kind of fear that helps us survive as a human race, a fear that teaches us to respect appropriate boundaries. Good fear alerts us to real dangers...this good kind of fear keeps kids from touching hot stoves, (well for the second time anyways), or walking into a busy intersection, or trying to pet the cute wild bear that has just wondered into your campsite, an event that actually happened to me as a child.

I was visiting a campsite here in Alberta, on holidays from Winnipeg and ran across a mother bear with two cubs. It was here that an appropriate fear was applied, a good fear, a God given hard wired fear that if heeded by humanity has the ability to prolong the average age of the human race. You see not all fears

are bad! In fact people at times like to be scared, that's why we have scary movies, roller coasters, bungee jumping, and the ride I almost lost it on, on the Vegas Stratosphere.

We like to be afraid; it's one of those vivid emotions that get our blood flowing, but the downside is that fear has a great capacity to cloud our judgment, our fear radar tunes into things that have slim to no chance of ever happening, and when this happens we are experiencing bad fears. You see bad fears paralyze us from doing what we ought to do; it is a kind of distorted fear, exaggerated, and typically out of touch with reality, a chronic sense of worry or anxiety...anyone hear know what I'm talking about?

Take for example what one medical doctor wrote by the name of Marc Siegel...*"A 50-year-old asthmatic patient who came to my office recently asked for Tamiflu as a protection against bird flu. "Bird flu may get us all this year," he wheezed anxiously. "There is no bird flu here," I said, to which he writes... The greatest problem among my patients right now isn't bird flu; it is fear of bird flu. The greatest risk of an epidemic is of a fear epidemic. This is how fear works, how the fear epidemic — as opposed to a flu pandemic — spreads. Fear is supposed to be our warning system against imminent dangers, but as a deep-rooted emotion, it interferes with our ability to make sound judgments. And if anything is contagious right now, it's judgment clouded by fear."* Marcus Aurelius wrote. *"If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself, but to your estimate of it; and this you have the power to revoke at any moment."*

Just take the widespread fear of terrorism for example; the level of fear related to this is way out of proportion to the actual danger. Your risk of dying in a plausible terrorist attack is actually much lower than your risk of dying in a car accident, by walking across the street, by drowning, by falling, or even by being murdered, but according to certain news agencies you would never know that, because lets face it, any good news agency realizes stories about suitcase bombs are considerably more interesting than seatbelts.

Now...both fears are real, both exist, good and bad...and just to make sure that distinction is real clear in your minds, I want to give you a little quiz. I'll run through a few scenarios and you tell me if the type of fear I describe is good fear or bad fear. First of all, the fear that keeps children from playing in the middle of the Deerfoot – good fear or bad fear? The fear that keeps you from interviewing for you're all time dream job – good or bad fear?

How about the fear that keeps you from expressing your deepest, truest feelings to the law enforcement officer who stopped you for speeding even though there are people going much faster than you on the road that he could have stopped? Good fear or bad?

As stated there exits good fears, but for the most part, I believe the number of commands related to fear in the Bible suggests that fear, as its most commonly experienced by the human race, is not a good thing, that time after time it threatens to keep people from trusting and obeying God.

An article I read from a lady whose daughter fell into drug abuse; I believe summarizes the two mindsets that exist when it comes to the possibilities left open to the human race when confronted with this kind of fear. In her own words, *"...our daughter returned home, and a drug/alcohol assessment revealed the beginning stages of an addiction...after the disbelief and 'why me's' subsided, I realized I had to choose faith or fear."*

This lady has nailed it on the head...when fear is confronted two mindsets exist, one is based on faith, where you can trust God that His goodness and power are sufficient for your life, and you can live with a sense of relaxed confidence in Him, which is the mindset of faith, or I can live in a mindset of fear, that believes, "I'm on my own." That believes unless I'm real careful and cautious something really bad will happen to me, and I might not be able to handle it.

You see the illusion that we human beings often have is that, *"It's the circumstances I face, the difficult situation that I'm in that produces fear in me."* But I believe Scriptures tell another story, over and over again in the Bible, two different sets of people will face the same situation and come up with real different responses.

Bob Walther last week alluded to the 12 scouts sent out by Moses to explore the Promised Land. Ten of them come back and say, **"Yeah, the land is great, but the enemies, those who defy God, are so**

powerful that we will never be able to overcome them, so we can't trust God on this one Moses...let's go home!"

But yet, two of the scouts, Joshua and Caleb, who were with these other ten, looking at the same land, seeing the same enemies, end up replying, ***"We should go to the Promised Land, for certainly we will be able to possess it with God's help."***

A young shepherd boy named David brought supplies to his brothers who were serving in the army. Upon arriving he sees what they all see; the great champion of the enemies of the people of God, named Goliath. Goliath is a character right out of the WWF. Day after day he would come out and mock Israel and God before the entire Jewish army, who I might add are terrified to do anything about it, but David sees him and goes after him with limited resources...a slingshot and a few small stones...the same enemy.

Jesus and His disciples are in a boat one day and this storm arises. The disciples are so scared they start screaming in panic...Jesus, who I might add is in the same boat, facing the same storm is doing what...sleeping. In all these various scenarios, and countless others like them, two sets of people face exactly the same situation...they scout the same lands, square off against the same enemies, encounter exactly the same situation...some respond with peace and others with panic.

So what exactly is the difference? It's not the situation. It's not the circumstances. It's the mindset...and if I had to put it in a single word, it would be the word "perspective."

The most important factor of whether you live in fear or in faith is your perspective. Your perspective makes or breaks it! It makes all the difference, because it will determine how we respond to things. Perspective is a sense of proportion. It's the ability to sort out what's a big deal and what's not. An unhealthy fear is the product of an off-kilter sense of perspective. If you truly believe the world is out to get you, I guarantee you your choices will reflect that.

Just look back at the world following September 11's terrorist attacks...do you think our perspective changed? Do you think the pendulum swung in another direction when it came to precaution? How about investing these days, are you stepping out on the limb for a few financial risk opportunities, any large financial purchases lately...or has your perspective changed since 8 months ago? Now...not that we shouldn't be careful and precautions, but to what degree? Even in our caution we can overreact and live out of fear versus faith.

The single most common command in the entire Bible is the command not to live that way, but rather to live in the mindset of faith, not a mindset of fear. So the question I want to spend a little time on this morning is "Why?" Why out of all the direction that human beings need, why is the call to not fear, number one? And to add a little perspective to this question, have you ever noticed in the Bible that when God does tell somebody "to not fear", very rarely is He doing it just to spare them anxiety. God usually doesn't say this just to soothe the individual.

Generally, God asks people to take some very risky and adventurous steps that normally they may not have even previously considered. He calls people to acts of extraordinary obedience, to risky faith, and generally it all comes down to this: *"Will they go with their fears or will they go with their faith?"*

I loved what Glen Beck writes in his book, "An Inconvenient Book" towards those who believe that simply avoiding difficulties in life is the answer, *"If we continue to shelter our kids the way we do, we'll have a generation of adults who can't handle the financial, emotional, and political struggles of everyday life. It's the struggle that makes us strong. If we understand up front that everything isn't going to be handed to us, that struggle becomes a blessing. Many of the greatest people in history had a bad lot in life, and most of them are great because of that lot. Need I remind you that Jesus was born in a manger?"*

God often asks us to trust Him, and I believe He asks this so much because I believe the number one factor that keeps people from adventurous living with God is fear. The reason so many of us miss out on all that God desires to offer us is the fear of facing struggles. Fear keeps people from living a risky, obedient life with God. So today, I want to give you the best case I can for why it is worth our intense effort to live beyond the fear factor.

I want us to walk away today and the following week with a very clear understanding on the high cost – a staggering high cost – of living with a mindset of fear, and that hopefully together we will learn to do whatever we need to do to live beyond fear because of this cost. The following are a list of some of the costs of living in fear...

Number One...living in a mindset of fear will eat away at your sense of self-worth. Fear will erode your ability to believe in your own value as someone made in the image of God. A very good psychological association published a book on self-esteem. They were looking at the following paradox: why is it there are so many people who have so many reasons to have a high sense of self worth living with self image issues?

People who have accomplished so many things, who are gifted, quite attractive, well liked, but yet struggle with their own sense of self worth, this in spite of all the positive feedback from other people. After a good amount of study and reviewing the research they discovered it boiled down, essentially to one issue, which is this, get this:

When you face a difficult situation, a fear producing situation, do you approach it? In other words do you take action and face it head on, or do you avoid it? Do you wimp out and run and hide, or square yourself firmly to face the situation? In other words what role does fear play in your life?

What they discovered is that when people take action, even though things may not turn out perfectly, you still end up with a surge of delight. *"I did a hard thing. I took on a difficult challenge. I faced a fear directly"* and in doing so you grow, with some very beneficial end results. You grow in character, you gain a sense of strength inside, of personhood, but when you avoid facing your fears, when you try to evade, even if things externally work out okay, inside you say, *"But the truth is, I wimped out. I did not do the hard thing. I took the easy path."*

Let me illustrate this to you in a small way, last summer I decided to build a walkout from my third level of our home. I have never built a walkout before, but there I was shovel in hand starting to dig. Trust me it was no small hole, 14 feet wide, 7 feet out and 4 feet deep...all by hand...hauling to the back lane...by the way don't try parking there anytime soon.

I admit countless times throughout this process I caught myself thinking, *"What have I done?"* Many times my wife asked me the very same question...*"Glenn what have you done?"* Now...my middle son, who has a tendency to take the safe route in life, asked me during the process...

"How do you know how to do all these things?" To which I simply replied, *"I don't...I just do it...and learn as I go."* It's been a mantra of mine since I was a child...countless times I could illustrate for you that if I was using common sense I should never have said "OK" or "Yes lets do it." Did they always work out? No. Have I grown? Definitely yes. Do I have more confidence now to take on the unknown? Absolutely.

In Bible College I avoided every speaking and Pastoral course they offered for the entire four years I was there. When I was asked in my very first year what my spiritual gifts were, sadly enough I couldn't tell them, but I was able to very confidently share with them what they were not, *"It's not speaking in public."* You see as a child I spoke Czech better than English, and as a result I was told early on *"you talk funny"*, and that had immediate consequences, because *"you talk funny"* was followed with, *"we don't want to play with you."*

Amazing what ruts can be created in childhood memories, but thankfully, my drive to try the unknown was stronger than my fear and so when a tiny church approached me after Bible College to preach, I said OK...and the rest is history.

It was the mindset I had when I had my children face the high ropes course at Camp Caroline at a very young age, an apparatus extending 20-30 feet in the air with countless opportunities to freak out. Was I being a cruel father, possibly, but what I really wanted them to experience was how when you face your fears, when you face a situation that creates fear, and you face it head on, you will feel a rush of satisfaction knowing that you displayed courage.

And the results were exactly that...both Kevin and Danielle at that age were terrified, no way were they going to do this, but by days end not only had they done it, but I had trouble getting them off the course.

When there's a hard decision to be made and nobody else is stepping up to the plate, and you step up and make the decision and claim responsibility, even if things don't all turn out great; when you take the initiative to have that difficult conversation with that boss, parent, child or spouse, even though it would be easier to shrink back; when you're wrestling with a pattern of sin or addictive behavior, and you take the courageous steps to bring it into the light, to talk about it with a trusted friend, when it would be so much easier to just keep it hidden; when you face difficulty head on, trust me...you'll feel great, and you will be better for it.

But more importantly something else occurs, inside you grow stronger. It took some persuasive encouragement to get my kids to climb those ropes for the first time, but after that, the benefits were a great payoff. You see had they never tried, had they given in to their fears, a pattern is being formed. It's the same mindset I use when I encourage them to face their friends they are fighting with, or a teacher who appears to be mean, to overcome the endless piles of homework and encourage them it is possible, to do the difficult things in life...like sharing their stories.

As humans we need to develop an inner core of strength and resolve and firmness, and not allow fear and anxiety and hollowness to exist. It was the same principles that my wife and I had to apply when our oldest, abandoned church, family and all those who loved him most and relied on drugs to be his source of satisfaction.

My wife and I celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary this fall, and I honestly could count on two hands the times we truly butted heads in any serious disagreements over those 25 years...but with most of those having to do with the fears and strategies in trying to deal with a child you no longer recognized...a fear that contributed to my decision to leave paid ministry. Fear my friends can be paralyzing.

If you live in fear and avoidance, then it doesn't matter if you're gifted or talented, and even if things externally turn out well, and even if you get quite good at eliciting a lot of praise from a lot of people, inside you will be incurring an internal debt that you'll pay off for the rest of your life. It's too high of a cost friend. Living in fear will erode your sense of worth as a person and make you feel hollow...and that's just the first cost.

The second cost of living with a mindset of fear is that you will experience stagnation in your life instead of growth. Here's the deal...if you live in fear, you will never experience or realize the potential God has placed in you since growth always involves risk, and risk always involves fear. Fear can be crippling. Fear keeps many of us from moving on, be it in our jobs, a ministry, relationships or any opportunity because we limit ourselves.

The truth is, for many people, unless we can have some ironclad guarantees that everything will work out just the way we want it to, we stall, we stagnate or procrastinate. Too many stories exist of people who find themselves at the end of their lives regretting they didn't follow their dreams. Yes they may have had very comfortable lives, but they never did what God possibly created them to do. We limit ourselves and find ourselves saying things like, "*I couldn't do that*".

It was a common phrase I heard when we began the church plant Lifespring Community, and I had asked people to step up to the plate. "*Could you be on our drama team?*" "*I couldn't do that!*" "*Would you consider the following leadership position?*" "*I'm not a leader.*" So let me ask you, what's the worst thing that could happen? You fail? But at least you will have tried, which I believe is better than living with the regret of never trying...and the coexisting consequences...a shrunken heart, unrealized potential, and patterns of fear being formed!

The third cost of living in fear is it will cost you your joy.

This actually is a staggering cost, living with the pain of constant chronic, low grade anxiety...not to mention the actual physical costs related to this type of living. One of the things that researchers have found is that most worriers tend to have a high capacity imagination. They are often people with a lot of creative potential and generally quite intelligent, but their imagination runs toward the negative...I'm sure you know a few people like this.

As well high capacity imaginative worriers tend to use the phrase, "*What if...*" a lot. "*What if I get in an accident and wreck the car?*" "*What if I make a mistake at work and lose my job?*" "*What if I give a bad*

message?" "What if..." These are all things that are contingent...they're all set in the future. They may never happen at all...and probably most of them won't. But when I live in a fear-filled mind, I give them the power to rob me of life now. A Japanese Proverb states, "*Fear is only as deep as the mind allows.*"

A healthy sense of perspective allows you to assign these events a realistic assessment that gives you the power to get on with your life. So what if you do wreck your car? Did you live to talk about it? PTL! Maybe now's the time to take advantage of all those insurance payments you have been paying...or start biking. What if you lose your job? Get a new one! So what if I give a bad message? I'm not your Pastor! (Kidding)

But when we live in fear, we lose this perspective, and the power of the "what if" becomes paralyzing. You go through life without joy because you are fundamentally incompatible. Have you ever seen a fearful, joyful person? They just don't co-exist...much too high of a price to pay.

A fourth cost of living with a mindset of fear will lead to a mountain of regret at the end of your life...for all the risks you never took, all the challenges you never embraced, all the times that God said to you, "*Come on, trust me*" and you said "no". You will be left with a mountain of regret...left with stories that could have been. God is challenging us to trust Him.

He says to Abraham, "Leave your home, go with your wife Sarah, and as a couple way past their childbearing years, I will give you a family, and you will become father of a nation that outnumbers the stars...but...you will have to leave behind everything you know and are comfortable with, and trust me." God tells Moses, "Go confront the most powerful man in the world. Tell him, 'Let my people go'. I am going to start a new community that's going to give hope to the world, and you'll be the beginning of that...but...you're going to have to trust me on this one."

God says to Daniel, "I want you to defy the King. I want you to pray even though there's a law against it. I want you to go to a lion's den, and I'm going to shut the mouths of the lions...but you really are going to have to trust me on this one."

Jesus said one day to a rich young ruler. "I want you to go and sell everything you have...all your riches. I want you to empty your whole portfolio and your bank accounts, and give it to the poor and bless their lives...then...come and follow me, and together we will do life...it will be an adventure of a lifetime...but you're going to have to trust me on this?"

And when people courageously, boldly stepped out in this trust, they never regretted it. You just don't find anybody in the Bible that says, "*I trusted God, and I'm, so sorry I did.*" But you did find those who turned the offer down, who said "no" like the rich young ruler. I wonder about him, I wonder if he lived to be an old man left wondering what could have been, possibly a heart that grew old, hard and cold would have caught on blazing fire. Maybe a spirit that became self-absorbed would have become generous. Maybe a life that got lonely would have been filled with love.

Maybe some of you are wondering what your life would have been like had you done this as a young man or woman.

Don't head for a mountain of regret one day, don't let all of those "what if's" that paralyzed you for so long become "might have beens". They're irretrievable. If you give into a mindset of fear, you will find yourself at the end of your life, comfortable maybe, filling up your days possibly, acquiring things or simply left watching television with reruns, but eventually a thought will arise, "What might have been?" What might have been if I'd have trusted God, what might I have done? What might have I become?

Finally one last cost. A mindset of fear is contagious. It's costly because it unwittingly gets passed from one generation to the next.

For parents this is the highest cost of all, because if you allow yourself, unchecked, to go through life with your hopes, your dreams, your callings, being impaired by distorted fears and worry, there's a very good chance that you will be limiting the hopes and dreams and callings of your children who you love. Because kids learn from their parents, and if you don't get a grip on this stuff, your children will learn from you that the only way to go through life is with anxiety and fear. You'll be passing on a legacy.

Listen to the following true case of an individual called Julie. Julie was raised in a house with very strict rules. All the furniture in her parent's home was covered with plastic, and Julie and her brother were not allowed in the living room, lest they broke something. Throughout her childhood, Julie was made to feel dirty. If she played outside or rode her bike for a few minutes, her mother marched her upstairs and made her take a bath.

It was not unusual for Julie to take two or three baths in one day. Her mother continually carped about Julie's appearance, about near-invisible specks and spots on her dress. And whenever she misbehaved, Julie's mother would say "You filthy little beast" or "You dirty little brat". It seemed that all of Julie's childhood revolved around staying clean but feeling dirty. Today, Julie is in her mid-forties. She has an immaculate home with beautiful furniture, all covered in plastic. She has strict rules for her family. She keeps the Dust buster handy to pick up any stray crumbs, lint, or flyspecks that may appear on the carpet or on her children.

Julie's husband is a workaholic who spends as much time away from home – and away from Julie – as possible. Even in her forties Julie takes as many as 2-3 baths a day. Her adult life, like her childhood, still revolves around staying clean but feeling dirty. Worst of all, she is passing her feelings of inferiority and contamination on to people around her – her husband, her withdrawn 9 year old son, and her rebellious, sexually active 14 year old daughter. She strives for immaculate perfection, but when she looks in the mirror, all she sees is flaws and filth...and the worst part of it all, is she doesn't even know what she is doing to her and her family, and she has no idea how she got that way.

So more often than God commands anything else, God commands "**Fear not**", and he doesn't leave it there, you need to understand this about Him and that is that God almost always gives a reason why you don't have to fear. God says, "**Fear not for...I am with you.**" "**Fear not for the Lord your God shall be with you.**" "**The Lord is my strength and my salvation, of whom shall I be afraid?**" "**In this world, you will have tribulation. I've overcome the world. Don't be afraid. Be of good cheer.**" "**Be courageous. Be strong.**"

This is right at the core of the gospel that Jesus proclaimed, what He came to live on this earth and to teach. Then He died on the cross and was resurrected again to ensure and guarantee for us forever – that by the free gift of grace – it is possible for you and me to live in the reality of the presence and power of God. That there is nothing – not loss, not failure, not rejection, not loneliness, not cancer, not sickness, not rebellious children nor death itself – there is nothing that has the power to separate you from the love and care of the father in the world, and in the world to come.

"**I'm with you**" God says. Now if that's really true what do you have to be afraid of? If that's really true, what could hold you back from trusting God with utter abandon?

An author by the name of Susan Jeffers says, "*The ultimate fear – underneath all our other fears of loneliness or rejection or failure or so on – the ultimate fear is 'I can't handle it. Something really bad is going to happen to me, and I won't be able to handle it.'*"

But what's the ultimate promise of God? **There's nothing you and I can't handle together.**" I'm telling you friends, when people in Scripture or people today get a hold of this truth, it changes lives. Karl Menninger said, "*Fears are educated into us, and can if we wish be educated out.*"

The Apostle Paul grasped it and I believe demonstrated the best "*I can handle*" statement found in all of literature. Now here's the setting. Imagine if this was you...today.

You've lost your job, your isolated from your friends. You're living in a strange country where you don't know people. Jealous enemies have trashed your reputation. You've been arrested on trumped up charges. You've been physically beaten, put in jail. You don't know if you'll ever get out of jail. You might be put to death, maybe tomorrow. Do you think you might be tempted to worry? Anybody?

This is what Paul writes from precisely that scenario, sitting in a jail cell, not knowing if he's going to survive another day. He says, "**I can handle anything through Christ who gives me strength.**" This is the promise of God: "So can you" Can you imagine going through life this way? Can you imagine what it

would be like to wake up in the morning and just let your day unfold, one event to the next, sometimes real good things, sometimes real bad things.

To go through the day with the one thought that you breathe in and out all day long, and *that is that "I can handle anything through Christ who gives me strength."*

That's God's will for you. Deeper than that, the Bible says *"It's simply truth."* So we need to devote ourselves to learn to live like this. Next week were going to look at the single most important principle that I know for turning fear into faith. Make the decision starting today that whatever I do, whatever things I need to learn, whatever I need to put into practice I will pay the price because I will not be ruled by fear. I've lived in fear to long and I no longer will live that way.

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Now we know fear itself is a universal deal, who in their lifetime hasn't experienced this emotion at some moment, especially these days...anyone looking at traveling to Mexico? If you haven't heard a unique strain of the swine flu, never seen before, has appeared killing dozens with no known vaccine to protect against it, Mexico City is shutting down...specialists fearing this could lead to a global pandemic. The most notorious flu pandemic was thought to have killed at least 40 million people worldwide in 1918-19.

More great news for a world gripped in a recession, tensions building in the Middle East and Nuclear threat becoming a reality again with the likes of Iran wanting to go nuclear. If we could monitor global fears, I'm pretty sure we would record some of histories highest scores. We live in fear filled days for countless millions of people...Google the word "fear" and just watch the response...fear is real, and it is having some powerful effects. In fact I just read about another high profile CEO for Freddie Mac who committed suicide, adding to the countless others in the past months that gave in to their fears...and ended their lives. Fear is a powerful reality!

In fact according to one author, he wrote. "*The most powerful forces known to man are not nuclear weapons, nor nature's awesome wonders, such as the might of an earthquake, the power of the sun, or mastery of a hurricane, but the thoughts and ideas of the mind*" with many, as we have seen, of those powerful thoughts or ideas being closely related to fear, anxiety, concerns, worries and even dread.

We will all wrestle with this one guaranteed, because were all born with a set of instinctive fears, fears that reality shows and writers of horror flicks prey upon. The fear of falling, the dark, slimy creatures, bugs, speaking in public, heights, the first day of school or first dates, or even the fear of the words, "*Some assembly required.*"

Now we do recognize that not all fear is bad. There exists a kind of fear that helps us survive as a human race, a fear that teaches us to respect appropriate boundaries. Good fear alerts us to real dangers...this good kind of fear keeps kids from touching hot stoves, (well for the second time anyways), or walking into a busy intersection, or trying to pet the cute wild bear that has just wondered into your campsite, an event that actually happened to me as a child.

I was visiting a campsite here in Alberta, on holidays from Winnipeg and ran across a mother bear with two cubs. It was here that an appropriate fear was applied, a good fear, a God given hard wired fear that if heeded by humanity has the ability to prolong the average age of the human race. You see not all fears

are bad! In fact people at times like to be scared, that's why we have scary movies, roller coasters, bungee jumping, and the ride I almost lost it on, on the Vegas Stratosphere.

We like to be afraid; it's one of those vivid emotions that get our blood flowing, but the downside is that fear has a great capacity to cloud our judgment, our fear radar tunes into things that have slim to no chance of ever happening, and when this happens we are experiencing bad fears. You see bad fears paralyze us from doing what we ought to do; it is a kind of distorted fear, exaggerated, and typically out of touch with reality, a chronic sense of worry or anxiety...anyone hear know what I'm talking about?

Take for example what one medical doctor wrote by the name of Marc Siegel...*"A 50-year-old asthmatic patient who came to my office recently asked for Tamiflu as a protection against bird flu. "Bird flu may get us all this year," he wheezed anxiously. "There is no bird flu here," I said, to which he writes... The greatest problem among my patients right now isn't bird flu; it is fear of bird flu. The greatest risk of an epidemic is of a fear epidemic. This is how fear works, how the fear epidemic — as opposed to a flu pandemic — spreads. Fear is supposed to be our warning system against imminent dangers, but as a deep-rooted emotion, it interferes with our ability to make sound judgments. And if anything is contagious right now, it's judgment clouded by fear."* Marcus Aurelius wrote. *"If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself, but to your estimate of it; and this you have the power to revoke at any moment."*

Just take the widespread fear of terrorism for example; the level of fear related to this is way out of proportion to the actual danger. Your risk of dying in a plausible terrorist attack is actually much lower than your risk of dying in a car accident, by walking across the street, by drowning, by falling, or even by being murdered, but according to certain news agencies you would never know that, because lets face it, any good news agency realizes stories about suitcase bombs are considerably more interesting than seatbelts.

Now...both fears are real, both exist, good and bad...and just to make sure that distinction is real clear in your minds, I want to give you a little quiz. I'll run through a few scenarios and you tell me if the type of fear I describe is good fear or bad fear. First of all, the fear that keeps children from playing in the middle of the Deerfoot – good fear or bad fear? The fear that keeps you from interviewing for you're all time dream job – good or bad fear?

How about the fear that keeps you from expressing your deepest, truest feelings to the law enforcement officer who stopped you for speeding even though there are people going much faster than you on the road that he could have stopped? Good fear or bad?

As stated there exits good fears, but for the most part, I believe the number of commands related to fear in the Bible suggests that fear, as its most commonly experienced by the human race, is not a good thing, that time after time it threatens to keep people from trusting and obeying God.

An article I read from a lady whose daughter fell into drug abuse; I believe summarizes the two mindsets that exist when it comes to the possibilities left open to the human race when confronted with this kind of fear. In her own words, *"...our daughter returned home, and a drug/alcohol assessment revealed the beginning stages of an addiction...after the disbelief and 'why me's' subsided, I realized I had to choose faith or fear."*

This lady has nailed it on the head...when fear is confronted two mindsets exist, one is based on faith, where you can trust God that His goodness and power are sufficient for your life, and you can live with a sense of relaxed confidence in Him, which is the mindset of faith, or I can live in a mindset of fear, that believes, "I'm on my own." That believes unless I'm real careful and cautious something really bad will happen to me, and I might not be able to handle it.

You see the illusion that we human beings often have is that, *"It's the circumstances I face, the difficult situation that I'm in that produces fear in me."* But I believe Scriptures tell another story, over and over again in the Bible, two different sets of people will face the same situation and come up with real different responses.

Bob Walther last week alluded to the 12 scouts sent out by Moses to explore the Promised Land. Ten of them come back and say, **"Yeah, the land is great, but the enemies, those who defy God, are so**

powerful that we will never be able to overcome them, so we can't trust God on this one Moses...let's go home!"

But yet, two of the scouts, Joshua and Caleb, who were with these other ten, looking at the same land, seeing the same enemies, end up replying, ***"We should go to the Promised Land, for certainly we will be able to possess it with God's help."***

A young shepherd boy named David brought supplies to his brothers who were serving in the army. Upon arriving he sees what they all see; the great champion of the enemies of the people of God, named Goliath. Goliath is a character right out of the WWF. Day after day he would come out and mock Israel and God before the entire Jewish army, who I might add are terrified to do anything about it, but David sees him and goes after him with limited resources...a slingshot and a few small stones...the same enemy.

Jesus and His disciples are in a boat one day and this storm arises. The disciples are so scared they start screaming in panic...Jesus, who I might add is in the same boat, facing the same storm is doing what...sleeping. In all these various scenarios, and countless others like them, two sets of people face exactly the same situation...they scout the same lands, square off against the same enemies, encounter exactly the same situation...some respond with peace and others with panic.

So what exactly is the difference? It's not the situation. It's not the circumstances. It's the mindset...and if I had to put it in a single word, it would be the word "perspective."

The most important factor of whether you live in fear or in faith is your perspective. Your perspective makes or breaks it! It makes all the difference, because it will determine how we respond to things. Perspective is a sense of proportion. It's the ability to sort out what's a big deal and what's not. An unhealthy fear is the product of an off-kilter sense of perspective. If you truly believe the world is out to get you, I guarantee you your choices will reflect that.

Just look back at the world following September 11's terrorist attacks...do you think our perspective changed? Do you think the pendulum swung in another direction when it came to precaution? How about investing these days, are you stepping out on the limb for a few financial risk opportunities, any large financial purchases lately...or has your perspective changed since 8 months ago? Now...not that we shouldn't be careful and precautions, but to what degree? Even in our caution we can overreact and live out of fear versus faith.

The single most common command in the entire Bible is the command not to live that way, but rather to live in the mindset of faith, not a mindset of fear. So the question I want to spend a little time on this morning is "Why?" Why out of all the direction that human beings need, why is the call to not fear, number one? And to add a little perspective to this question, have you ever noticed in the Bible that when God does tell somebody "to not fear", very rarely is He doing it just to spare them anxiety. God usually doesn't say this just to soothe the individual.

Generally, God asks people to take some very risky and adventurous steps that normally they may not have even previously considered. He calls people to acts of extraordinary obedience, to risky faith, and generally it all comes down to this: *"Will they go with their fears or will they go with their faith?"*

I loved what Glen Beck writes in his book, "An Inconvenient Book" towards those who believe that simply avoiding difficulties in life is the answer, *"If we continue to shelter our kids the way we do, we'll have a generation of adults who can't handle the financial, emotional, and political struggles of everyday life. It's the struggle that makes us strong. If we understand up front that everything isn't going to be handed to us, that struggle becomes a blessing. Many of the greatest people in history had a bad lot in life, and most of them are great because of that lot. Need I remind you that Jesus was born in a manger?"*

God often asks us to trust Him, and I believe He asks this so much because I believe the number one factor that keeps people from adventurous living with God is fear. The reason so many of us miss out on all that God desires to offer us is the fear of facing struggles. Fear keeps people from living a risky, obedient life with God. So today, I want to give you the best case I can for why it is worth our intense effort to live beyond the fear factor.

I want us to walk away today and the following week with a very clear understanding on the high cost – a staggering high cost – of living with a mindset of fear, and that hopefully together we will learn to do whatever we need to do to live beyond fear because of this cost. The following are a list of some of the costs of living in fear...

Number One...living in a mindset of fear will eat away at your sense of self-worth. Fear will erode your ability to believe in your own value as someone made in the image of God. A very good psychological association published a book on self-esteem. They were looking at the following paradox: why is it there are so many people who have so many reasons to have a high sense of self worth living with self image issues?

People who have accomplished so many things, who are gifted, quite attractive, well liked, but yet struggle with their own sense of self worth, this in spite of all the positive feedback from other people. After a good amount of study and reviewing the research they discovered it boiled down, essentially to one issue, which is this, get this:

When you face a difficult situation, a fear producing situation, do you approach it? In other words do you take action and face it head on, or do you avoid it? Do you wimp out and run and hide, or square yourself firmly to face the situation? In other words what role does fear play in your life?

What they discovered is that when people take action, even though things may not turn out perfectly, you still end up with a surge of delight. *"I did a hard thing. I took on a difficult challenge. I faced a fear directly"* and in doing so you grow, with some very beneficial end results. You grow in character, you gain a sense of strength inside, of personhood, but when you avoid facing your fears, when you try to evade, even if things externally work out okay, inside you say, *"But the truth is, I wimped out. I did not do the hard thing. I took the easy path."*

Let me illustrate this to you in a small way, last summer I decided to build a walkout from my third level of our home. I have never built a walkout before, but there I was shovel in hand starting to dig. Trust me it was no small hole, 14 feet wide, 7 feet out and 4 feet deep...all by hand...hauling to the back lane...by the way don't try parking there anytime soon.

I admit countless times throughout this process I caught myself thinking, *"What have I done?"* Many times my wife asked me the very same question...*"Glenn what have you done?"* Now...my middle son, who has a tendency to take the safe route in life, asked me during the process...

"How do you know how to do all these things?" To which I simply replied, *"I don't...I just do it...and learn as I go."* It's been a mantra of mine since I was a child...countless times I could illustrate for you that if I was using common sense I should never have said "OK" or "Yes lets do it." Did they always work out? No. Have I grown? Definitely yes. Do I have more confidence now to take on the unknown? Absolutely.

In Bible College I avoided every speaking and Pastoral course they offered for the entire four years I was there. When I was asked in my very first year what my spiritual gifts were, sadly enough I couldn't tell them, but I was able to very confidently share with them what they were not, *"It's not speaking in public."* You see as a child I spoke Czech better than English, and as a result I was told early on *"you talk funny"*, and that had immediate consequences, because *"you talk funny"* was followed with, *"we don't want to play with you."*

Amazing what ruts can be created in childhood memories, but thankfully, my drive to try the unknown was stronger than my fear and so when a tiny church approached me after Bible College to preach, I said OK...and the rest is history.

It was the mindset I had when I had my children face the high ropes course at Camp Caroline at a very young age, an apparatus extending 20-30 feet in the air with countless opportunities to freak out. Was I being a cruel father, possibly, but what I really wanted them to experience was how when you face your fears, when you face a situation that creates fear, and you face it head on, you will feel a rush of satisfaction knowing that you displayed courage.

And the results were exactly that...both Kevin and Danielle at that age were terrified, no way were they going to do this, but by days end not only had they done it, but I had trouble getting them off the course.

When there's a hard decision to be made and nobody else is stepping up to the plate, and you step up and make the decision and claim responsibility, even if things don't all turn out great; when you take the initiative to have that difficult conversation with that boss, parent, child or spouse, even though it would be easier to shrink back; when you're wrestling with a pattern of sin or addictive behavior, and you take the courageous steps to bring it into the light, to talk about it with a trusted friend, when it would be so much easier to just keep it hidden; when you face difficulty head on, trust me...you'll feel great, and you will be better for it.

But more importantly something else occurs, inside you grow stronger. It took some persuasive encouragement to get my kids to climb those ropes for the first time, but after that, the benefits were a great payoff. You see had they never tried, had they given in to their fears, a pattern is being formed. It's the same mindset I use when I encourage them to face their friends they are fighting with, or a teacher who appears to be mean, to overcome the endless piles of homework and encourage them it is possible, to do the difficult things in life...like sharing their stories.

As humans we need to develop an inner core of strength and resolve and firmness, and not allow fear and anxiety and hollowness to exist. It was the same principles that my wife and I had to apply when our oldest, abandoned church, family and all those who loved him most and relied on drugs to be his source of satisfaction.

My wife and I celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary this fall, and I honestly could count on two hands the times we truly butted heads in any serious disagreements over those 25 years...but with most of those having to do with the fears and strategies in trying to deal with a child you no longer recognized...a fear that contributed to my decision to leave paid ministry. Fear my friends can be paralyzing.

If you live in fear and avoidance, then it doesn't matter if you're gifted or talented, and even if things externally turn out well, and even if you get quite good at eliciting a lot of praise from a lot of people, inside you will be incurring an internal debt that you'll pay off for the rest of your life. It's too high of a cost friend. Living in fear will erode your sense of worth as a person and make you feel hollow...and that's just the first cost.

The second cost of living with a mindset of fear is that you will experience stagnation in your life instead of growth. Here's the deal...if you live in fear, you will never experience or realize the potential God has placed in you since growth always involves risk, and risk always involves fear. Fear can be crippling. Fear keeps many of us from moving on, be it in our jobs, a ministry, relationships or any opportunity because we limit ourselves.

The truth is, for many people, unless we can have some ironclad guarantees that everything will work out just the way we want it to, we stall, we stagnate or procrastinate. Too many stories exist of people who find themselves at the end of their lives regretting they didn't follow their dreams. Yes they may have had very comfortable lives, but they never did what God possibly created them to do. We limit ourselves and find ourselves saying things like, *"I couldn't do that"*.

It was a common phrase I heard when we began the church plant Lifespring Community, and I had asked people to step up to the plate. *"Could you be on our drama team?" "I couldn't do that!" "Would you consider the following leadership position?" "I'm not a leader."* So let me ask you, what's the worst thing that could happen? You fail? But at least you will have tried, which I believe is better than living with the regret of never trying...and the coexisting consequences...a shrunken heart, unrealized potential, and patterns of fear being formed!

The third cost of living in fear is it will cost you your joy.

This actually is a staggering cost, living with the pain of constant chronic, low grade anxiety...not to mention the actual physical costs related to this type of living. One of the things that researchers have found is that most worriers tend to have a high capacity imagination. They are often people with a lot of creative potential and generally quite intelligent, but their imagination runs toward the negative...I'm sure you know a few people like this.

As well high capacity imaginative worriers tend to use the phrase, *"What if..."* a lot. *"What if I get in an accident and wreck the car?" "What if I make a mistake at work and lose my job?" "What if I give a bad*

message?" "What if..." These are all things that are contingent...they're all set in the future. They may never happen at all...and probably most of them won't. But when I live in a fear-filled mind, I give them the power to rob me of life now. A Japanese Proverb states, "*Fear is only as deep as the mind allows.*"

A healthy sense of perspective allows you to assign these events a realistic assessment that gives you the power to get on with your life. So what if you do wreck your car? Did you live to talk about it? PTL! Maybe now's the time to take advantage of all those insurance payments you have been paying...or start biking. What if you lose your job? Get a new one! So what if I give a bad message? I'm not your Pastor! (Kidding)

But when we live in fear, we lose this perspective, and the power of the "what if" becomes paralyzing. You go through life without joy because you are fundamentally incompatible. Have you ever seen a fearful, joyful person? They just don't co-exist...much too high of a price to pay.

A fourth cost of living with a mindset of fear will lead to a mountain of regret at the end of your life...for all the risks you never took, all the challenges you never embraced, all the times that God said to you, "*Come on, trust me*" and you said "no". You will be left with a mountain of regret...left with stories that could have been. God is challenging us to trust Him.

He says to Abraham, "Leave your home, go with your wife Sarah, and as a couple way past their childbearing years, I will give you a family, and you will become father of a nation that outnumbers the stars...but...you will have to leave behind everything you know and are comfortable with, and trust me." God tells Moses, "Go confront the most powerful man in the world. Tell him, 'Let my people go'. I am going to start a new community that's going to give hope to the world, and you'll be the beginning of that...but...you're going to have to trust me on this one."

God says to Daniel, "I want you to defy the King. I want you to pray even though there's a law against it. I want you to go to a lion's den, and I'm going to shut the mouths of the lions...but you really are going to have to trust me on this one."

Jesus said one day to a rich young ruler. "I want you to go and sell everything you have...all your riches. I want you to empty your whole portfolio and your bank accounts, and give it to the poor and bless their lives...then...come and follow me, and together we will do life...it will be an adventure of a lifetime...but you're going to have to trust me on this?"

And when people courageously, boldly stepped out in this trust, they never regretted it. You just don't find anybody in the Bible that says, "*I trusted God, and I'm, so sorry I did.*" But you did find those who turned the offer down, who said "no" like the rich young ruler. I wonder about him, I wonder if he lived to be an old man left wondering what could have been, possibly a heart that grew old, hard and cold would have caught on blazing fire. Maybe a spirit that became self-absorbed would have become generous. Maybe a life that got lonely would have been filled with love.

Maybe some of you are wondering what your life would have been like had you done this as a young man or woman.

Don't head for a mountain of regret one day, don't let all of those "what if's" that paralyzed you for so long become "might have beens". They're irretrievable. If you give into a mindset of fear, you will find yourself at the end of your life, comfortable maybe, filling up your days possibly, acquiring things or simply left watching television with reruns, but eventually a thought will arise, "What might have been?" What might have been if I'd have trusted God, what might I have done? What might have I become?

Finally one last cost. A mindset of fear is contagious. It's costly because it unwittingly gets passed from one generation to the next.

For parents this is the highest cost of all, because if you allow yourself, unchecked, to go through life with your hopes, your dreams, your callings, being impaired by distorted fears and worry, there's a very good chance that you will be limiting the hopes and dreams and callings of your children who you love. Because kids learn from their parents, and if you don't get a grip on this stuff, your children will learn from you that the only way to go through life is with anxiety and fear. You'll be passing on a legacy.

Listen to the following true case of an individual called Julie. Julie was raised in a house with very strict rules. All the furniture in her parent's home was covered with plastic, and Julie and her brother were not allowed in the living room, lest they broke something. Throughout her childhood, Julie was made to feel dirty. If she played outside or rode her bike for a few minutes, her mother marched her upstairs and made her take a bath.

It was not unusual for Julie to take two or three baths in one day. Her mother continually carped about Julie's appearance, about near-invisible specks and spots on her dress. And whenever she misbehaved, Julie's mother would say "You filthy little beast" or "You dirty little brat". It seemed that all of Julie's childhood revolved around staying clean but feeling dirty. Today, Julie is in her mid-forties. She has an immaculate home with beautiful furniture, all covered in plastic. She has strict rules for her family. She keeps the Dust buster handy to pick up any stray crumbs, lint, or flyspecks that may appear on the carpet or on her children.

Julie's husband is a workaholic who spends as much time away from home – and away from Julie – as possible. Even in her forties Julie takes as many as 2-3 baths a day. Her adult life, like her childhood, still revolves around staying clean but feeling dirty. Worst of all, she is passing her feelings of inferiority and contamination on to people around her – her husband, her withdrawn 9 year old son, and her rebellious, sexually active 14 year old daughter. She strives for immaculate perfection, but when she looks in the mirror, all she sees is flaws and filth...and the worst part of it all, is she doesn't even know what she is doing to her and her family, and she has no idea how she got that way.

So more often than God commands anything else, God commands "***Fear not***", and he doesn't leave it there, you need to understand this about Him and that is that God almost always gives a reason why you don't have to fear. God says, "***Fear not for...I am with you.***" "***Fear not for the Lord your God shall be with you.***" "***The Lord is my strength and my salvation, of whom shall I be afraid?***" "***In this world, you will have tribulation. I've overcome the world. Don't be afraid. Be of good cheer.***" "***Be courageous. Be strong.***"

This is right at the core of the gospel that Jesus proclaimed, what He came to live on this earth and to teach. Then He died on the cross and was resurrected again to ensure and guarantee for us forever – that by the free gift of grace – it is possible for you and me to live in the reality of the presence and power of God. That there is nothing – not loss, not failure, not rejection, not loneliness, not cancer, not sickness, not rebellious children nor death itself – there is nothing that has the power to separate you from the love and care of the father in the world, and in the world to come.

"***I'm with you***" God says. Now if that's really true what do you have to be afraid of? If that's really true, what could hold you back from trusting God with utter abandon?

An author by the name of Susan Jeffers says, "*The ultimate fear – underneath all our other fears of loneliness or rejection or failure or so on – the ultimate fear is 'I can't handle it. Something really bad is going to happen to me, and I won't be able to handle it.'*"

But what's the ultimate promise of God? ***There's nothing you and I can't handle together.***" I'm telling you friends, when people in Scripture or people today get a hold of this truth, it changes lives. Karl Menninger said, "*Fears are educated into us, and can if we wish be educated out.*"

The Apostle Paul grasped it and I believe demonstrated the best "*I can handle*" statement found in all of literature. Now here's the setting. Imagine if this was you...today.

You've lost your job, your isolated from your friends. You're living in a strange country where you don't know people. Jealous enemies have trashed your reputation. You've been arrested on trumped up charges. You've been physically beaten, put in jail. You don't know if you'll ever get out of jail. You might be put to death, maybe tomorrow. Do you think you might be tempted to worry? Anybody?

This is what Paul writes from precisely that scenario, sitting in a jail cell, not knowing if he's going to survive another day. He says, "***I can handle anything through Christ who gives me strength.***" This is the promise of God: "So can you" Can you imagine going through life this way? Can you imagine what it

would be like to wake up in the morning and just let your day unfold, one event to the next, sometimes real good things, sometimes real bad things.

To go through the day with the one thought that you breathe in and out all day long, and *that is that "I can handle anything through Christ who gives me strength."*

That's God's will for you. Deeper than that, the Bible says *"It's simply truth."* So we need to devote ourselves to learn to live like this. Next week were going to look at the single most important principle that I know for turning fear into faith. Make the decision starting today that whatever I do, whatever things I need to learn, whatever I need to put into practice I will pay the price because I will not be ruled by fear. I've lived in fear to long and I no longer will live that way.

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Thank you for the opportunity to share with you for the next couple of weeks, my family and I have been attending now for the past eight months and have come to appreciate the ministry God is doing here. I was raised in the NAB conference; my family actually was part of a church plant in Winnipeg MB, Fort Richmond Baptist. I was Associate Pastor at Thornhill Baptist here in Calgary for 9 years, and a church planter for 7 years at Lifespring Community. For the last three years I took on a position that even required more time on my knees than Pastoring, floor installer!

So let me begin this morning by asking you a question... what do you think is the most common command found in Scripture? In other words what is it that God asks or expects most from us? Now according to a few conversations I have had with people over the years, you would assume it was "Thou shalt have no fun?" Now I'm not quite sure where they picked this up, but it surely wasn't from watching my life, but for those of us who know a little better, we might assume something more along the lines of, "Be more loving", a good idea, in fact right at the core of God's will for humanity, but...not the most frequent request.

A lot of the biblical authors write about our struggle with pride, how this seems to be at the heart of human fallenness, but yet the most common command doesn't have to do with fighting pride or cultivating humility. In fact it's not about sexual integrity or walking in the truth, although these are real important things, but the most common command given in all of Scripture is summed up in two words: "**Fear Not**" with countless related commands like, "**Don't be afraid**", "**Be strong and courageous**" and "**You can trust Me**".

Now we know fear itself is a universal deal, who in their lifetime hasn't experienced this emotion at some moment, especially these days...anyone looking at traveling to Mexico? If you haven't heard a unique strain of the swine flu, never seen before, has appeared killing dozens with no known vaccine to protect against it, Mexico City is shutting down...specialists fearing this could lead to a global pandemic. The most notorious flu pandemic was thought to have killed at least 40 million people worldwide in 1918-19.

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I was visiting a campsite here in Alberta, on holidays from Winnipeg and ran across a mother bear with two cubs. It was here that an appropriate fear was applied, a good fear, a God given hard wired fear that if heeded by humanity has the ability to prolong the average age of the human race. You see not all fears

are bad! In fact people at times like to be scared, that's why we have scary movies, roller coasters, bungee jumping, and the ride I almost lost it on, on the Vegas Stratosphere.

We like to be afraid; it's one of those vivid emotions that get our blood flowing, but the downside is that fear has a great capacity to cloud our judgment, our fear radar tunes into things that have slim to no chance of ever happening, and when this happens we are experiencing bad fears. You see bad fears paralyze us from doing what we ought to do; it is a kind of distorted fear, exaggerated, and typically out of touch with reality, a chronic sense of worry or anxiety...anyone hear know what I'm talking about?

Take for example what one medical doctor wrote by the name of Marc Siegel...*"A 50-year-old asthmatic patient who came to my office recently asked for Tamiflu as a protection against bird flu. "Bird flu may get us all this year," he wheezed anxiously. "There is no bird flu here," I said, to which he writes... The greatest problem among my patients right now isn't bird flu; it is fear of bird flu. The greatest risk of an epidemic is of a fear epidemic. This is how fear works, how the fear epidemic — as opposed to a flu pandemic — spreads. Fear is supposed to be our warning system against imminent dangers, but as a deep-rooted emotion, it interferes with our ability to make sound judgments. And if anything is contagious right now, it's judgment clouded by fear."* Marcus Aurelius wrote. *"If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself, but to your estimate of it; and this you have the power to revoke at any moment."*

Just take the widespread fear of terrorism for example; the level of fear related to this is way out of proportion to the actual danger. Your risk of dying in a plausible terrorist attack is actually much lower than your risk of dying in a car accident, by walking across the street, by drowning, by falling, or even by being murdered, but according to certain news agencies you would never know that, because lets face it, any good news agency realizes stories about suitcase bombs are considerably more interesting than seatbelts.

Now...both fears are real, both exist, good and bad...and just to make sure that distinction is real clear in your minds, I want to give you a little quiz. I'll run through a few scenarios and you tell me if the type of fear I describe is good fear or bad fear. First of all, the fear that keeps children from playing in the middle of the Deerfoot – good fear or bad fear? The fear that keeps you from interviewing for you're all time dream job – good or bad fear?

How about the fear that keeps you from expressing your deepest, truest feelings to the law enforcement officer who stopped you for speeding even though there are people going much faster than you on the road that he could have stopped? Good fear or bad?

As stated there exits good fears, but for the most part, I believe the number of commands related to fear in the Bible suggests that fear, as its most commonly experienced by the human race, is not a good thing, that time after time it threatens to keep people from trusting and obeying God.

An article I read from a lady whose daughter fell into drug abuse; I believe summarizes the two mindsets that exist when it comes to the possibilities left open to the human race when confronted with this kind of fear. In her own words, *"...our daughter returned home, and a drug/alcohol assessment revealed the beginning stages of an addiction...after the disbelief and 'why me's' subsided, I realized I had to choose faith or fear."*

This lady has nailed it on the head...when fear is confronted two mindsets exist, one is based on faith, where you can trust God that His goodness and power are sufficient for your life, and you can live with a sense of relaxed confidence in Him, which is the mindset of faith, or I can live in a mindset of fear, that believes, "I'm on my own." That believes unless I'm real careful and cautious something really bad will happen to me, and I might not be able to handle it.

You see the illusion that we human beings often have is that, *"It's the circumstances I face, the difficult situation that I'm in that produces fear in me."* But I believe Scriptures tell another story, over and over again in the Bible, two different sets of people will face the same situation and come up with real different responses.

Bob Walther last week alluded to the 12 scouts sent out by Moses to explore the Promised Land. Ten of them come back and say, **"Yeah, the land is great, but the enemies, those who defy God, are so**

powerful that we will never be able to overcome them, so we can't trust God on this one Moses...let's go home!"

But yet, two of the scouts, Joshua and Caleb, who were with these other ten, looking at the same land, seeing the same enemies, end up replying, ***"We should go to the Promised Land, for certainly we will be able to possess it with God's help."***

A young shepherd boy named David brought supplies to his brothers who were serving in the army. Upon arriving he sees what they all see; the great champion of the enemies of the people of God, named Goliath. Goliath is a character right out of the WWF. Day after day he would come out and mock Israel and God before the entire Jewish army, who I might add are terrified to do anything about it, but David sees him and goes after him with limited resources...a slingshot and a few small stones...the same enemy.

Jesus and His disciples are in a boat one day and this storm arises. The disciples are so scared they start screaming in panic...Jesus, who I might add is in the same boat, facing the same storm is doing what...sleeping. In all these various scenarios, and countless others like them, two sets of people face exactly the same situation...they scout the same lands, square off against the same enemies, encounter exactly the same situation...some respond with peace and others with panic.

So what exactly is the difference? It's not the situation. It's not the circumstances. It's the mindset...and if I had to put it in a single word, it would be the word "perspective."

The most important factor of whether you live in fear or in faith is your perspective. Your perspective makes or breaks it! It makes all the difference, because it will determine how we respond to things. Perspective is a sense of proportion. It's the ability to sort out what's a big deal and what's not. An unhealthy fear is the product of an off-kilter sense of perspective. If you truly believe the world is out to get you, I guarantee you your choices will reflect that.

Just look back at the world following September 11's terrorist attacks...do you think our perspective changed? Do you think the pendulum swung in another direction when it came to precaution? How about investing these days, are you stepping out on the limb for a few financial risk opportunities, any large financial purchases lately...or has your perspective changed since 8 months ago? Now...not that we shouldn't be careful and precautions, but to what degree? Even in our caution we can overreact and live out of fear versus faith.

The single most common command in the entire Bible is the command not to live that way, but rather to live in the mindset of faith, not a mindset of fear. So the question I want to spend a little time on this morning is "Why?" Why out of all the direction that human beings need, why is the call to not fear, number one? And to add a little perspective to this question, have you ever noticed in the Bible that when God does tell somebody "to not fear", very rarely is He doing it just to spare them anxiety. God usually doesn't say this just to soothe the individual.

Generally, God asks people to take some very risky and adventurous steps that normally they may not have even previously considered. He calls people to acts of extraordinary obedience, to risky faith, and generally it all comes down to this: *"Will they go with their fears or will they go with their faith?"*

I loved what Glen Beck writes in his book, "An Inconvenient Book" towards those who believe that simply avoiding difficulties in life is the answer, *"If we continue to shelter our kids the way we do, we'll have a generation of adults who can't handle the financial, emotional, and political struggles of everyday life. It's the struggle that makes us strong. If we understand up front that everything isn't going to be handed to us, that struggle becomes a blessing. Many of the greatest people in history had a bad lot in life, and most of them are great because of that lot. Need I remind you that Jesus was born in a manger?"*

God often asks us to trust Him, and I believe He asks this so much because I believe the number one factor that keeps people from adventurous living with God is fear. The reason so many of us miss out on all that God desires to offer us is the fear of facing struggles. Fear keeps people from living a risky, obedient life with God. So today, I want to give you the best case I can for why it is worth our intense effort to live beyond the fear factor.

I want us to walk away today and the following week with a very clear understanding on the high cost – a staggering high cost – of living with a mindset of fear, and that hopefully together we will learn to do whatever we need to do to live beyond fear because of this cost. The following are a list of some of the costs of living in fear...

Number One...living in a mindset of fear will eat away at your sense of self-worth. Fear will erode your ability to believe in your own value as someone made in the image of God. A very good psychological association published a book on self-esteem. They were looking at the following paradox: why is it there are so many people who have so many reasons to have a high sense of self worth living with self image issues?

People who have accomplished so many things, who are gifted, quite attractive, well liked, but yet struggle with their own sense of self worth, this in spite of all the positive feedback from other people. After a good amount of study and reviewing the research they discovered it boiled down, essentially to one issue, which is this, get this:

When you face a difficult situation, a fear producing situation, do you approach it? In other words do you take action and face it head on, or do you avoid it? Do you wimp out and run and hide, or square yourself firmly to face the situation? In other words what role does fear play in your life?

What they discovered is that when people take action, even though things may not turn out perfectly, you still end up with a surge of delight. *"I did a hard thing. I took on a difficult challenge. I faced a fear directly"* and in doing so you grow, with some very beneficial end results. You grow in character, you gain a sense of strength inside, of personhood, but when you avoid facing your fears, when you try to evade, even if things externally work out okay, inside you say, *"But the truth is, I wimped out. I did not do the hard thing. I took the easy path."*

Let me illustrate this to you in a small way, last summer I decided to build a walkout from my third level of our home. I have never built a walkout before, but there I was shovel in hand starting to dig. Trust me it was no small hole, 14 feet wide, 7 feet out and 4 feet deep...all by hand...hauling to the back lane...by the way don't try parking there anytime soon.

I admit countless times throughout this process I caught myself thinking, *"What have I done?"* Many times my wife asked me the very same question...*"Glenn what have you done?"* Now...my middle son, who has a tendency to take the safe route in life, asked me during the process...

"How do you know how to do all these things?" To which I simply replied, *"I don't...I just do it...and learn as I go."* It's been a mantra of mine since I was a child...countless times I could illustrate for you that if I was using common sense I should never have said "OK" or "Yes lets do it." Did they always work out? No. Have I grown? Definitely yes. Do I have more confidence now to take on the unknown? Absolutely.

In Bible College I avoided every speaking and Pastoral course they offered for the entire four years I was there. When I was asked in my very first year what my spiritual gifts were, sadly enough I couldn't tell them, but I was able to very confidently share with them what they were not, *"It's not speaking in public."* You see as a child I spoke Czech better than English, and as a result I was told early on *"you talk funny"*, and that had immediate consequences, because *"you talk funny"* was followed with, *"we don't want to play with you."*

Amazing what ruts can be created in childhood memories, but thankfully, my drive to try the unknown was stronger than my fear and so when a tiny church approached me after Bible College to preach, I said OK...and the rest is history.

It was the mindset I had when I had my children face the high ropes course at Camp Caroline at a very young age, an apparatus extending 20-30 feet in the air with countless opportunities to freak out. Was I being a cruel father, possibly, but what I really wanted them to experience was how when you face your fears, when you face a situation that creates fear, and you face it head on, you will feel a rush of satisfaction knowing that you displayed courage.

And the results were exactly that...both Kevin and Danielle at that age were terrified, no way were they going to do this, but by days end not only had they done it, but I had trouble getting them off the course.

When there's a hard decision to be made and nobody else is stepping up to the plate, and you step up and make the decision and claim responsibility, even if things don't all turn out great; when you take the initiative to have that difficult conversation with that boss, parent, child or spouse, even though it would be easier to shrink back; when you're wrestling with a pattern of sin or addictive behavior, and you take the courageous steps to bring it into the light, to talk about it with a trusted friend, when it would be so much easier to just keep it hidden; when you face difficulty head on, trust me...you'll feel great, and you will be better for it.

But more importantly something else occurs, inside you grow stronger. It took some persuasive encouragement to get my kids to climb those ropes for the first time, but after that, the benefits were a great payoff. You see had they never tried, had they given in to their fears, a pattern is being formed. It's the same mindset I use when I encourage them to face their friends they are fighting with, or a teacher who appears to be mean, to overcome the endless piles of homework and encourage them it is possible, to do the difficult things in life...like sharing their stories.

As humans we need to develop an inner core of strength and resolve and firmness, and not allow fear and anxiety and hollowness to exist. It was the same principles that my wife and I had to apply when our oldest, abandoned church, family and all those who loved him most and relied on drugs to be his source of satisfaction.

My wife and I celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary this fall, and I honestly could count on two hands the times we truly butted heads in any serious disagreements over those 25 years...but with most of those having to do with the fears and strategies in trying to deal with a child you no longer recognized...a fear that contributed to my decision to leave paid ministry. Fear my friends can be paralyzing.

If you live in fear and avoidance, then it doesn't matter if you're gifted or talented, and even if things externally turn out well, and even if you get quite good at eliciting a lot of praise from a lot of people, inside you will be incurring an internal debt that you'll pay off for the rest of your life. It's too high of a cost friend. Living in fear will erode your sense of worth as a person and make you feel hollow...and that's just the first cost.

The second cost of living with a mindset of fear is that you will experience stagnation in your life instead of growth. Here's the deal...if you live in fear, you will never experience or realize the potential God has placed in you since growth always involves risk, and risk always involves fear. Fear can be crippling. Fear keeps many of us from moving on, be it in our jobs, a ministry, relationships or any opportunity because we limit ourselves.

The truth is, for many people, unless we can have some ironclad guarantees that everything will work out just the way we want it to, we stall, we stagnate or procrastinate. Too many stories exist of people who find themselves at the end of their lives regretting they didn't follow their dreams. Yes they may have had very comfortable lives, but they never did what God possibly created them to do. We limit ourselves and find ourselves saying things like, *"I couldn't do that"*.

It was a common phrase I heard when we began the church plant Lifespring Community, and I had asked people to step up to the plate. *"Could you be on our drama team?" "I couldn't do that!" "Would you consider the following leadership position?" "I'm not a leader."* So let me ask you, what's the worst thing that could happen? You fail? But at least you will have tried, which I believe is better than living with the regret of never trying...and the coexisting consequences...a shrunken heart, unrealized potential, and patterns of fear being formed!

The third cost of living in fear is it will cost you your joy.

This actually is a staggering cost, living with the pain of constant chronic, low grade anxiety...not to mention the actual physical costs related to this type of living. One of the things that researchers have found is that most worriers tend to have a high capacity imagination. They are often people with a lot of creative potential and generally quite intelligent, but their imagination runs toward the negative...I'm sure you know a few people like this.

As well high capacity imaginative worriers tend to use the phrase, *"What if..."* a lot. *"What if I get in an accident and wreck the car?" "What if I make a mistake at work and lose my job?" "What if I give a bad*

message?" "What if..." These are all things that are contingent...they're all set in the future. They may never happen at all...and probably most of them won't. But when I live in a fear-filled mind, I give them the power to rob me of life now. A Japanese Proverb states, "*Fear is only as deep as the mind allows.*"

A healthy sense of perspective allows you to assign these events a realistic assessment that gives you the power to get on with your life. So what if you do wreck your car? Did you live to talk about it? PTL! Maybe now's the time to take advantage of all those insurance payments you have been paying...or start biking. What if you lose your job? Get a new one! So what if I give a bad message? I'm not your Pastor! (Kidding)

But when we live in fear, we lose this perspective, and the power of the "what if" becomes paralyzing. You go through life without joy because you are fundamentally incompatible. Have you ever seen a fearful, joyful person? They just don't co-exist...much too high of a price to pay.

A fourth cost of living with a mindset of fear will lead to a mountain of regret at the end of your life...for all the risks you never took, all the challenges you never embraced, all the times that God said to you, "*Come on, trust me*" and you said "no". You will be left with a mountain of regret...left with stories that could have been. God is challenging us to trust Him.

He says to Abraham, "Leave your home, go with your wife Sarah, and as a couple way past their childbearing years, I will give you a family, and you will become father of a nation that outnumbers the stars...but...you will have to leave behind everything you know and are comfortable with, and trust me." God tells Moses, "Go confront the most powerful man in the world. Tell him, 'Let my people go'. I am going to start a new community that's going to give hope to the world, and you'll be the beginning of that...but...you're going to have to trust me on this one."

God says to Daniel, "I want you to defy the King. I want you to pray even though there's a law against it. I want you to go to a lion's den, and I'm going to shut the mouths of the lions...but you really are going to have to trust me on this one."

Jesus said one day to a rich young ruler. "I want you to go and sell everything you have...all your riches. I want you to empty your whole portfolio and your bank accounts, and give it to the poor and bless their lives...then...come and follow me, and together we will do life...it will be an adventure of a lifetime...but you're going to have to trust me on this?"

And when people courageously, boldly stepped out in this trust, they never regretted it. You just don't find anybody in the Bible that says, "*I trusted God, and I'm, so sorry I did.*" But you did find those who turned the offer down, who said "no" like the rich young ruler. I wonder about him, I wonder if he lived to be an old man left wondering what could have been, possibly a heart that grew old, hard and cold would have caught on blazing fire. Maybe a spirit that became self-absorbed would have become generous. Maybe a life that got lonely would have been filled with love.

Maybe some of you are wondering what your life would have been like had you done this as a young man or woman.

Don't head for a mountain of regret one day, don't let all of those "what if's" that paralyzed you for so long become "might have beens". They're irretrievable. If you give into a mindset of fear, you will find yourself at the end of your life, comfortable maybe, filling up your days possibly, acquiring things or simply left watching television with reruns, but eventually a thought will arise, "What might have been?" What might have been if I'd have trusted God, what might I have done? What might have I become?

Finally one last cost. A mindset of fear is contagious. It's costly because it unwittingly gets passed from one generation to the next.

For parents this is the highest cost of all, because if you allow yourself, unchecked, to go through life with your hopes, your dreams, your callings, being impaired by distorted fears and worry, there's a very good chance that you will be limiting the hopes and dreams and callings of your children who you love. Because kids learn from their parents, and if you don't get a grip on this stuff, your children will learn from you that the only way to go through life is with anxiety and fear. You'll be passing on a legacy.

Listen to the following true case of an individual called Julie. Julie was raised in a house with very strict rules. All the furniture in her parent's home was covered with plastic, and Julie and her brother were not allowed in the living room, lest they broke something. Throughout her childhood, Julie was made to feel dirty. If she played outside or rode her bike for a few minutes, her mother marched her upstairs and made her take a bath.

It was not unusual for Julie to take two or three baths in one day. Her mother continually carped about Julie's appearance, about near-invisible specks and spots on her dress. And whenever she misbehaved, Julie's mother would say "You filthy little beast" or "You dirty little brat". It seemed that all of Julie's childhood revolved around staying clean but feeling dirty. Today, Julie is in her mid-forties. She has an immaculate home with beautiful furniture, all covered in plastic. She has strict rules for her family. She keeps the Dust buster handy to pick up any stray crumbs, lint, or flyspecks that may appear on the carpet or on her children.

Julie's husband is a workaholic who spends as much time away from home – and away from Julie – as possible. Even in her forties Julie takes as many as 2-3 baths a day. Her adult life, like her childhood, still revolves around staying clean but feeling dirty. Worst of all, she is passing her feelings of inferiority and contamination on to people around her – her husband, her withdrawn 9 year old son, and her rebellious, sexually active 14 year old daughter. She strives for immaculate perfection, but when she looks in the mirror, all she sees is flaws and filth...and the worst part of it all, is she doesn't even know what she is doing to her and her family, and she has no idea how she got that way.

So more often than God commands anything else, God commands "***Fear not***", and he doesn't leave it there, you need to understand this about Him and that is that God almost always gives a reason why you don't have to fear. God says, "***Fear not for...I am with you.***" "***Fear not for the Lord your God shall be with you.***" "***The Lord is my strength and my salvation, of whom shall I be afraid?***" "***In this world, you will have tribulation. I've overcome the world. Don't be afraid. Be of good cheer.***" "***Be courageous. Be strong.***"

This is right at the core of the gospel that Jesus proclaimed, what He came to live on this earth and to teach. Then He died on the cross and was resurrected again to ensure and guarantee for us forever – that by the free gift of grace – it is possible for you and me to live in the reality of the presence and power of God. That there is nothing – not loss, not failure, not rejection, not loneliness, not cancer, not sickness, not rebellious children nor death itself – there is nothing that has the power to separate you from the love and care of the father in the world, and in the world to come.

"***I'm with you***" God says. Now if that's really true what do you have to be afraid of? If that's really true, what could hold you back from trusting God with utter abandon?

An author by the name of Susan Jeffers says, "*The ultimate fear – underneath all our other fears of loneliness or rejection or failure or so on – the ultimate fear is 'I can't handle it. Something really bad is going to happen to me, and I won't be able to handle it.'*"

But what's the ultimate promise of God? ***There's nothing you and I can't handle together.***" I'm telling you friends, when people in Scripture or people today get a hold of this truth, it changes lives. Karl Menninger said, "*Fears are educated into us, and can if we wish be educated out.*"

The Apostle Paul grasped it and I believe demonstrated the best "*I can handle*" statement found in all of literature. Now here's the setting. Imagine if this was you...today.

You've lost your job, your isolated from your friends. You're living in a strange country where you don't know people. Jealous enemies have trashed your reputation. You've been arrested on trumped up charges. You've been physically beaten, put in jail. You don't know if you'll ever get out of jail. You might be put to death, maybe tomorrow. Do you think you might be tempted to worry? Anybody?

This is what Paul writes from precisely that scenario, sitting in a jail cell, not knowing if he's going to survive another day. He says, "***I can handle anything through Christ who gives me strength.***" This is the promise of God: "So can you" Can you imagine going through life this way? Can you imagine what it

would be like to wake up in the morning and just let your day unfold, one event to the next, sometimes real good things, sometimes real bad things.

To go through the day with the one thought that you breathe in and out all day long, and *that is that "I can handle anything through Christ who gives me strength."*

That's God's will for you. Deeper than that, the Bible says *"It's simply truth."* So we need to devote ourselves to learn to live like this. Next week were going to look at the single most important principle that I know for turning fear into faith. Make the decision starting today that whatever I do, whatever things I need to learn, whatever I need to put into practice I will pay the price because I will not be ruled by fear. I've lived in fear to long and I no longer will live that way.

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Thank you for the opportunity to share with you for the next couple of weeks, my family and I have been attending now for the past eight months and have come to appreciate the ministry God is doing here. I was raised in the NAB conference; my family actually was part of a church plant in Winnipeg MB, Fort Richmond Baptist. I was Associate Pastor at Thornhill Baptist here in Calgary for 9 years, and a church planter for 7 years at Lifespring Community. For the last three years I took on a position that even required more time on my knees than Pastoring, floor installer!

So let me begin this morning by asking you a question... what do you think is the most common command found in Scripture? In other words what is it that God asks or expects most from us? Now according to a few conversations I have had with people over the years, you would assume it was "Thou shalt have no fun?" Now I'm not quite sure where they picked this up, but it surely wasn't from watching my life, but for those of us who know a little better, we might assume something more along the lines of, "Be more loving", a good idea, in fact right at the core of God's will for humanity, but...not the most frequent request.

A lot of the biblical authors write about our struggle with pride, how this seems to be at the heart of human fallenness, but yet the most common command doesn't have to do with fighting pride or cultivating humility. In fact it's not about sexual integrity or walking in the truth, although these are real important things, but the most common command given in all of Scripture is summed up in two words: "**Fear Not**" with countless related commands like, "**Don't be afraid**", "**Be strong and courageous**" and "**You can trust Me**".

Now we know fear itself is a universal deal, who in their lifetime hasn't experienced this emotion at some moment, especially these days...anyone looking at traveling to Mexico? If you haven't heard a unique strain of the swine flu, never seen before, has appeared killing dozens with no known vaccine to protect against it, Mexico City is shutting down...specialists fearing this could lead to a global pandemic. The most notorious flu pandemic was thought to have killed at least 40 million people worldwide in 1918-19.

More great news for a world gripped in a recession, tensions building in the Middle East and Nuclear threat becoming a reality again with the likes of Iran wanting to go nuclear. If we could monitor global fears, I'm pretty sure we would record some of histories highest scores. We live in fear filled days for countless millions of people...Google the word "fear" and just watch the response...fear is real, and it is having some powerful effects. In fact I just read about another high profile CEO for Freddie Mac who committed suicide, adding to the countless others in the past months that gave in to their fears...and ended their lives. Fear is a powerful reality!

In fact according to one author, he wrote. "*The most powerful forces known to man are not nuclear weapons, nor nature's awesome wonders, such as the might of an earthquake, the power of the sun, or mastery of a hurricane, but the thoughts and ideas of the mind*" with many, as we have seen, of those powerful thoughts or ideas being closely related to fear, anxiety, concerns, worries and even dread.

We will all wrestle with this one guaranteed, because were all born with a set of instinctive fears, fears that reality shows and writers of horror flicks prey upon. The fear of falling, the dark, slimy creatures, bugs, speaking in public, heights, the first day of school or first dates, or even the fear of the words, "*Some assembly required.*"

Now we do recognize that not all fear is bad. There exists a kind of fear that helps us survive as a human race, a fear that teaches us to respect appropriate boundaries. Good fear alerts us to real dangers...this good kind of fear keeps kids from touching hot stoves, (well for the second time anyways), or walking into a busy intersection, or trying to pet the cute wild bear that has just wondered into your campsite, an event that actually happened to me as a child.

I was visiting a campsite here in Alberta, on holidays from Winnipeg and ran across a mother bear with two cubs. It was here that an appropriate fear was applied, a good fear, a God given hard wired fear that if heeded by humanity has the ability to prolong the average age of the human race. You see not all fears

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Just take the widespread fear of terrorism for example; the level of fear related to this is way out of proportion to the actual danger. Your risk of dying in a plausible terrorist attack is actually much lower than your risk of dying in a car accident, by walking across the street, by drowning, by falling, or even by being murdered, but according to certain news agencies you would never know that, because lets face it, any good news agency realizes stories about suitcase bombs are considerably more interesting than seatbelts.

Now...both fears are real, both exist, good and bad...and just to make sure that distinction is real clear in your minds, I want to give you a little quiz. I'll run through a few scenarios and you tell me if the type of fear I describe is good fear or bad fear. First of all, the fear that keeps children from playing in the middle of the Deerfoot – good fear or bad fear? The fear that keeps you from interviewing for you're all time dream job – good or bad fear?

How about the fear that keeps you from expressing your deepest, truest feelings to the law enforcement officer who stopped you for speeding even though there are people going much faster than you on the road that he could have stopped? Good fear or bad?

As stated there exits good fears, but for the most part, I believe the number of commands related to fear in the Bible suggests that fear, as its most commonly experienced by the human race, is not a good thing, that time after time it threatens to keep people from trusting and obeying God.

An article I read from a lady whose daughter fell into drug abuse; I believe summarizes the two mindsets that exist when it comes to the possibilities left open to the human race when confronted with this kind of fear. In her own words, *"...our daughter returned home, and a drug/alcohol assessment revealed the beginning stages of an addiction...after the disbelief and 'why me's' subsided, I realized I had to choose faith or fear."*

This lady has nailed it on the head...when fear is confronted two mindsets exist, one is based on faith, where you can trust God that His goodness and power are sufficient for your life, and you can live with a sense of relaxed confidence in Him, which is the mindset of faith, or I can live in a mindset of fear, that believes, "I'm on my own." That believes unless I'm real careful and cautious something really bad will happen to me, and I might not be able to handle it.

You see the illusion that we human beings often have is that, *"It's the circumstances I face, the difficult situation that I'm in that produces fear in me."* But I believe Scriptures tell another story, over and over again in the Bible, two different sets of people will face the same situation and come up with real different responses.

Bob Walther last week alluded to the 12 scouts sent out by Moses to explore the Promised Land. Ten of them come back and say, **"Yeah, the land is great, but the enemies, those who defy God, are so**

powerful that we will never be able to overcome them, so we can't trust God on this one Moses...let's go home!"

But yet, two of the scouts, Joshua and Caleb, who were with these other ten, looking at the same land, seeing the same enemies, end up replying, ***"We should go to the Promised Land, for certainly we will be able to possess it with God's help."***

A young shepherd boy named David brought supplies to his brothers who were serving in the army. Upon arriving he sees what they all see; the great champion of the enemies of the people of God, named Goliath. Goliath is a character right out of the WWF. Day after day he would come out and mock Israel and God before the entire Jewish army, who I might add are terrified to do anything about it, but David sees him and goes after him with limited resources...a slingshot and a few small stones...the same enemy.

Jesus and His disciples are in a boat one day and this storm arises. The disciples are so scared they start screaming in panic...Jesus, who I might add is in the same boat, facing the same storm is doing what...sleeping. In all these various scenarios, and countless others like them, two sets of people face exactly the same situation...they scout the same lands, square off against the same enemies, encounter exactly the same situation...some respond with peace and others with panic.

So what exactly is the difference? It's not the situation. It's not the circumstances. It's the mindset...and if I had to put it in a single word, it would be the word "perspective."

The most important factor of whether you live in fear or in faith is your perspective. Your perspective makes or breaks it! It makes all the difference, because it will determine how we respond to things. Perspective is a sense of proportion. It's the ability to sort out what's a big deal and what's not. An unhealthy fear is the product of an off-kilter sense of perspective. If you truly believe the world is out to get you, I guarantee you your choices will reflect that.

Just look back at the world following September 11's terrorist attacks...do you think our perspective changed? Do you think the pendulum swung in another direction when it came to precaution? How about investing these days, are you stepping out on the limb for a few financial risk opportunities, any large financial purchases lately...or has your perspective changed since 8 months ago? Now...not that we shouldn't be careful and precautions, but to what degree? Even in our caution we can overreact and live out of fear versus faith.

The single most common command in the entire Bible is the command not to live that way, but rather to live in the mindset of faith, not a mindset of fear. So the question I want to spend a little time on this morning is "Why?" Why out of all the direction that human beings need, why is the call to not fear, number one? And to add a little perspective to this question, have you ever noticed in the Bible that when God does tell somebody "to not fear", very rarely is He doing it just to spare them anxiety. God usually doesn't say this just to soothe the individual.

Generally, God asks people to take some very risky and adventurous steps that normally they may not have even previously considered. He calls people to acts of extraordinary obedience, to risky faith, and generally it all comes down to this: *"Will they go with their fears or will they go with their faith?"*

I loved what Glen Beck writes in his book, "An Inconvenient Book" towards those who believe that simply avoiding difficulties in life is the answer, *"If we continue to shelter our kids the way we do, we'll have a generation of adults who can't handle the financial, emotional, and political struggles of everyday life. It's the struggle that makes us strong. If we understand up front that everything isn't going to be handed to us, that struggle becomes a blessing. Many of the greatest people in history had a bad lot in life, and most of them are great because of that lot. Need I remind you that Jesus was born in a manger?"*

God often asks us to trust Him, and I believe He asks this so much because I believe the number one factor that keeps people from adventurous living with God is fear. The reason so many of us miss out on all that God desires to offer us is the fear of facing struggles. Fear keeps people from living a risky, obedient life with God. So today, I want to give you the best case I can for why it is worth our intense effort to live beyond the fear factor.

I want us to walk away today and the following week with a very clear understanding on the high cost – a staggering high cost – of living with a mindset of fear, and that hopefully together we will learn to do whatever we need to do to live beyond fear because of this cost. The following are a list of some of the costs of living in fear...

Number One...living in a mindset of fear will eat away at your sense of self-worth. Fear will erode your ability to believe in your own value as someone made in the image of God. A very good psychological association published a book on self-esteem. They were looking at the following paradox: why is it there are so many people who have so many reasons to have a high sense of self worth living with self image issues?

People who have accomplished so many things, who are gifted, quite attractive, well liked, but yet struggle with their own sense of self worth, this in spite of all the positive feedback from other people. After a good amount of study and reviewing the research they discovered it boiled down, essentially to one issue, which is this, get this:

When you face a difficult situation, a fear producing situation, do you approach it? In other words do you take action and face it head on, or do you avoid it? Do you wimp out and run and hide, or square yourself firmly to face the situation? In other words what role does fear play in your life?

What they discovered is that when people take action, even though things may not turn out perfectly, you still end up with a surge of delight. *"I did a hard thing. I took on a difficult challenge. I faced a fear directly"* and in doing so you grow, with some very beneficial end results. You grow in character, you gain a sense of strength inside, of personhood, but when you avoid facing your fears, when you try to evade, even if things externally work out okay, inside you say, *"But the truth is, I wimped out. I did not do the hard thing. I took the easy path."*

Let me illustrate this to you in a small way, last summer I decided to build a walkout from my third level of our home. I have never built a walkout before, but there I was shovel in hand starting to dig. Trust me it was no small hole, 14 feet wide, 7 feet out and 4 feet deep...all by hand...hauling to the back lane...by the way don't try parking there anytime soon.

I admit countless times throughout this process I caught myself thinking, *"What have I done?"* Many times my wife asked me the very same question...*"Glenn what have you done?"* Now...my middle son, who has a tendency to take the safe route in life, asked me during the process...

"How do you know how to do all these things?" To which I simply replied, *"I don't...I just do it...and learn as I go."* It's been a mantra of mine since I was a child...countless times I could illustrate for you that if I was using common sense I should never have said "OK" or "Yes lets do it." Did they always work out? No. Have I grown? Definitely yes. Do I have more confidence now to take on the unknown? Absolutely.

In Bible College I avoided every speaking and Pastoral course they offered for the entire four years I was there. When I was asked in my very first year what my spiritual gifts were, sadly enough I couldn't tell them, but I was able to very confidently share with them what they were not, *"It's not speaking in public."* You see as a child I spoke Czech better than English, and as a result I was told early on *"you talk funny"*, and that had immediate consequences, because *"you talk funny"* was followed with, *"we don't want to play with you."*

Amazing what ruts can be created in childhood memories, but thankfully, my drive to try the unknown was stronger than my fear and so when a tiny church approached me after Bible College to preach, I said OK...and the rest is history.

It was the mindset I had when I had my children face the high ropes course at Camp Caroline at a very young age, an apparatus extending 20-30 feet in the air with countless opportunities to freak out. Was I being a cruel father, possibly, but what I really wanted them to experience was how when you face your fears, when you face a situation that creates fear, and you face it head on, you will feel a rush of satisfaction knowing that you displayed courage.

And the results were exactly that...both Kevin and Danielle at that age were terrified, no way were they going to do this, but by days end not only had they done it, but I had trouble getting them off the course.

When there's a hard decision to be made and nobody else is stepping up to the plate, and you step up and make the decision and claim responsibility, even if things don't all turn out great; when you take the initiative to have that difficult conversation with that boss, parent, child or spouse, even though it would be easier to shrink back; when you're wrestling with a pattern of sin or addictive behavior, and you take the courageous steps to bring it into the light, to talk about it with a trusted friend, when it would be so much easier to just keep it hidden; when you face difficulty head on, trust me...you'll feel great, and you will be better for it.

But more importantly something else occurs, inside you grow stronger. It took some persuasive encouragement to get my kids to climb those ropes for the first time, but after that, the benefits were a great payoff. You see had they never tried, had they given in to their fears, a pattern is being formed. It's the same mindset I use when I encourage them to face their friends they are fighting with, or a teacher who appears to be mean, to overcome the endless piles of homework and encourage them it is possible, to do the difficult things in life...like sharing their stories.

As humans we need to develop an inner core of strength and resolve and firmness, and not allow fear and anxiety and hollowness to exist. It was the same principles that my wife and I had to apply when our oldest, abandoned church, family and all those who loved him most and relied on drugs to be his source of satisfaction.

My wife and I celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary this fall, and I honestly could count on two hands the times we truly butted heads in any serious disagreements over those 25 years...but with most of those having to do with the fears and strategies in trying to deal with a child you no longer recognized...a fear that contributed to my decision to leave paid ministry. Fear my friends can be paralyzing.

If you live in fear and avoidance, then it doesn't matter if you're gifted or talented, and even if things externally turn out well, and even if you get quite good at eliciting a lot of praise from a lot of people, inside you will be incurring an internal debt that you'll pay off for the rest of your life. It's too high of a cost friend. Living in fear will erode your sense of worth as a person and make you feel hollow...and that's just the first cost.

The second cost of living with a mindset of fear is that you will experience stagnation in your life instead of growth. Here's the deal...if you live in fear, you will never experience or realize the potential God has placed in you since growth always involves risk, and risk always involves fear. Fear can be crippling. Fear keeps many of us from moving on, be it in our jobs, a ministry, relationships or any opportunity because we limit ourselves.

The truth is, for many people, unless we can have some ironclad guarantees that everything will work out just the way we want it to, we stall, we stagnate or procrastinate. Too many stories exist of people who find themselves at the end of their lives regretting they didn't follow their dreams. Yes they may have had very comfortable lives, but they never did what God possibly created them to do. We limit ourselves and find ourselves saying things like, "*I couldn't do that*".

It was a common phrase I heard when we began the church plant Lifespring Community, and I had asked people to step up to the plate. "*Could you be on our drama team?*" "*I couldn't do that!*" "*Would you consider the following leadership position?*" "*I'm not a leader.*" So let me ask you, what's the worst thing that could happen? You fail? But at least you will have tried, which I believe is better than living with the regret of never trying...and the coexisting consequences...a shrunken heart, unrealized potential, and patterns of fear being formed!

The third cost of living in fear is it will cost you your joy.

This actually is a staggering cost, living with the pain of constant chronic, low grade anxiety...not to mention the actual physical costs related to this type of living. One of the things that researchers have found is that most worriers tend to have a high capacity imagination. They are often people with a lot of creative potential and generally quite intelligent, but their imagination runs toward the negative...I'm sure you know a few people like this.

As well high capacity imaginative worriers tend to use the phrase, "*What if...*" a lot. "*What if I get in an accident and wreck the car?*" "*What if I make a mistake at work and lose my job?*" "*What if I give a bad*

message?" "What if..." These are all things that are contingent...they're all set in the future. They may never happen at all...and probably most of them won't. But when I live in a fear-filled mind, I give them the power to rob me of life now. A Japanese Proverb states, "*Fear is only as deep as the mind allows.*"

A healthy sense of perspective allows you to assign these events a realistic assessment that gives you the power to get on with your life. So what if you do wreck your car? Did you live to talk about it? PTL! Maybe now's the time to take advantage of all those insurance payments you have been paying...or start biking. What if you lose your job? Get a new one! So what if I give a bad message? I'm not your Pastor! (Kidding)

But when we live in fear, we lose this perspective, and the power of the "what if" becomes paralyzing. You go through life without joy because you are fundamentally incompatible. Have you ever seen a fearful, joyful person? They just don't co-exist...much too high of a price to pay.

A fourth cost of living with a mindset of fear will lead to a mountain of regret at the end of your life...for all the risks you never took, all the challenges you never embraced, all the times that God said to you, "*Come on, trust me*" and you said "no". You will be left with a mountain of regret...left with stories that could have been. God is challenging us to trust Him.

He says to Abraham, "Leave your home, go with your wife Sarah, and as a couple way past their childbearing years, I will give you a family, and you will become father of a nation that outnumbers the stars...but...you will have to leave behind everything you know and are comfortable with, and trust me." God tells Moses, "Go confront the most powerful man in the world. Tell him, 'Let my people go'. I am going to start a new community that's going to give hope to the world, and you'll be the beginning of that...but...you're going to have to trust me on this one."

God says to Daniel, "I want you to defy the King. I want you to pray even though there's a law against it. I want you to go to a lion's den, and I'm going to shut the mouths of the lions...but you really are going to have to trust me on this one."

Jesus said one day to a rich young ruler. "I want you to go and sell everything you have...all your riches. I want you to empty your whole portfolio and your bank accounts, and give it to the poor and bless their lives...then...come and follow me, and together we will do life...it will be an adventure of a lifetime...but you're going to have to trust me on this?"

And when people courageously, boldly stepped out in this trust, they never regretted it. You just don't find anybody in the Bible that says, "*I trusted God, and I'm, so sorry I did.*" But you did find those who turned the offer down, who said "no" like the rich young ruler. I wonder about him, I wonder if he lived to be an old man left wondering what could have been, possibly a heart that grew old, hard and cold would have caught on blazing fire. Maybe a spirit that became self-absorbed would have become generous. Maybe a life that got lonely would have been filled with love.

Maybe some of you are wondering what your life would have been like had you done this as a young man or woman.

Don't head for a mountain of regret one day, don't let all of those "what if's" that paralyzed you for so long become "might have beens". They're irretrievable. If you give into a mindset of fear, you will find yourself at the end of your life, comfortable maybe, filling up your days possibly, acquiring things or simply left watching television with reruns, but eventually a thought will arise, "What might have been?" What might have been if I'd have trusted God, what might I have done? What might have I become?

Finally one last cost. A mindset of fear is contagious. It's costly because it unwittingly gets passed from one generation to the next.

For parents this is the highest cost of all, because if you allow yourself, unchecked, to go through life with your hopes, your dreams, your callings, being impaired by distorted fears and worry, there's a very good chance that you will be limiting the hopes and dreams and callings of your children who you love. Because kids learn from their parents, and if you don't get a grip on this stuff, your children will learn from you that the only way to go through life is with anxiety and fear. You'll be passing on a legacy.

Listen to the following true case of an individual called Julie. Julie was raised in a house with very strict rules. All the furniture in her parent's home was covered with plastic, and Julie and her brother were not allowed in the living room, lest they broke something. Throughout her childhood, Julie was made to feel dirty. If she played outside or rode her bike for a few minutes, her mother marched her upstairs and made her take a bath.

It was not unusual for Julie to take two or three baths in one day. Her mother continually carped about Julie's appearance, about near-invisible specks and spots on her dress. And whenever she misbehaved, Julie's mother would say "You filthy little beast" or "You dirty little brat". It seemed that all of Julie's childhood revolved around staying clean but feeling dirty. Today, Julie is in her mid-forties. She has an immaculate home with beautiful furniture, all covered in plastic. She has strict rules for her family. She keeps the Dust buster handy to pick up any stray crumbs, lint, or flyspecks that may appear on the carpet or on her children.

Julie's husband is a workaholic who spends as much time away from home – and away from Julie – as possible. Even in her forties Julie takes as many as 2-3 baths a day. Her adult life, like her childhood, still revolves around staying clean but feeling dirty. Worst of all, she is passing her feelings of inferiority and contamination on to people around her – her husband, her withdrawn 9 year old son, and her rebellious, sexually active 14 year old daughter. She strives for immaculate perfection, but when she looks in the mirror, all she sees is flaws and filth...and the worst part of it all, is she doesn't even know what she is doing to her and her family, and she has no idea how she got that way.

So more often than God commands anything else, God commands "***Fear not***", and he doesn't leave it there, you need to understand this about Him and that is that God almost always gives a reason why you don't have to fear. God says, "***Fear not for...I am with you.***" "***Fear not for the Lord your God shall be with you.***" "***The Lord is my strength and my salvation, of whom shall I be afraid?***" "***In this world, you will have tribulation. I've overcome the world. Don't be afraid. Be of good cheer.***" "***Be courageous. Be strong.***"

This is right at the core of the gospel that Jesus proclaimed, what He came to live on this earth and to teach. Then He died on the cross and was resurrected again to ensure and guarantee for us forever – that by the free gift of grace – it is possible for you and me to live in the reality of the presence and power of God. That there is nothing – not loss, not failure, not rejection, not loneliness, not cancer, not sickness, not rebellious children nor death itself – there is nothing that has the power to separate you from the love and care of the father in the world, and in the world to come.

"***I'm with you***" God says. Now if that's really true what do you have to be afraid of? If that's really true, what could hold you back from trusting God with utter abandon?

An author by the name of Susan Jeffers says, "*The ultimate fear – underneath all our other fears of loneliness or rejection or failure or so on – the ultimate fear is 'I can't handle it. Something really bad is going to happen to me, and I won't be able to handle it.'*"

But what's the ultimate promise of God? ***There's nothing you and I can't handle together.***" I'm telling you friends, when people in Scripture or people today get a hold of this truth, it changes lives. Karl Menninger said, "*Fears are educated into us, and can if we wish be educated out.*"

The Apostle Paul grasped it and I believe demonstrated the best "*I can handle*" statement found in all of literature. Now here's the setting. Imagine if this was you...today.

You've lost your job, your isolated from your friends. You're living in a strange country where you don't know people. Jealous enemies have trashed your reputation. You've been arrested on trumped up charges. You've been physically beaten, put in jail. You don't know if you'll ever get out of jail. You might be put to death, maybe tomorrow. Do you think you might be tempted to worry? Anybody?

This is what Paul writes from precisely that scenario, sitting in a jail cell, not knowing if he's going to survive another day. He says, "***I can handle anything through Christ who gives me strength.***" This is the promise of God: "So can you" Can you imagine going through life this way? Can you imagine what it

would be like to wake up in the morning and just let your day unfold, one event to the next, sometimes real good things, sometimes real bad things.

To go through the day with the one thought that you breathe in and out all day long, and *that is that "I can handle anything through Christ who gives me strength."*

That's God's will for you. Deeper than that, the Bible says *"It's simply truth."* So we need to devote ourselves to learn to live like this. Next week were going to look at the single most important principle that I know for turning fear into faith. Make the decision starting today that whatever I do, whatever things I need to learn, whatever I need to put into practice I will pay the price because I will not be ruled by fear. I've lived in fear to long and I no longer will live that way.

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Thank you for the opportunity to share with you for the next couple of weeks, my family and I have been attending now for the past eight months and have come to appreciate the ministry God is doing here. I was raised in the NAB conference; my family actually was part of a church plant in Winnipeg MB, Fort Richmond Baptist. I was Associate Pastor at Thornhill Baptist here in Calgary for 9 years, and a church planter for 7 years at Lifespring Community. For the last three years I took on a position that even required more time on my knees than Pastoring, floor installer!

So let me begin this morning by asking you a question... what do you think is the most common command found in Scripture? In other words what is it that God asks or expects most from us? Now according to a few conversations I have had with people over the years, you would assume it was "Thou shalt have no fun?" Now I'm not quite sure where they picked this up, but it surely wasn't from watching my life, but for those of us who know a little better, we might assume something more along the lines of, "Be more loving", a good idea, in fact right at the core of God's will for humanity, but...not the most frequent request.

A lot of the biblical authors write about our struggle with pride, how this seems to be at the heart of human fallenness, but yet the most common command doesn't have to do with fighting pride or cultivating humility. In fact it's not about sexual integrity or walking in the truth, although these are real important things, but the most common command given in all of Scripture is summed up in two words: "**Fear Not**" with countless related commands like, "**Don't be afraid**", "**Be strong and courageous**" and "**You can trust Me**".

Now we know fear itself is a universal deal, who in their lifetime hasn't experienced this emotion at some moment, especially these days...anyone looking at traveling to Mexico? If you haven't heard a unique strain of the swine flu, never seen before, has appeared killing dozens with no known vaccine to protect against it, Mexico City is shutting down...specialists fearing this could lead to a global pandemic. The most notorious flu pandemic was thought to have killed at least 40 million people worldwide in 1918-19.

More great news for a world gripped in a recession, tensions building in the Middle East and Nuclear threat becoming a reality again with the likes of Iran wanting to go nuclear. If we could monitor global fears, I'm pretty sure we would record some of histories highest scores. We live in fear filled days for countless millions of people...Google the word "fear" and just watch the response...fear is real, and it is having some powerful effects. In fact I just read about another high profile CEO for Freddie Mac who committed suicide, adding to the countless others in the past months that gave in to their fears...and ended their lives. Fear is a powerful reality!

In fact according to one author, he wrote. "*The most powerful forces known to man are not nuclear weapons, nor nature's awesome wonders, such as the might of an earthquake, the power of the sun, or mastery of a hurricane, but the thoughts and ideas of the mind*" with many, as we have seen, of those powerful thoughts or ideas being closely related to fear, anxiety, concerns, worries and even dread.

We will all wrestle with this one guaranteed, because were all born with a set of instinctive fears, fears that reality shows and writers of horror flicks prey upon. The fear of falling, the dark, slimy creatures, bugs, speaking in public, heights, the first day of school or first dates, or even the fear of the words, "*Some assembly required.*"

Now we do recognize that not all fear is bad. There exists a kind of fear that helps us survive as a human race, a fear that teaches us to respect appropriate boundaries. Good fear alerts us to real dangers...this good kind of fear keeps kids from touching hot stoves, (well for the second time anyways), or walking into a busy intersection, or trying to pet the cute wild bear that has just wondered into your campsite, an event that actually happened to me as a child.

I was visiting a campsite here in Alberta, on holidays from Winnipeg and ran across a mother bear with two cubs. It was here that an appropriate fear was applied, a good fear, a God given hard wired fear that if heeded by humanity has the ability to prolong the average age of the human race. You see not all fears

are bad! In fact people at times like to be scared, that's why we have scary movies, roller coasters, bungee jumping, and the ride I almost lost it on, on the Vegas Stratosphere.

We like to be afraid; it's one of those vivid emotions that get our blood flowing, but the downside is that fear has a great capacity to cloud our judgment, our fear radar tunes into things that have slim to no chance of ever happening, and when this happens we are experiencing bad fears. You see bad fears paralyze us from doing what we ought to do; it is a kind of distorted fear, exaggerated, and typically out of touch with reality, a chronic sense of worry or anxiety...anyone hear know what I'm talking about?

Take for example what one medical doctor wrote by the name of Marc Siegel...*"A 50-year-old asthmatic patient who came to my office recently asked for Tamiflu as a protection against bird flu. "Bird flu may get us all this year," he wheezed anxiously. "There is no bird flu here," I said, to which he writes... The greatest problem among my patients right now isn't bird flu; it is fear of bird flu. The greatest risk of an epidemic is of a fear epidemic. This is how fear works, how the fear epidemic — as opposed to a flu pandemic — spreads. Fear is supposed to be our warning system against imminent dangers, but as a deep-rooted emotion, it interferes with our ability to make sound judgments. And if anything is contagious right now, it's judgment clouded by fear."* Marcus Aurelius wrote. *"If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself, but to your estimate of it; and this you have the power to revoke at any moment."*

Just take the widespread fear of terrorism for example; the level of fear related to this is way out of proportion to the actual danger. Your risk of dying in a plausible terrorist attack is actually much lower than your risk of dying in a car accident, by walking across the street, by drowning, by falling, or even by being murdered, but according to certain news agencies you would never know that, because lets face it, any good news agency realizes stories about suitcase bombs are considerably more interesting than seatbelts.

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How about the fear that keeps you from expressing your deepest, truest feelings to the law enforcement officer who stopped you for speeding even though there are people going much faster than you on the road that he could have stopped? Good fear or bad?

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This lady has nailed it on the head...when fear is confronted two mindsets exist, one is based on faith, where you can trust God that His goodness and power are sufficient for your life, and you can live with a sense of relaxed confidence in Him, which is the mindset of faith, or I can live in a mindset of fear, that believes, "I'm on my own." That believes unless I'm real careful and cautious something really bad will happen to me, and I might not be able to handle it.

You see the illusion that we human beings often have is that, *"It's the circumstances I face, the difficult situation that I'm in that produces fear in me."* But I believe Scriptures tell another story, over and over again in the Bible, two different sets of people will face the same situation and come up with real different responses.

Bob Walther last week alluded to the 12 scouts sent out by Moses to explore the Promised Land. Ten of them come back and say, **"Yeah, the land is great, but the enemies, those who defy God, are so**

powerful that we will never be able to overcome them, so we can't trust God on this one Moses...let's go home!"

But yet, two of the scouts, Joshua and Caleb, who were with these other ten, looking at the same land, seeing the same enemies, end up replying, ***"We should go to the Promised Land, for certainly we will be able to possess it with God's help."***

A young shepherd boy named David brought supplies to his brothers who were serving in the army. Upon arriving he sees what they all see; the great champion of the enemies of the people of God, named Goliath. Goliath is a character right out of the WWF. Day after day he would come out and mock Israel and God before the entire Jewish army, who I might add are terrified to do anything about it, but David sees him and goes after him with limited resources...a slingshot and a few small stones...the same enemy.

Jesus and His disciples are in a boat one day and this storm arises. The disciples are so scared they start screaming in panic...Jesus, who I might add is in the same boat, facing the same storm is doing what...sleeping. In all these various scenarios, and countless others like them, two sets of people face exactly the same situation...they scout the same lands, square off against the same enemies, encounter exactly the same situation...some respond with peace and others with panic.

So what exactly is the difference? It's not the situation. It's not the circumstances. It's the mindset...and if I had to put it in a single word, it would be the word "perspective."

The most important factor of whether you live in fear or in faith is your perspective. Your perspective makes or breaks it! It makes all the difference, because it will determine how we respond to things. Perspective is a sense of proportion. It's the ability to sort out what's a big deal and what's not. An unhealthy fear is the product of an off-kilter sense of perspective. If you truly believe the world is out to get you, I guarantee you your choices will reflect that.

Just look back at the world following September 11's terrorist attacks...do you think our perspective changed? Do you think the pendulum swung in another direction when it came to precaution? How about investing these days, are you stepping out on the limb for a few financial risk opportunities, any large financial purchases lately...or has your perspective changed since 8 months ago? Now...not that we shouldn't be careful and precautions, but to what degree? Even in our caution we can overreact and live out of fear versus faith.

The single most common command in the entire Bible is the command not to live that way, but rather to live in the mindset of faith, not a mindset of fear. So the question I want to spend a little time on this morning is "Why?" Why out of all the direction that human beings need, why is the call to not fear, number one? And to add a little perspective to this question, have you ever noticed in the Bible that when God does tell somebody "to not fear", very rarely is He doing it just to spare them anxiety. God usually doesn't say this just to soothe the individual.

Generally, God asks people to take some very risky and adventurous steps that normally they may not have even previously considered. He calls people to acts of extraordinary obedience, to risky faith, and generally it all comes down to this: *"Will they go with their fears or will they go with their faith?"*

I loved what Glen Beck writes in his book, "An Inconvenient Book" towards those who believe that simply avoiding difficulties in life is the answer, *"If we continue to shelter our kids the way we do, we'll have a generation of adults who can't handle the financial, emotional, and political struggles of everyday life. It's the struggle that makes us strong. If we understand up front that everything isn't going to be handed to us, that struggle becomes a blessing. Many of the greatest people in history had a bad lot in life, and most of them are great because of that lot. Need I remind you that Jesus was born in a manger?"*

God often asks us to trust Him, and I believe He asks this so much because I believe the number one factor that keeps people from adventurous living with God is fear. The reason so many of us miss out on all that God desires to offer us is the fear of facing struggles. Fear keeps people from living a risky, obedient life with God. So today, I want to give you the best case I can for why it is worth our intense effort to live beyond the fear factor.

I want us to walk away today and the following week with a very clear understanding on the high cost – a staggering high cost – of living with a mindset of fear, and that hopefully together we will learn to do whatever we need to do to live beyond fear because of this cost. The following are a list of some of the costs of living in fear...

Number One...living in a mindset of fear will eat away at your sense of self-worth. Fear will erode your ability to believe in your own value as someone made in the image of God. A very good psychological association published a book on self-esteem. They were looking at the following paradox: why is it there are so many people who have so many reasons to have a high sense of self worth living with self image issues?

People who have accomplished so many things, who are gifted, quite attractive, well liked, but yet struggle with their own sense of self worth, this in spite of all the positive feedback from other people. After a good amount of study and reviewing the research they discovered it boiled down, essentially to one issue, which is this, get this:

When you face a difficult situation, a fear producing situation, do you approach it? In other words do you take action and face it head on, or do you avoid it? Do you wimp out and run and hide, or square yourself firmly to face the situation? In other words what role does fear play in your life?

What they discovered is that when people take action, even though things may not turn out perfectly, you still end up with a surge of delight. *"I did a hard thing. I took on a difficult challenge. I faced a fear directly"* and in doing so you grow, with some very beneficial end results. You grow in character, you gain a sense of strength inside, of personhood, but when you avoid facing your fears, when you try to evade, even if things externally work out okay, inside you say, *"But the truth is, I wimped out. I did not do the hard thing. I took the easy path."*

Let me illustrate this to you in a small way, last summer I decided to build a walkout from my third level of our home. I have never built a walkout before, but there I was shovel in hand starting to dig. Trust me it was no small hole, 14 feet wide, 7 feet out and 4 feet deep...all by hand...hauling to the back lane...by the way don't try parking there anytime soon.

I admit countless times throughout this process I caught myself thinking, *"What have I done?"* Many times my wife asked me the very same question...*"Glenn what have you done?"* Now...my middle son, who has a tendency to take the safe route in life, asked me during the process...

"How do you know how to do all these things?" To which I simply replied, *"I don't...I just do it...and learn as I go."* It's been a mantra of mine since I was a child...countless times I could illustrate for you that if I was using common sense I should never have said "OK" or "Yes lets do it." Did they always work out? No. Have I grown? Definitely yes. Do I have more confidence now to take on the unknown? Absolutely.

In Bible College I avoided every speaking and Pastoral course they offered for the entire four years I was there. When I was asked in my very first year what my spiritual gifts were, sadly enough I couldn't tell them, but I was able to very confidently share with them what they were not, *"It's not speaking in public."* You see as a child I spoke Czech better than English, and as a result I was told early on *"you talk funny"*, and that had immediate consequences, because *"you talk funny"* was followed with, *"we don't want to play with you."*

Amazing what ruts can be created in childhood memories, but thankfully, my drive to try the unknown was stronger than my fear and so when a tiny church approached me after Bible College to preach, I said OK...and the rest is history.

It was the mindset I had when I had my children face the high ropes course at Camp Caroline at a very young age, an apparatus extending 20-30 feet in the air with countless opportunities to freak out. Was I being a cruel father, possibly, but what I really wanted them to experience was how when you face your fears, when you face a situation that creates fear, and you face it head on, you will feel a rush of satisfaction knowing that you displayed courage.

And the results were exactly that...both Kevin and Danielle at that age were terrified, no way were they going to do this, but by days end not only had they done it, but I had trouble getting them off the course.

When there's a hard decision to be made and nobody else is stepping up to the plate, and you step up and make the decision and claim responsibility, even if things don't all turn out great; when you take the initiative to have that difficult conversation with that boss, parent, child or spouse, even though it would be easier to shrink back; when you're wrestling with a pattern of sin or addictive behavior, and you take the courageous steps to bring it into the light, to talk about it with a trusted friend, when it would be so much easier to just keep it hidden; when you face difficulty head on, trust me...you'll feel great, and you will be better for it.

But more importantly something else occurs, inside you grow stronger. It took some persuasive encouragement to get my kids to climb those ropes for the first time, but after that, the benefits were a great payoff. You see had they never tried, had they given in to their fears, a pattern is being formed. It's the same mindset I use when I encourage them to face their friends they are fighting with, or a teacher who appears to be mean, to overcome the endless piles of homework and encourage them it is possible, to do the difficult things in life...like sharing their stories.

As humans we need to develop an inner core of strength and resolve and firmness, and not allow fear and anxiety and hollowness to exist. It was the same principles that my wife and I had to apply when our oldest, abandoned church, family and all those who loved him most and relied on drugs to be his source of satisfaction.

My wife and I celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary this fall, and I honestly could count on two hands the times we truly butted heads in any serious disagreements over those 25 years...but with most of those having to do with the fears and strategies in trying to deal with a child you no longer recognized...a fear that contributed to my decision to leave paid ministry. Fear my friends can be paralyzing.

If you live in fear and avoidance, then it doesn't matter if you're gifted or talented, and even if things externally turn out well, and even if you get quite good at eliciting a lot of praise from a lot of people, inside you will be incurring an internal debt that you'll pay off for the rest of your life. It's too high of a cost friend. Living in fear will erode your sense of worth as a person and make you feel hollow...and that's just the first cost.

The second cost of living with a mindset of fear is that you will experience stagnation in your life instead of growth. Here's the deal...if you live in fear, you will never experience or realize the potential God has placed in you since growth always involves risk, and risk always involves fear. Fear can be crippling. Fear keeps many of us from moving on, be it in our jobs, a ministry, relationships or any opportunity because we limit ourselves.

The truth is, for many people, unless we can have some ironclad guarantees that everything will work out just the way we want it to, we stall, we stagnate or procrastinate. Too many stories exist of people who find themselves at the end of their lives regretting they didn't follow their dreams. Yes they may have had very comfortable lives, but they never did what God possibly created them to do. We limit ourselves and find ourselves saying things like, *"I couldn't do that"*.

It was a common phrase I heard when we began the church plant Lifespring Community, and I had asked people to step up to the plate. *"Could you be on our drama team?" "I couldn't do that!" "Would you consider the following leadership position?" "I'm not a leader."* So let me ask you, what's the worst thing that could happen? You fail? But at least you will have tried, which I believe is better than living with the regret of never trying...and the coexisting consequences...a shrunken heart, unrealized potential, and patterns of fear being formed!

The third cost of living in fear is it will cost you your joy.

This actually is a staggering cost, living with the pain of constant chronic, low grade anxiety...not to mention the actual physical costs related to this type of living. One of the things that researchers have found is that most worriers tend to have a high capacity imagination. They are often people with a lot of creative potential and generally quite intelligent, but their imagination runs toward the negative...I'm sure you know a few people like this.

As well high capacity imaginative worriers tend to use the phrase, *"What if..."* a lot. *"What if I get in an accident and wreck the car?" "What if I make a mistake at work and lose my job?" "What if I give a bad*

message?" "What if..." These are all things that are contingent...they're all set in the future. They may never happen at all...and probably most of them won't. But when I live in a fear-filled mind, I give them the power to rob me of life now. A Japanese Proverb states, "*Fear is only as deep as the mind allows.*"

A healthy sense of perspective allows you to assign these events a realistic assessment that gives you the power to get on with your life. So what if you do wreck your car? Did you live to talk about it? PTL! Maybe now's the time to take advantage of all those insurance payments you have been paying...or start biking. What if you lose your job? Get a new one! So what if I give a bad message? I'm not your Pastor! (Kidding)

But when we live in fear, we lose this perspective, and the power of the "what if" becomes paralyzing. You go through life without joy because you are fundamentally incompatible. Have you ever seen a fearful, joyful person? They just don't co-exist...much too high of a price to pay.

A fourth cost of living with a mindset of fear will lead to a mountain of regret at the end of your life...for all the risks you never took, all the challenges you never embraced, all the times that God said to you, "*Come on, trust me*" and you said "no". You will be left with a mountain of regret...left with stories that could have been. God is challenging us to trust Him.

He says to Abraham, "Leave your home, go with your wife Sarah, and as a couple way past their childbearing years, I will give you a family, and you will become father of a nation that outnumbers the stars...but...you will have to leave behind everything you know and are comfortable with, and trust me." God tells Moses, "Go confront the most powerful man in the world. Tell him, 'Let my people go'. I am going to start a new community that's going to give hope to the world, and you'll be the beginning of that...but...you're going to have to trust me on this one."

God says to Daniel, "I want you to defy the King. I want you to pray even though there's a law against it. I want you to go to a lion's den, and I'm going to shut the mouths of the lions...but you really are going to have to trust me on this one."

Jesus said one day to a rich young ruler. "I want you to go and sell everything you have...all your riches. I want you to empty your whole portfolio and your bank accounts, and give it to the poor and bless their lives...then...come and follow me, and together we will do life...it will be an adventure of a lifetime...but you're going to have to trust me on this?"

And when people courageously, boldly stepped out in this trust, they never regretted it. You just don't find anybody in the Bible that says, "*I trusted God, and I'm, so sorry I did.*" But you did find those who turned the offer down, who said "no" like the rich young ruler. I wonder about him, I wonder if he lived to be an old man left wondering what could have been, possibly a heart that grew old, hard and cold would have caught on blazing fire. Maybe a spirit that became self-absorbed would have become generous. Maybe a life that got lonely would have been filled with love.

Maybe some of you are wondering what your life would have been like had you done this as a young man or woman.

Don't head for a mountain of regret one day, don't let all of those "what if's" that paralyzed you for so long become "might have beens". They're irretrievable. If you give into a mindset of fear, you will find yourself at the end of your life, comfortable maybe, filling up your days possibly, acquiring things or simply left watching television with reruns, but eventually a thought will arise, "What might have been?" What might have been if I'd have trusted God, what might I have done? What might have I become?

Finally one last cost. A mindset of fear is contagious. It's costly because it unwittingly gets passed from one generation to the next.

For parents this is the highest cost of all, because if you allow yourself, unchecked, to go through life with your hopes, your dreams, your callings, being impaired by distorted fears and worry, there's a very good chance that you will be limiting the hopes and dreams and callings of your children who you love. Because kids learn from their parents, and if you don't get a grip on this stuff, your children will learn from you that the only way to go through life is with anxiety and fear. You'll be passing on a legacy.

Listen to the following true case of an individual called Julie. Julie was raised in a house with very strict rules. All the furniture in her parent's home was covered with plastic, and Julie and her brother were not allowed in the living room, lest they broke something. Throughout her childhood, Julie was made to feel dirty. If she played outside or rode her bike for a few minutes, her mother marched her upstairs and made her take a bath.

It was not unusual for Julie to take two or three baths in one day. Her mother continually carped about Julie's appearance, about near-invisible specks and spots on her dress. And whenever she misbehaved, Julie's mother would say "You filthy little beast" or "You dirty little brat". It seemed that all of Julie's childhood revolved around staying clean but feeling dirty. Today, Julie is in her mid-forties. She has an immaculate home with beautiful furniture, all covered in plastic. She has strict rules for her family. She keeps the Dust buster handy to pick up any stray crumbs, lint, or flyspecks that may appear on the carpet or on her children.

Julie's husband is a workaholic who spends as much time away from home – and away from Julie – as possible. Even in her forties Julie takes as many as 2-3 baths a day. Her adult life, like her childhood, still revolves around staying clean but feeling dirty. Worst of all, she is passing her feelings of inferiority and contamination on to people around her – her husband, her withdrawn 9 year old son, and her rebellious, sexually active 14 year old daughter. She strives for immaculate perfection, but when she looks in the mirror, all she sees is flaws and filth...and the worst part of it all, is she doesn't even know what she is doing to her and her family, and she has no idea how she got that way.

So more often than God commands anything else, God commands "***Fear not***", and he doesn't leave it there, you need to understand this about Him and that is that God almost always gives a reason why you don't have to fear. God says, "***Fear not for...I am with you.***" "***Fear not for the Lord your God shall be with you.***" "***The Lord is my strength and my salvation, of whom shall I be afraid?***" "***In this world, you will have tribulation. I've overcome the world. Don't be afraid. Be of good cheer.***" "***Be courageous. Be strong.***"

This is right at the core of the gospel that Jesus proclaimed, what He came to live on this earth and to teach. Then He died on the cross and was resurrected again to ensure and guarantee for us forever – that by the free gift of grace – it is possible for you and me to live in the reality of the presence and power of God. That there is nothing – not loss, not failure, not rejection, not loneliness, not cancer, not sickness, not rebellious children nor death itself – there is nothing that has the power to separate you from the love and care of the father in the world, and in the world to come.

"***I'm with you***" God says. Now if that's really true what do you have to be afraid of? If that's really true, what could hold you back from trusting God with utter abandon?

An author by the name of Susan Jeffers says, "*The ultimate fear – underneath all our other fears of loneliness or rejection or failure or so on – the ultimate fear is 'I can't handle it. Something really bad is going to happen to me, and I won't be able to handle it.'*"

But what's the ultimate promise of God? ***There's nothing you and I can't handle together.***" I'm telling you friends, when people in Scripture or people today get a hold of this truth, it changes lives. Karl Menninger said, "*Fears are educated into us, and can if we wish be educated out.*"

The Apostle Paul grasped it and I believe demonstrated the best "*I can handle*" statement found in all of literature. Now here's the setting. Imagine if this was you...today.

You've lost your job, your isolated from your friends. You're living in a strange country where you don't know people. Jealous enemies have trashed your reputation. You've been arrested on trumped up charges. You've been physically beaten, put in jail. You don't know if you'll ever get out of jail. You might be put to death, maybe tomorrow. Do you think you might be tempted to worry? Anybody?

This is what Paul writes from precisely that scenario, sitting in a jail cell, not knowing if he's going to survive another day. He says, "***I can handle anything through Christ who gives me strength.***" This is the promise of God: "So can you" Can you imagine going through life this way? Can you imagine what it

would be like to wake up in the morning and just let your day unfold, one event to the next, sometimes real good things, sometimes real bad things.

To go through the day with the one thought that you breathe in and out all day long, and *that is that "I can handle anything through Christ who gives me strength."*

That's God's will for you. Deeper than that, the Bible says *"It's simply truth."* So we need to devote ourselves to learn to live like this. Next week were going to look at the single most important principle that I know for turning fear into faith. Make the decision starting today that whatever I do, whatever things I need to learn, whatever I need to put into practice I will pay the price because I will not be ruled by fear. I've lived in fear to long and I no longer will live that way.

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