

How to Combat the Fear of the Unknown

Good morning Gathering Family, for those of you who do not know, I am Adam Hatley, and I am the youth pastor here. I love working with students and God has given me a heart to help them grow in their relationship with Him.

We are in our series called Asking for a Friend, in this series we have been answering tough questions that you guys have asked, whether it be for you or for a friend of yours. Today, we are looking at the question “How can I combat the fear of the unknown...” Whoever asked this question stated this initially and then added to it, saying “like the fear of eternity, Jesus coming back, and those sort of things.” When I was asked what message I felt God impressing on me to speak, I knew for a fact that God had this message in mind. **So here is my story with the fear of the unknown**, let’s jump right in. And by the way, I hope you are ready to right down and flip to a bunch of scriptures today, because we will be spending a great deal of time in the word.

In my experience, there are some people who deal with this battle more so than others. So for those of you who do not have this exact fear, I ask that you think about something that does bring fear to you. Before we get into scripture fully I want us to understand what some people are facing, especially in the realm of the fear of the unknown. For some people, God has programmed them to not worry or even sometimes they don’t even think about the things that they cannot know. It just is what it is to them. While others, God gave this mind to want to know everything, and to

some degree this can be a bad thing. If we have to know everything all the time then we may limit our usefulness when it comes to being obedient to GOD because we may not always know what the full plan is for our life.

The first question that I want to ask, is where does our fear come from? Could it be that we are given fear from God or is there something else playing a factor into our fear? When it comes to someone dealing with the fear of eternity or Jesus’ return, this is a very real and often frightening fear, but the simple answer is that the FEAR is not from God. Whether fear of the unknown or some other fear we recognize that God did not give us this fear. Look at **2 Timothy 1:7**, “*for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*” If we believe that scripture is true then plain and simple we see that God has not given us this fear. So where do these fears come from. I believe that we see the one who causes these fears to enter our lives in **John 10:10**, “*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*” Jesus right here explains that Satan has come to steal, kill, and destroy. When we are believers, Satan will try to do these things to keep us from being productive members of the body of Christ and will try to prevent us from bearing fruit that the world will see, which will point to Jesus. Thus, planting a seed which allows Jesus’ light to be shown to the world, where people might turn from their sins to the one true Savior. Satan is ok with “Christians” who live in fear and are scared to show the light of Christ, but he is not ok with people who despite their fears turn to God and allow His victory to reign in their lives. I believe

the most frightening thing to the devil other than the trinity of God, are people who are sold out to being obedient to what God is calling them to do, so he tries to steal their joy, or make their life hard. He tries to kill their ability to serve, through their ambitions for other things in this life. And he tries to destroy their willingness to serve God, because he wants us to believe that living the “Christian life” should be easy. When Satan attacks us with fear, he is often trying to limit our ability to serve God and be useful for God’s glory. Living in the fear of the unknown, can be a tactic that if not treated can overcome us and cause us to stumble in our relationship with God. This may be fear of the unknown of what someone might say when I witness to them. This might be fear of eternity and what it will be like... Whatever the fear that you are dealing with, just know that God has not given us a spirit of fear, rather one of power, love and self-control.

The Second question I want to ask is how do we process and respond to this fear? I believe in the flesh that we have 2 ways to respond. The first way is to ignore the fear and suppress the thoughts that we have about the unknown. One of the problems with this is that we break down and let this be a continual problem each time the unknown is brought up. Anytime that we think about Heaven or Hell or something that is unknown to us, then we might try to suppress those thoughts and not allow God to use them in the way that only He can. Believe me, He can use them, I promise. The second way that we process this fear in the flesh, is by getting caught up in it and in our ability to try and logically think our way through these fears. I can say

that when it comes to fear of eternity, our finite minds, limited in their understanding cannot process the infinite nature of eternity. We just aren’t able to do that on this side of Heaven.

By now, you are understanding these things but you want to know how to fight against these fears. So how do we fight? I believe that the answer is quite simple, we fight through the one who has already won the victory, that’s Jesus! **1 Corinthians 15:55-58** says “*“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*” You see, we serve a God who not only has victory but Won victory. Jesus Christ won victory not over Satan for Himself, because He already had that, but also victory for those of us who choose to follow and serve Him. We are given victory by the death and resurrection of Jesus and we receive relationship with God, all because of the price He paid for us. There is some true value that God sees in us.

We understand that we have victory over these fears through Jesus, so how do we practically walk this out in faith? I believe that we find the answer in **Philippians 4:6-7**, “*do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts*

and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Here Paul and Timothy are telling us to not be anxious about anything. I know it is much easier said than done, but when we look at the definition of the Greek word used for anxious, we can see that it means to be troubled by or care for. So they are telling us do not be troubled by or care for anything that causes us trouble. Do not let these things that are truly insignificant bother you more than they ought too.

Looking at these verses, we see that there are three things that we can practically walk out in faith to God that will lead us to victory in our battle with the thoughts of the unknown. **The first way we combat these fears is By Prayer.** Now I want to point out that the writers of Philippians, did not just say in the things that trouble you, rather they said in everything. When you look at our lives as followers of Christ, then we see that little things can become big things when God is in them. So I want to show you what I mean when I say that the first way we combat these fears is by prayer. When we look at prayer, specifically the Lord’s Prayer, we see that Jesus was showing us the proper way to have conversation with God. Prayer simply boiled down to our understanding, is conversation with God. When someone is having a conversation with another, there are multiple aspects. One must speak and one must listen and then the other listens and also speaks. When I look back at much of my life, prayer has not been an easy thing for me because prayer is much easier when I am asking of God to do something, but becomes radically difficult when I am listening to God speak to me. As the Holy Spirit has continued to grow me I

have realized that God wants to not only hear from me but He desires to speak truth, whether hard to hear or not, to me. You see, God wants a relationship with His creation, and He has made a way for us to be reunited with Him through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Prayer is the means that the Almighty God, has chosen to hear from and speak to His creation. But why would God want to speak to us, especially when we are experiencing fears? God wants this because He desires relationship with us. Look at Matthew 6:9 and Luke 11:2, Jesus starts the prayer with stating the relationship between the one praying and the one hearing our prayer. He says “Father”. When I was preparing for this message I had a hard time figuring out the difference between prayer and supplication. As God began to teach me about these two, I realized that they are both needed, no one more than the other. Prayer is relational. It is the means by which God and man have conversation, not only about troubles, but about the way that we are to live, the areas that we need to be changed, and how God would have us to walk out our faith. He cares so much about us and how we walk out our faith that He chooses to speak to us in prayer. Look at **1 John 3:1** “*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.*” The relationship that God the Father wants with us is one that we are His children and that we can and should come to Him with anything that we are going through. The fears that Satan has tried to trap us with are fears that often make us doubt the goodness of God and doubt our faith in Him and who He says we are. Think about a problem that you have with another person.

When you have conflict or you don't know what to say to someone, you often fear having conversation with that person because you don't know what will come up. When in actuality the best way to combat fears and lack of understanding is to turn to the one who can point you in the right direction. The one who can lead you to a place of peace.

The second way we combat the fears of the unknown is **By Supplication**. Remember I said that prayer is conversation with God and supplication is defined as **asking or begging for something earnestly or humbly**. When thinking through our relationship with God, we understand that He is our father and that we cannot live without Him. Supplication with thanksgiving is of major importance. Think about it, when Satan tries to attack us with fears of the unknown, we must ask and beg God earnestly and humbly to move in our lives. You see, prayer says that I know You are Lord, and supplication says I know You have power over everything. If we believe that God truly has power over everything, then every decision we make and trial we face, we should be humbly coming before God to seek Him to move in us or in our situation. There is a big difference between asking God to change us and asking God to change a situation and we cannot know which to ask for unless we spend time in prayer, having relationship with Him.

Paul and Timothy wrote that we should come to God by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. When we are coming before God, asking Him to move either in us or in

our lives, we must be thankful for the opportunity to speak so boldly with the creator of All things. When we come before God humbly, asking and begging Him to move, we recognize that we are insignificant compared to His ability but He desires to use us for His glory. Because of this Satan tries to kill, steal and destroy. Fears flood our minds and hearts and often keep us from being beneficial for God when we don't turn to Him by prayer and supplication.

Galatians 2:20 says "*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*" Begging God to move in our lives, we are saying that we want nothing more than to do what God has planned for us to do. We beg Him to move and are thankful that He hears us. We no longer live for ourselves, but we live for Christ in faith. We combat the fears of eternity knowing that Satan will try to distract and destroy us, but we have refuge in the One who gave Himself for us.

The third way we combat the fears of the unknown is **By making the request known to God**. We make the request known to God through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. Showing God that it is not only our belief that He cared enough for us to die for us, but that HE also cares enough for us to carry us through the battles that we face in this world. In my experience with the fears of the unknown, I was constantly scared to go to God. WHY? Because I thought being a Christian meant that I had to understand everything about what I believed. This is not the

case. When we walk by faith, we simply may not know everything and if we did, it wouldn't be faith. When I struggled with these fears and realized that through prayer and supplication I had to make these request known to God I understood my place and God's place and was able to fully rely on Him because I couldn't fully rely on myself.

Let me share with you an example of what I mean in this. Back in June, I started working for a company where I am doing some computer programming. I have taken classes on this thing, but it has honestly been a while back. Through this opportunity I have learned many new things and to be honest have had many days that felt I was inadequate. If I had to rely on my own understanding I would have been completely lost because I would have had no understanding on how to make things work or even where to begin. I believe that many Christians today make the mistake of not knowing something about their faith and just leave it alone. If we are honest we feel unequipped to fight the battles we face and honestly have very little understanding of where to begin to fight this battle. Much like me with my new job, I had to turn to someone who knew what I was going through and knew what I could do to be made ready for my job. God is not sitting there thinking that Adam will figure out how to fight this battle on his own, He is rather wanting me to come to Him so that He can work in my life, to change me and my situation so that I can faithfully put my trust in Him. When we take our request and give it to God we are saying that I am not enough and I need you to move. With my battle against the fears of the unknown towards eternity, I had to turn to the

God who was in control of everything, including eternity so that He could give me peace.

Once we come to God with prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, and make our request known to God, we see that He doesn't just leave us high and dry but rather He acts. Look at verse 7 of Philippians, "***And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***" You see, God moves in and gives us peace that surpasses all understanding. So in the past 3 years God has really been working in my life to deal with this battle. Just so you realize, I have been battling these fears for 12 years. But God has recently began to give me more and more peace because every time that I have been attacked with this, I have realized what was happening and I have turned to Him. I have not lived these past few years without experiencing these fears but rather when the attacks come. I have experienced peace that passes all of my understanding.

When we experience this peace of God, we see that our hearts and minds will be guarded in Christ Jesus. The problem is with what I am wearing. I know that you guys are trying to figure out why I am dressed up in a sloth costume to preach a message about fearing the unknown. And truthfully, me wearing this began as a way to invite some teenagers to hear the word that God has given me. But as I prayed through it I believe that God had a much bigger purpose in mind. He showed me that often in my battle with these fears of the unknown, I move much like

the character I am dressed as. I seem to be super quick to move through and think through things myself, but when it comes time to truly seek God, which is at the beginning, I often move slower than I should. **Share how God has changed my view on these attacks from the devil.**

As we begin to wrap things up here today, I want to leave you with a passage that God has been pouring into me.

1Peter 5:6-8 *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”* These attacks of the fear of the unknown are evident all around, and we have one who cares for us and who wants to use us. He wants us to come to Him and be alert of the attacks that Satan will try to bring on us. Don't be slothful in your movement towards God, but fully embrace what He has called us to do and allow the attacks of Satan to be something that God can use.