



# Teaching God's Word to Train Disciples

## Fellowship BIBLE CHURCH

Audio of Pastor Don Griffin's sermons is available at  
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Nike athletic shoes had an interesting ad in a magazine some time ago. It said, "fear of failure, fear of success, fear of losing your health, fear of losing your mind, fear of being taken too seriously, fear of not being taken seriously enough, fear that you worry too much, fear that you don't worry enough, Your Mother's fear- you'll never marry, Your Father's fear that you will, fear of the unknown? Forget it. fear of too many roads and not enough time? Maybe! But go ahead. Put one foot in front of the other. And just do it!"

as its headlines these words: "the only thing to fear is everything."

The good news is that the bible has a lot to say about fear. The bible has more to say about fear than it does about heaven. For example, Psalm 34:7, "I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears." All through the bible you find God telling people to not be afraid. God does not want you to be afraid because fear is a trap. It is a trap that will keep you from doing God's will and from having his blessings.

## The Last Words of the Apostle Paul

### 2 Timothy

### Part 2: Overcoming Fear

Paul wrote 2 letters to a young man named Timothy. His 2nd letter to Timothy was written while he was in prison, some think only weeks before his execution. It is a very personal book, and Paul encourages Timothy to not be fearful. That was important to Timothy because he was naturally prone to being fearful, and he had plenty to be afraid of. The Roman Empire was persecuting the Christian church severely, and things would only get worse. That is bad enough, but now he faces life without his great mentor the Apostle Paul. He knows that he's going to have to go it alone.

There are many things in our lives and in our world that could cause us to be fearful.

There is the fear of being different and the fear of rejection. There is the fear of things that could happen as well as things that will eventually happen to us all. More than that, we live in a time when fear is all over the place. A few weeks ago NBC News began with Charlie Gibson saying, "Good evening. Americans are scared." One magazine had

#### FEAR'S DAMAGING EFFECTS

##### 1. Lost Potential

Fear brings with it lost potential. What have you always dreamed of doing but have never done because you are afraid of failing?

##### 2. Exhaustion

Have you ever been worn out because you could not sleep because of your worry about something? I have many times. Alfred Hitchcock said, "I turn my fears into movies," and so do we. You turn your fears into movies in your mind, and you watch them over and over again.

##### 3. Hindered Relationships

It is very difficult for fearful people to give and to receive love. You are afraid to really open up to someone because you're afraid that you will be hurt.

##### 4. Lapses in Logic

You cannot think straight when you are afraid. When anxiety is controlling your mind, you are in a mental fog.

##### 5. Physical Problems

In the New York Times, July 26, 1970, an article entitled "Child's Death in London Laid to Fear of Den-

list” was published and also included in a book entitled Psychosomatics. A four-year-old child went to the dentist to have some baby teeth extracted, she screamed hysterically in the dentist’s chair. Within a few minutes after having her teeth removed, the child had a heart attack and was rushed to the hospital where she died two days later. The autopsy found very high levels of adrenaline in her blood stream due to fear that caused her to have a heart attack. If fear can go so far is to take someone’s life, what is fear, anxiety and worry doing to our lives on a lesser scale each day?

If you study through the bible you find that fear is never recommended by God. You have other negative attitudes recommended. For example, there are times when God tells us to mourn because mourning is sometimes good for us. The bible tells us to be angry and to sin not. There are times for righteous anger, but God never tells us, “why don’t you give fear a shot? Maybe it will help.”

## REASONS TO NOT BE AFRAID

### 1. Fear is not from God

*2 Timothy 1:7, “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity; but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”*

When God created man in the very beginning, he did not create him with fear. Fear came as a result of man’s sin. When I say that, I’m not talking about the kind of fear that we should have. If someone comes walking toward you with a loaded gun, it might be a good idea to be afraid. There are some things that we should be fearful about, but there are many things in life that we need to not be afraid of.

### 2. God has taken the sting out of physical death

*2 Timothy 1:9b-10, “This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”*

The older versions say he has “abolished” death. There is a serious problem with that thought. Death does not appear to have been abolished. If death has been abolished, someone forgot to tell the undertakers. People still die every day.

Your death is so certain that there is an entire industry built around its expectation.

It’s called the life insurance industry. Think of it this way-if you don’t die, you have wasted your money on life insurance, and no one wants to waste money.

Life insurance is based on one great theological truth: Death reigns.

The word translated “destroyed” in 2 Timothy 1:10 means “to render powerless.” When Jesus rose from the dead, he broke the power of death forever. Death for the Christian is a temporary interruption, a passing from one stage of life to another. That is what Paul meant when he declared that to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Will we have the same body in eternity? Yes, but greatly improved which is good news for most of us. Our bodies will be immortal and incorruptible. Today we have five senses. Then we may have 500. Scientists tell us the body constantly renews itself as old cells disappear and new ones are formed so that every seven or eight years we have an entirely new body. If you are 50 years old, you’re living in the seventh or eighth version of your own body.

To use computer terminology, right now I am Don Griffin Version 7.0. Because I am a work in progress I am susceptible to viruses, quirky incompatibility, and sudden system failures. But the day is coming when God will issue Don Griffin Version 12.0 and I will be immune to viruses, completely compatible, and free from system failure for all eternity.

### 3. God has spared us from eternal judgment

*2 Timothy 1:8-9, “So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.”*

The word, “saved” means “rescued.” The bible tells us that people, left to themselves, will follow the evil enemy of mankind, Satan, into a Godless eternity away from God.

*2 Timothy 1:12, “That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.”*

When Paul uses the words “that today” or “the day” or “that great day,” he is speaking of the coming judgment of God. The bible teaches us that there is coming a day when God, the righteous judge, will call people into account for what they’ve done while on earth. No one will miss that day. No one will slip by while the angels are not looking.

To be “saved” means that we have been rescued from that awful place. So whatever else may happen in your life, the worst thing that could happen has already been taken care of if you are a Christian. That’s because God has forgiven you and paid your debt by the sacrifice of his son.

#### **4. God has spared us from a meaningless existence**

Verse nine also tells us that God “saved us and called us to a holy life not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.”

The bible says you’re not an afterthought with God. He was thinking about you before you ever born, and he has a wonderful plan for your life that will unveil before you as you continue to walk with him. While God is working out his purpose for the world, he also is working out his program personally for you and me! If you know the Lord, the worst thing that can happen is that you will go to heaven this year, which is also the best thing that can happen to you this year.

### **FOUR STEPS TO DEALING WITH FEAR**

#### **1. Remember your position.**

*Proverbs 28:1, “The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.”*

You will never be any more than you see yourself being. A legend from India tells about a mouse who was terrified of cats until a magician agreed to transform him into a cat. That helped him to control his fear for a while until he met a dog. So the magician changed him into a dog. The mouse-turned-dog was content until he met a tiger--so, once again, the magician changed him into what he feared. But when the tiger came complaining that he had met a hunter, the magician refused to help. "I will make you into a mouse again, for though you have the body of a tiger, you still have the heart of a mouse."

The first step to courage is to remember you are God’s loved child, and God does not give you a spirit of fear. You were born for courage not fear.

You may remember the story of the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid. It is the story about the American Hockey Team, basically made up of men barely out of their teens, all basically amateurs. They were given no chance of winning the gold medal because to win it, they would have to defeat the unbelievably talented Russian hockey team that was considered to be invincible. Gathered in the locker room before the game, the coach, Herb Brooks, said one sentence, “Men, you were born to play this game.” As one man, they arose and went out on the ice and defeated the mighty Russian team and went on to beat Finland to win the gold medal against all odds. If you are a Christian, the same is true for you. You were born to play this game called life with courage and strength. You are born to have victory over your problems and struggles through the Holy Spirit who lives within you.

#### **2. Confront your fears.**

When I was going through school, my greatest fear was to stand before a class and do a book report or a current event. There came a time when I felt that God wanted me to be a pastor, and that presented a real problem. That’s because you don’t have very many pastors who do not speak before groups. This kind of what it’s all about. That meant that I either had to face my fear or tell God that I wasn’t going to do it. What I found was that when I faced my fear, God gave me the strength to do what I could not do otherwise. That is the way it is with all fear. You either face it with God’s power, or you live in its grip for the rest of your life.

#### **3. Cultivate your love.**

There is a spiritual young man who was dating the girl who was to become his wife. On one occasion he wanted to do something nice for her, so he gave her little card and wrote the reference of 1 John 4:18 in the card.

*1 John 4:18 says, “Perfect love casts out fear.”*

The result was that she did not want to talk with him for two weeks. She was furious, and every time she did talk with him, and she would say, "You know, that is not funny." He could not figure out what was the problem until he was over at her apartment. He saw the card that he had written and realized that he had left out the number 1 before John, so that it was John 4:18. John 4:18 is talking about the woman at the well. It says, "Jesus said to her, 'The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband.'"

How much different would be your life if you lived in light of the fact that you had a heavenly father who loves you and wants to do the best for you? That takes us back to the statement of Paul when he says, "if God be with us, who can be against us? If God loves you with a personal love and is committed to taking care of you, what is there to fear. In addition to God's love for us, there's our love for other people. Fear is basically a self centered thing. It is based on what I'm afraid will happen to me. When you focus your attention on loving other people, much of your fears fade away. Either fear will push the love out, or the love of God will push the fear out.

#### **4. Censor your input.**

The Bible says, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." If you are going to be free from fear, you will have to be careful about what you think and who you listen to. Listening to some people would make anyone discouraged. Listen to people who will encourage you rather than discourage you. Put the word of God in one ear, and the fear will go out the other ear.

#### **5. Remember God's power**

Paul was not strong and courageous because of what he thought he could do or someone else could do. Paul was strong because of what he thought God could do.

*2 Timothy 1:12, "That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day."*

We sometimes talk about someone who has great faith in God. It's not so much great faith in God that we need. We need faith in a great God. It is because we believe Him to be great that we are able to accept His will rather than trying to change it. It is because of who we believe Him to be that we are able to obey without understanding. Our faith says "Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me." Paul says, "I've trusted him through the years, and I know now without any doubt that he is able."

If I could have only three words from the Bible, they would be these three words: he is able. That's all you need. It doesn't say he was able, or he will be able, or he might be able. He is able, and because He is able, I don't have to be afraid because He can take care of anything that comes my way.