

Fresh Start Week 8: Scary Stuff

We have been talking about how to get a **much-needed fresh start**. It's a "do over." When you put some things behind you as you **erase the white board and begin with the most basic stuff**. One of the basics is **a view of God** that allows for fresh starts. The second is **why am I here?** That goes to finding your **calling**. You're unique identity, purpose, and the context where you are to live out your purpose.

If there is a **Grinch for Halloween**, then it's me. I hate Halloween. I think it's a low-grade holiday. I should say it has become a low-grade holiday. As with most things that are great for kids, adults ruin it. Now is my old guy "**get off my lawn**" moment. When I was a kid, Halloween was a thing for kids and the adults were there to keep it fun. Now it's another opportunity for adults to get a babysitter for the kids and dress trashy and get hammered.

That kind of fear isn't real or realistic. How can the psychopathic killer walk after people running and somehow catch them. [\(Commercial video\)](#) **The point is you don't make good decisions when you are responding in fear.** It's funny, but it's **also true and sad**. And that is where we get stuck.

Today we are talking about...[Enemies of a fresh start](#).

These have nothing much to do with **what other people do around us**, or **circumstances** being easy or tough. They mostly deal with our **biggest problem** and that is ourselves. **It's when I listen to the wrong voice and the enemy manipulates me.**

Actually, there is only one enemy and that is the one who has come to **steal, kill, and destroy**. I really should have said, "**ways the enemy keeps me from a fresh start.**"

We begin with a big one, because as we have learned because of this **we don't make good decisions** and we don't see the right path in front of us. **We don't hear God's voice calling us to be who he created us to be.** That is...[Fear](#).

Let's start out with some foundational truth about those who are following Jesus. **So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children.** Now we call him, "Abba, Father." Romans 8:15

You are **adopted as a child**, the opposite of a slave to sin and fear. This is living in the **new reality** that God has adopted you.

Have you ever been frozen with fear to the point where you can't make a decision? That is not from God. **The enemy has to convince us that we aren't adopted** children with the spirit of Jesus in us. **If I believe that truth**, how can I remain frozen in fear?

What we are not talking about is a **common sense desire to avoid** something terrible. That is **discernment**. If I choose this, it will take me somewhere that I don't like. It's not the fear that gives us that **rush of adrenaline** that can get us out of a truly scary situation.

We are talking about the kind of fear that keeps your brain grinding on solving something, or preventing something, or protecting yourself against something that is out there trying to get you. **It's a problem that can't be solved**. It's the desire to control all risk. It's the desire to ask a question that doesn't even have an answer.

With that in mind, let this sink into your heart, burrow into your soul. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. Romans 8:38

The antidote for fear for today and worry for tomorrow is recognizing God's love. That's why we worship on Sunday morning. **We sing**, read, and repeat the truth of God's love and his goodness. **That is why we begin every bridge group** by asking the question, "God, how can you be so good?" **Then we replay the signs of his goodness** that we have experienced in the past week.

Do you really believe that God does love you?

Fear wins the day when I don't really believe that he is good and that he loves me. He is **absent, ambivalent, or angry...** Now I have to **be careful** not to make a misstep and that makes me fearful of disappointing or upsetting a cranky god.

When we live in the reality that we have been chosen and adopted and that we are loved, then this is what we receive. **For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. 2 Timothy 1:7**

In Jesus, we have the ability to love and discipline our responses, not react in fear. No longer can I be bullied by my fears. Are you tired of being bullied by some mysterious fear of what might happen? Sometimes I have this weird fearful desperate feeling for no reason. Can anyone relate to that? What I do is I acknowledge what I am feeling, but I don't trust it. I don't try to figure it out. I repeat something like "I am one in whom Christ dwells and I live in his unshakable kingdom." That tends to settle me down.

Dread is the worst of all fears. It simply lurks out there like the train that is coming, that can't be stopped. For years, I will periodically have the thought that I wished I were dead. As before, I acknowledge that I'm feeling this, but I can't dwell on it or entertain it.

There's something that therapists and counselors call "Imposter complex." This is, "who are you trying to fool, acting like that?" You can't do that job, be good enough to raise kids, wise enough to lead that church...

This is where I want to be when I grow up. **Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. 1 John 4:18**

God is helping us grow into perfect love. Ultimately, it will cast out all fear right now, it is casting out the fears that the Spirit makes me aware of.

The next way the enemy can cause us to not get this fresh start is actually one of the negative responses to fear. **A need for control.**

Notice I didn't say control, because that is a fantasy. Because of fear, we can want to control, need to control, make every effort to control, but ultimately control is not within our power; particularly when it comes to the things that scare us.

This is one of the first verses I memorized as a kid and it is still money. **Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.⁶ Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. Proverbs 3:5-6**

The need to control is living in constant fear and constant failure. It is impossible to be in control of what you have no power over.

This one is hard to see sometimes, because it just sounds like what we are supposed to do. We make every effort to mitigate what could go wrong.

The problem is that it is **devastating for our relationships**. This is simple because **most people don't like being controlled, because that is a way of saying manipulation**.

We struggle sometimes, **letting our kids drive a long distance** because that's how one died. (Dietrich driving to GR...)

How can I tell if I have an issue with control?

- **Am I overly serious?** Rarely am I playful? That means you're anxious.
- **Do I have a history of having trouble with people in authority?** Or do I have **trouble following** someone's leadership once I see something I don't like? This may show up at school, work, church...
- **Things must be done on my terms for me to participate.**
- **Do I move from one thing to another to avoid getting too connected?**
- **Do I avoid small gatherings** at church?
- **Have a hard time delegating?**

The Bible talks a lot about authority and it being given by God. We ignore a lot of that stuff in our **individualist society**. There are people who God has put in authority. We can disagree with them. **But when we constantly fight against them, we are wasting our energy.**

This is happening in **school**. It used to be that if the principal said "I'm calling your parents," the kid would say "no please don't call my mom." Now it's "great, go ahead, I'll even text my dad for you."

It's easy to shake our heads at the kid in a poor neighborhood who doesn't respect the authority of the law and then rush to the school thinking why is that teacher keeping my kid from an A?

Jesus is King, Lord, promised messiah he has been given authority over all things and he has called us into the family business. If we won't submit to him when he calls, or when he **tells us through his word that something in our lives is sin**, will we listen to him and obey?

If this were striking a cord, I would tell you to **put yourself in a position where you are intentionally allowing someone to lead**. Serving according

to someone else's agenda is key. **Coming under someone and learning to follow and trust even when you don't agree.**

Fear, which can lead us to want to be in control. This brings us to the next thing that the enemy will use to keep us from a fresh start. **Pride.**

Consistently we are told that this is good. I'm supposed to be proud to be an American, a Chemic, a Michigander, to be a Christian...

Isn't that all really good? What's the problem?

For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. 1 John 2:16

Alazoneia...an insolent and empty assurance, which trusts in its own power and resources and shamefully despises and violates divine laws and human rights.

This is where I act like my own designer. Which puts me on top. What did Jesus promote? Was it winning and being on top, which is what I'm supposed to be proud of? No, Jesus said the first will be last, and the last will be first. Jesus said that we should seek to serve, not be served which is exactly what He did.

Here is a list of statements about pride from the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is a book of wisdom. It describes how wisdom looks in real life. It begins with the premise that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. This is not the fear we are trying to avoid in responding to God as if he is the ultimate authority.

The Hebrew word used mostly in these verses is "Zadon"...pride, insolence, presumptuousness, arrogance...

**Pride leads to disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom. Proverbs 11:2
Pride leads to conflict; those who take advice are wise. Proverbs 13:10
Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall. Proverbs 16:18**

Pride ends in humiliation, while humility brings honor. Proverbs 29:23

**Humiliation is forced humility not offered up of one's own volition.
"Every knee will bow..."**

Paul's pride is in Jesus and in those in whom he has disciplined.

There is a difference between being proud of who I am and being confident in who God has created and called me to be.

Here's an example...It is more important to be grateful for living in this country than to be proud. Particularly when pride is a sense that we are better than others.

Let's look at the other side of the coin from pride. **So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7** Resisting is effort!

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor. James 4:10

Pride is the desire to make sure I am lifted up to where I think I deserve to be. Humility, as Jesus taught, is to seek the lower position; one from which I can serve others then Jesus will lift me up.

I don't see a lot of humility in our culture right now.

Same as earlier, come under someone and allow them to lead. Also release to someone what has been yours. Allow them to shape it and make it their own.

This last way the enemy tries to keep us from our calling and a fresh start is kind of the punch line. Am I living in a...**Fixed mindset v. growth mindset.**

I'm a grumpy person. **I'm someone who has to have it my way.** I'm...these are hints that we might be dealing with a fixed mindset.

Real...ready to be changed...relational...release.

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. **Romans 12:2**

Steps to a Fresh Start:

Label what is keeping you from a fresh start with God.

When I label something, then when it rears its ugly head again I will recognize it before it can get its teeth into me. We don't label people, but we do label what is not of God that we hear and feel.

I was coaching a player who was getting anxious on the court and, therefore, not playing well. I pulled him aside and said, "do you notice that

your breathing is getting fast and shallow." He said, "no". I told him that's what you need to be able to recognize because it is negatively affecting your play and making you anxious so you play loose and confidently.

Take it to God:

This is an offering. Give it to him and **allow him to tell you what to do with it.** This is releasing and trusting God. **Not usually a quick fix,** but today we will practice this.

And one last thing today, find someone to serve instead of being served and that will put you on the **right foot forward, away from the wall of chainsaws, and the cemetery.**