

The Remedy for all Our Fears

We live in a world that's dominated by fear of various things. Many Americans admit to being afraid of terrorists, financial ruin, loss of our health, loss of our American way of life and even the common fear of death or the way we'll die just to name a few. Why are we so often filled with fear? Christian counselor and author, Ed Welch, has noted that, "Misplaced trust is THE fear of the human heart." Dr. Welch is pointing to the reality that we will often, wrongly, place our ultimate trust in earthly possessions or people, neither of which is capable of bearing the full weight of that trust. When we do that we are in danger of falling into unhealthy patterns of fear and anxiety.

How do we move away from unhealthy fear? It begins by placing our ultimate trust in God. In Psalm 56, King David helps us with some important biblical teaching. David writes, "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall never be afraid. What can flesh do to me?" (56:3-4). Our full and complete trust must never be in our jobs (they can be lost), in people (who can often disappoint or leave us) or in our physical health (we will get sick and our bodies will eventually wear out) as important as these things may be. Given the fact that David's words should be taken to heart, how can we know that we're placing our ultimate trust in God? It must begin by placing our faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. If you're not sure that you are a Christian that's the first step in this process. True peace with God comes by faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). And yet, even those of us who know that we're secure in the love of Jesus, must continue to place our trust in him daily, even moment by moment, in the choices we make no matter what comes our way.

You and I have experienced times of fear and anxiety to some degree (Matthew 6:19-34), but it's so important that we don't fall prey to ongoing patterns of unhealthy, irrational fear that has the potential to completely control us and cause us and others great harm. There's quite a difference between responsible concern for the issues and people that make up our lives and unhealthy fear and anxiety over things that we generally can do nothing about. How do we identify the difference?

Let's begin by acknowledging that we should have a responsible concern for our physical, spiritual and emotional health and that of our family and for others as we have opportunity. It's right to make reasonable plans and set goals for the future; that, assuming we're able, we work

hard to earn a living. For God's people then, our lives should be characterized by love of God (John 14:15) and love of neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 12:1-2). We must always treat others as we want to be treated (Matthew 7:12). Keep in mind that our ultimate trust in God doesn't mean that we place no trust in others. It's right to be able to depend on others and to be trustworthy ourselves. But, the priority of our trust must always be in God. For example: As a pattern of life we should be asking, "What does God's word, the Bible, say about this particular situation? How should I respond to this person in a way that honors Jesus?"

When God is our priority, we can know true peace even in the midst of difficult situations or relationships. When we love God as our priority we'll love others better, not less.

We will experience joys as well as sorrows in this life but we can be sure that, as God's children, He loves us and is at work in everything that comes into our lives for our good and his glory (Romans 8:28). Fully trusting in God is the remedy for all our fears, for the past, the present as well as the future. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." (1 John 4:18).

Rev. Dr. Steve Jones is the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church PCA in Paxton, Ill.