

*“The key ingredient to overcoming fear is not just speaking to it; it’s speaking to it in Jesus’ name.”*

*– Sadie Robertson*

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## Win the Battle for Your Mind

Imagine being exhausted by a long day of ministry and then trying to outrun a vicious storm on the lake. But instead of land, you see an apparition walking toward you – on the choppy waves! We don’t have to imagine very hard to feel terror! This was the disciples in Matthew 14.

Jesus called to them immediately: *“Don’t be afraid,’ he said. ‘Take courage. I am here!’”* (v. 27 NLT).

Although the disciples were frightened by the storm, Jesus was there to reassure them right away with His presence. The storm was not unusual. Nor is it unusual that the disciples displayed a healthy fear of the storm or an unknown spectacle.

The first lesson we need to remember is that storms are a natural part of life. Jesus even told us to expect them: *“Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33 NLT). We were never promised smooth sailing.

The second lesson is that Jesus was there immediately and reassured the disciples with His presence. Just knowing that we’re not alone in the trials of life can help calm our fears immensely.

Peter, the brash disciple, immediately said, If it’s *really* you, Jesus, *“command me to come to You on the water”* (v. 28). Having taken a few steps, though, he noticed that the storm was still raging, became afraid, and started to sink.

You see, friend, Peter started to sink when he took his eyes off Jesus. That’s what happens to us, too. When we’re in a life storm, we sometimes lose sight of Jesus, and so we start to sink. The third lesson is to keep our eyes on Jesus, no matter what.

Giving in to the spirit of fear is easy. While we know the truth of Paul’s encouraging words to Timothy, we have a hard time applying them: *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind”* (2 Timothy 1:7).

So how can we overcome the battle of fear in our minds?

## Simple Steps Overcoming Fear

### Control your body

It's not all in your head. Sometimes it's also in your body. You know, the sick-to-your-stomach feeling, the racing heartbeat, the shaking hands. Before you can win the battle over fear in your mind, you may have to deal with the effects of fear in your body.

Peter engaged his whole body in overcoming his fear – he swung his legs over the side of the boat, set his feet on the choppy waters, and stepped forward.

What does stepping forward look like for you? Make sure that you're getting proper rest, nutrition, and exercise. An activity that can calm your physical body is deep breathing. Inhale peace, exhale worry. Speak the name of Jesus over the situation. Turn on some praise music. The devil cannot stand to listen to it and will flee!

Once we get our physical bodies to calm down just a bit, then we can start getting our minds engaged with the truth of God's Word, which is the real way to overcome fear.

### Correct Your Core Beliefs

Sometimes wrong beliefs allow stray thoughts and negative emotions to rule our minds with fear. That's why it's important to saturate our minds with the truth of God's Word constantly. Look up verses on hope and peace, write them on sticky notes, and post them where you'll see them. Set your favorite verse as your background on your cell phone.

One such wrong maxim is "God won't give you more than we can handle." Does the Bible really say that? Let's look at the actual verse and context of that thought:

*"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be **tempted** beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).*

This verse is actually about *temptation*! It's not about life circumstances at all. What Paul's telling Christians here is that God will always help you avoid falling into the trap of sin.

Here's another insight on that false premise: God would be irrelevant if we never had more than we could handle. If we could always deal with our fears on our own, we wouldn't need to reach out to God for help. And God wants us to ask Him for help:

*"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you" (James 1:5 NIV).*

But what if the worst-case scenario does happen? What if the rent is overdue, and the balance in your bank account is zero? What if your company shuts down because of a worldwide pandemic? What if your car breaks down...at night...in the rain...and you've got two babies and no cell phone? What if war shows up on your front doorstep? What if your son is sent to the front lines?

## Simple Steps Overcoming Fear

Then we need to internalize three truths: 1. God is still good. 2. God is still with you. 3. God is still faithful. Just because something bad happens in your life does not mean that God was looking the other way. God has an overarching perspective that we can't possibly see or know. He sees the big picture, and He's got a good and perfect plan for your life. You may not be able to see it for a long time, but you've got to trust Him. *"He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD"* (Psalm 112:7 ESV).

Even when you feel alone, remind yourself over and over again that Jesus is right there beside you. He feels every pain; He understands every fear. Many times what we need is just to know that we are not alone. Somehow that takes the edge off our fears. Hebrews 13:5 reminds us, *"Be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'"* (ESV). Personalize this verse by saying to yourself, "Jesus will never leave me" as many times as you need to.

Remember, God provided for the Israelites every step of the way – parting the Red Sea, gushing water from a rock, raining manna. The provision didn't always look the way they thought it should, but God always supplied what they needed. Look back over your life and trace the number of ways – big and small – that God has provided for you. Know that He will always continue to provide for you in the future.

## Corral Your Thoughts

Many times we're tempted to assume that we can't control what we think about. And, indeed, we can't control what pops into our brains. But we can control how long those thoughts stay there and the direction they go once they arrive.

We need to challenge worrisome thoughts – Is it true? Is it valid? Is it helpful? – and answer ourselves honestly.

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things (Philippians 4:8 ESV).*

Try just focusing on today, on this hour. Are you afraid of something that happened in your past? Remind yourself – out loud if you need to – "That was then. This is now." Are you afraid of something that could happen in the future? Reassure yourself, "I am okay right now. I can make it through the next five minutes, the next half hour. Jesus is right here with me."

*"Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble"* (Matthew 6:34 ESV).

Many New Testament verses use the word anxious, but the root word in Greek means "to take thought" (often translated as such in the King James Version). This implies that you can control your thoughts and take them elsewhere.

It will take practice and effort, but every time you catch a fearful thought coming into your head, take it captive! Redirect it with God's truth.

## Contain Your Emotions

Similarly, we can't always control our emotions, but when we become aware of what we're feeling, we bring it out into the light, and we name it, then we can contain and correct our emotions. When we realize how our emotions do or don't line up with God's Word, containing them is easier.

Here's the thing, emotions and feelings are powerful. But they aren't always the truth. They're showing us that we need to deal with things in our lives, so we can't ignore them. But they should not dictate how we act or even react.

When worries are running rampant through your mind, sometimes it helps to write them all out. Create a list with two columns. In the first column, write out everything that's causing you anxiety right now, big or small. Go through and decide whether you can do something tangible about each item. If so, write that thing down in the second column. If not, write the word *pray*. There's your pre-made prayer list. Start giving those worries over to God in prayer.

When we're tempted to think that prayer is just doing nothing, remember what Oswald Chambers said, "Prayer does not equip us for greater works – prayer *is* the greater work."

## Conquered

Friend, winning the battle of fear in your mind happens when you control your body, correct your core beliefs, corral your thoughts, and contain your emotions. You and Jesus can do it!

Let's look at the end of Peter's story from Matthew 14: As soon as the waves reached his waist, he recognized his fear and called out, "*Lord, save me!*" (v. 30). All Peter had to do was keep his eyes on Jesus and ask for salvation! Jesus is that close to us in our storms too. When we start sinking in our fear, we just need to lift our eyes from the waves and call out to Jesus.

The real miracle, though, happened after Jesus and Peter hopped back into the boat and the wind stopped. The disciples' eyes were opened, and they realized that Jesus was the Messiah: "*Truly you are the Son of God*" (v. 33).

Open your eyes, friend, and see that Jesus is right there in the boat with you, ready to calm your fears and perform miracles for you.