

"HOW TO FACE FEAR FEARLESSLY"

A story is told about a member of a Bomb Demolition Squad working in London during the last war, who, having entered a hole already dug, was about to place a tackle around a 1000 pound bomb, when he suddenly called out to his comrades to pull him out quickly. When he reached the top of the pit, they asked him anxiously what the trouble was. was the bomb about to explode. "I don't know about that", he replied. "But there's a rat down there, and I'm scared of rats." Here was a man who was unafraid of bombs, but afraid of rats.

The story serves to remind us that even the bravest person may have some fear. A person may fear rats....or dogs....or snakes. We may know of people who fear sickness.....or old age and insecurity... people who fear loneliness. I think I'm within the mark when I say that from the days of the cradle to the days of the rocking chair, man is beset by a whole category of fears.

Some fears, I suppose, may be good - such as the normal day to day worries concerning our own well-being and safety. These are respected fears and have a place in our lives. But there are many fears lurking in our minds that are unnecessary. These should be rooted out and thrown away. But the question is HOW.....How do we get rid of our fears? I would like to be practical and offer four suggestions.....

FEARS CAN BE DEFEATED BY
NOT FEARING THEM.....

First, fears can be defeated by not fearing them. Recall the words of Jesus to his troubled disciples.."Be not afraid!" His words are still full

of meaning.....

A PERSON'S ATTITUDE of mind is of very great importance when it comes to dealing with fears. An elephant can be tied up with string, if it believes it is a captive. And by the same token, if we believe we are chained by habit or fear, we too are held in bondage. And this captivity may be based on a very trivial concern.

People who worry and fear are usually sensitive and very able people. A meron doesn't possess the normal fears that others possess. Recognize that your worries may stamp you as being exceptional. The very qualities that make it possible for you to worry also make possible your mastery of your anxiety.

Fears can be conquered. Fear cannot defeat a person whose attitude is positive and courageous. No one can make a person afraid. If fear enters into the life of an individual, it is he himself who has allowed it to come in. We need to keep in mind that we can only live a minute at a time, regardless of what happens. And this minute can be stretched into hours, and hours into a day. Whip your fears by breaking life up into manageable units, and then live one unit at a time.

It helps if we don't anticipate too much. Don't always be looking down the road toward fears to come. The poet Addison once said:

"Were a man's sorrows summed up at the end of his life, it would generally be found he had suffered more from the apprehensions of such evils as never happened to him than from those which have really befallen him"

We must also be careful not to be stampeded into fear. Perhaps you remember the childhood story about Henny Penny. One day an acorn hit her on the head, and she immediately thought the sky was falling down, and she hurried off to tell the king. On the way to see the king, she met other animals and told them that the sky was falling down. The other animals all joined the panic stricken flight until they came to a hole in the ground which the fox told them was a short cut to the king's palace. But the short cut was really his den, and as they entered, he snapped off their heads until he missed Cocky Locky who called out a warning to Henny Penny. She escaped the fox, and the sky never did fall in - BUT THOSE WHOM HER FEAR HAD STAMPEDED REALLY BROUGHT ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD FOR THEMSELVES.

A recent president of our country once remarked, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself". From Henny Penny to Franklin Roosevelt, the thought is the same - fears can be defeated by not fearing them.

BRING THE FEARS OUT
INTO THE OPEN.

In the second place, it helps if we bring our fears out into the open. Get a good grip on them and haul them out into the sunlight. See them for what they are.

It helps to talk over your fears and problems with someone in whom you have confidence. In doing so you gain a perspective that will reveal the unworthy character and essential unimportance of your fears. A minister tells the story of a woman who came to see him about a very serious problem in her life. She talked and he listened. She continued to talk, and he continued to listen. After she had gone over the whole story at length and in great detail, she arose to go with these words:

"You've helped me a lot. I feel so much better. I feel as if a ton of weight had rolled off my shoulders."

The woman was helped not by anything the minister said, but rather by the talking she did. She had been all tied up inside. The talking helped to unburden the problem that she had been holding inside of herself.

Another method of getting your fears into the open is to make a written list of them. Jot them down, one by one, every single fear and bit of worry that bothers you. Do this for several weeks. This helps to keep the worries in proper focus. The inner pressure will be relieved, and you'll see how really unimportant some of your fears are.

There was a woman who realized that her fears were ruining her life, and so she made herself a worry chart. In adding up all of her worries, she discovered the following results:

- 40% of her worries never happened.
- 30% of her fears were about decisions, old decisions, that she couldn't change.
- 12% of her worries stemmed from others' criticism of her, most of which was untrue, made by people who feel inferior.
- 10% of her fears were tied up with her health which got worse as she worried.
- 8% of the fears could be classed as "legitimate" - since life does have some real problems.....

The second suggestion then is to bring your fears into the open and analyze them, trace them to their origin, and see what's really behind them.....

**TRANSFER YOUR CONCERN FOR YOURSELF
TO A CONCERN FOR OTHER PEOPLE.**

The third suggestion for handling fear is to transfer your concern for yourself to a concern for other people.

When a person cowers and cringes in the snug protection of his own self interest, he is not in the best position to meet the issues of life.

Napoleon in his early years as a lieutenant in the French Army gave every indication of his military genius. The army had been attacking for several days a walled city without any degree of success. The War Council met one evening to discuss further strategy. The older men of the council all thought the key to the city was to be found inside the city walls. But the bright young Napoleon pointed to a place on the map, outside the city walls and said: There lies the key to the city! The older men accepted his suggestion reluctantly and history proved that he was correct. The key to the city was not inside the city walls, but outside the walls. In a sense, this is also true in our personal lives. The key to one's life is usually to be found outside one's life - in the lives of others.

IF YOU WOULD FIND GREATER joy in life, attempt to serve and please someone every day. The gift of yourself to someone who needs you will in return, bring the gift of confidence and serenity to you. Fear cannot exist in the atmosphere of affection and good will. As we find joy in serving others, we will find our fears being cast out.

FAITH IN GOD. FINALLY it can be said that fear can be mastered by an unconquerable faith in God. To help you face your fears with courage, take some "spiritual medicine" or "mental medicine" every day. Perhaps you've heard about the efficiency expert who says his prayers once a year, New Year's Day. The rest of the time he just jumps into bed and says, "God - ditto - Amen". One doesn't grow spiritually this way. "Spiritual medicine" must be taken daily.

Here are a few types of "spiritual medicine" you can beneficially take each day:

Repeat several times each morning: "Nothing that happens outside of me today can hurt me within". You are the master of life, and you can hold the fort against fear and worry.....

Magnify your abilities. Often we have a fear of failure. This comes from a sense of insecurity...from lack of confidence. Remember that you have certain abilities. Develop your talents. Take pride in them and note how your self-confidence grows.

Ridicule your fears. Laugh them out. Refuse to take them seriously. Psychologists tell us that ridicule is the master cure for fear and anxiety. Use it daily and see some of your fears slink away.

And above all, let yourself be helped. Don't try to go it alone. Let go and let God take over..... Develop a faith that's in operation twenty-four hours a day, not just in emergencies.

These are just a few ideas to help you overcome fear and worry.

Minnie Louise Haskins caught the right idea in her poem which was quoted by the late King George VI in a radio broadcast to the British Empire in December 1939.

And I said to the man who stood at the gate
of the year,
"Give me a light that I may tread safely
into the unknown...."

And he replied, "Go out into the darkness
and put your hand into the hand of God.
That shall be to you better than a light
and safer than any known way".

So I went forth, and finding the hand of God,
trod gladly into the night. And he led
me towards the hills, and the breaking of
day in the West.

T US PRAY:

Our Father.....as we come and kneel at thy table this morning,
may we find the peace which passes all human understanding.
Help us to say with the psalmist: "Thou art my refuge and
my fortress. My God - in Thee do I trust!"

Amen.