
Fear the Lord by Elizabeth Underwood

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Memphis Union Mission Men's Homeless Shelter

*"From ghoulies and ghosties
And long-legged beasties
And things that go bump in the night,
Good Lord, deliver us!"*

This was taken from the Scottish Book of Common Prayer and is a classic definition of what many people find scary, especially children. Other people might be afraid of flying, snakes, sharks, spiders, thunderstorms, and you may have fears that none of us even know about. Personally, I was scared to death when I was first asked to speak in front of over 100 men. All of these things represent the traditional definition of fear.

But in the Psalm that was just read, fear has a different meaning. "Happy are they all who fear the Lord, and who follow in his ways! The man who fears the Lord shall thus indeed be blessed." Does this mean that we are to fear God like we fear ghoulies and ghosties? I don't think so. Fear in this Psalm is referring to having respect and awe towards the Lord. It is urging us to respect God's power and have faith in God's ability to protect and take care of us. But it's not always easy to maintain this faith in God, especially in times of hardship. It is difficult to have respect for God's power when things aren't going our way. We frequently ask ourselves questions like "How can a loving God who has all the power in the world allow disastrous things to happen?" And in these times of doubt we often lose confidence in our own abilities and everything seems to spiral out of control. We feel as if God has deserted us and it all seems hopeless. This is one of the great challenges in faith and we all struggle with it at some time. But it is important to remember that God is always with us. If we can maintain this faith in the Lord, then we will be blessed and find eternal happiness.

You are not alone if you have ever doubted God's power. We all go through doubt at one point, some more often than others. A very close friend and teacher of mine, Mr. Johnson, was diagnosed with a serious type of cancer two years ago and has been battling it ever since. He is an extremely special person who has touched and inspired many lives, including mine. Mr. Johnson is hardly a person you would think God would let something so terrible happen to. I've watched Mr. Johnson struggle with the cancer and I know there have been times when he has struggled with his faith. He said that right after he was diagnosed he asked God, "Why me? What have I done to deserve this? What good is coming out of this?" I asked these very same questions when I found out about his illness. I couldn't believe God was doing this to such a great person. For a time I'm sure Mr. Johnson was angry at God, questioned God's power, and turned away from God. But then Mr. Johnson realized that he couldn't go through it alone. He needed God, so eventually he regained his respect for the Lord. Mr. Johnson has come to terms

with this new path God set for him and has faith that he will make it through this.

Even when it doesn't seem this way, God knows us and has a plan for us all. God has a reason for allowing hardship in our lives, but this is very difficult to believe when we are going through those hard times or watching loved ones go through them. We ask, "Why are you doing this?" But is this really the question we should be asking? I'm not sure it matters so much why God does something; and I'm sure there are times when God is the only one who can ever understand it. I think the question we should ask is of ourselves: "What do I do now? I'm suffering, so where do I go from here?" This Psalm gives us the answer; fear the Lord. Have respect and faith that God is doing the right thing. We often blame God during hard times, but God is not to blame. God knows what is best for us. Our challenge is to have faith in the Lord. This faith will help us find happiness and will open our eyes. When in the valley of darkness, it is difficult to see the light ahead of us. If we are closed off, it's hard to see the subtle blessings of God. But when we find the strength to fear the Lord, we will begin to see these blessings. Mr. Johnson's faith gave him acceptance and vision. His outlook on life was changed. He loved his family and friends even more. It brought Mr. Johnson closer to those around him. Therefore his ability to inspire others increased. My prayer today is that we will have the courage to fear the Lord through darkness and light. Amen.