

XVI. L.E.A.D. in Biblical Perspective
Lifestyle of Evangelism and Discipleship
“Overcoming the Hindrance of Intimidation”

Matthew 10:19

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

September 23, 2018 • Evening Sermon

We are taking a few studies to go through hindrances to personal evangelism. Now our lifestyle can't evangelize but it can open doors and affirm the Gospel message we share with people but evangelize is actually sharing the Good News of the Gospel with other people. Part of the Gospel is the preaching of the Gospel and people sharing the Gospel personally in their life. So what is it that keeps us from making evangelism a lifestyle? I have five hindrances that we are taking on one by one and I'm trying to bring a Biblical antidote to each one of them.

In the last study we looked at the hindrance of a lack of incentive/motivation. We addressed the motivations that God gives us with some being for His glory, He commands it, He is worthy of it, because people need the Lord and are headed to an eternal condemnation. These motivations are to remove the lack of incentive/motivation.

Think of someone you have shared the Gospel with in the last seven days. Perhaps you can't think of one. I know in the last week you have had some meals but did you work into the lifestyle of seven days an opportunity to share the Gospel? Maybe you didn't meet anyone who didn't know the Lord. I'm not getting on you I'm getting on me because perhaps I didn't do a very good job of laying out the incentives/motives. So what is it that continually keeps us from doing this?

There isn't just one hindrance to this but perhaps it was fear that kept you from sharing the Gospel with someone this past week. When you're fearful and you're not going to do something you will come up with all kinds of rationalizations as to why it's not fear but maybe it is fear. Fear is certainly one of those things that Satan uses for it makes its appearance after sin in the Bible. After Adam and Eve sinned they hid and God came to them and this is what Adam said in Genesis 3:9–10, [9] *But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”* [10] *And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”* It's interesting that after sin comes into the world then comes fear, shame and guilt.

The Lord takes away our guilt and shame, but can't He take away our fear also? Proverbs 29:25 says [25] *The fear of man lays (brings) a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.* Jesus says in Matthew 10:28, [28] *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.* We are to abandon fear and it is not to have a place in our life except that glorious, life giving blessing of the fear of the Lord. So has fear or intimidation caused you to be silent about sharing the Gospel?

I Peter 5:8 says [8] *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* Why does a lion roar? When a lion roars it strikes fear in its prey and that means it has got its prey. For when fear comes people then are paralyzed. It keeps us from engaging in those things that God has called us to do to serve Him and including sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Now let's look at II Timothy 1.

II Timothy 1:7 says [7] *for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.* God is in control of ourselves because of His power and His love that motivates us.

We get rid of the spirit of fear (or timidity) when we have the Holy Spirit because He brings power and the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love. Because of this power and love by the Spirit we have this concluding fruit which is self-control. Galatians 5:22–23 says [22] *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* In other words, Satan doesn't control us through fear, for our Lord controls us through His Spirit in His power and love and therefore we are His and we belong to Him.

It's no accident that the following verses in II Timothy 1:8–14 say [8] *Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, [9] who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, [10] and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, [11] for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, [12] which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. [13] Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. [14] By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.*

Romans 1:16 starts out, [16] *For I am not ashamed of the gospel...* why would Paul say this as he writes to the believers at Rome? He reveals why if you read further in this text but some would say the reason is he loves the Gospel. I don't associate a statement of 'I'm not ashamed' simply because I love something. I use the illustration of my wife whom I love and I cannot remember ever introducing her 'Hi this is my wife Cindy and I am not ashamed of her.' Further on in this text it describes the death spiral of a culture particularly in the judgments of God in sexual anarchy with promiscuity and perversity but that they do these sins shamelessly (Romans 1:27) and they approve of them (Romans 1:32). So a culture that is unashamed of sin always tries to intimidate those who bring the Gospel but Paul said 'with me that doesn't work for I will not be intimidated or ashamed to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.' I have this in my life that will abolish the fear/intimidation.

I want to give five fears that silence or paralyze believers in evangelism when we go through the everyday activities of life. The first one is the fear of man. We somehow become intimidated by others. We have no problem talking with them normally about what we love as long as it is not about Jesus and about what they love but we know that there is an antipathy to Christ in the lives of unbelievers unless the Lord gives them a heart for Him. Therefore to bring up Christ many times is going to put us in a position where people will respond in a negative way to us. Because we don't like to be unaccepted or rebuked then the fear of man many times will cause us to be silent and paralyzes us in sharing the Gospel.

Secondly, is a fear of the world. The whole world system is against Christ and the Gospel and it is designed to silence a believer. If I say something about the Gospel I might lose my job or get a bad mark or get ostracized in my dorm, my team, my class or among my friends. The world that stands in its rebellion against God would intimidate me because of what it could do to me.

Thirdly, is the fear of fear. Sometimes we're just afraid to be afraid. If I do this then sudden fear will come upon me. No one likes to be afraid therefore we attempt to avoid fear out of fear of fear.

Fourthly, is we are afraid of failure. I may share the Gospel and they just don't believe or I won't be successful or effective. They may reject the Gospel because I didn't do a good job or I'm afraid they will ask me some questions I can't answer. I end up failing the Lord and them.

The fifth fear is just the fear of evangelizing, to take the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that says you're in need of a Savior, you can't save yourself and you know that the only answer is Christ. To a world, unless God changes their heart, the Gospel that ought to be embraced as the greatest new that ever exists, becomes a scandal and you will be scandalized for bringing the scandal of the Gospel. This is the fear of evangelizing. So I'd like to bring Biblical antidote to fear in our life.

I have four passages of Scripture that I'd like to share to help us with fear in our life. These have at least been the antidote in my life and I'd like to share it with you. I will make some brief comments about each one of these passages. I'd like to start by looking at Psalm 27 and this is a very dear Psalm to me. There was a moment in my life early on in my ministry where I was utterly at the end of myself and for six months of my life this Psalm is what the Lord used to give me any sense of equilibrium and hope.

Psalm 27:1 says *[1] The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* This has the echo of Romans 8:31b which says *[31b] If God is for us, who can be against us?* Here in Psalm 27 we're instructed with a rhetorical question and there is no one for me to fear. I wish I could have given you all the Scriptures I had on fear but many of them came from the Psalms. Now let's look at Psalm 56.

Psalm 56:1–4 says *[1] Be gracious to me, O God, for man tramples on me; all day long an attacker oppresses me; [2] my enemies trample on me all day long, for many attack me proudly. [3] When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. [4] In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?*

Some of you remember Dr. Lillback who came and shared the heart and life of the founding father of our country, George Washington and Psalm 56:4 was the verse that was so dear to him. When Abraham Lincoln was converted years later and he heard that and he said in a public statement that he would love for this to be the motto of our nation – In God we trust – and thankfully it became such. In God we trust, one nation under God, with the phrase 'under God' inserted into our pledge of allegiance in the 1950s from this Psalm.

When I am afraid I put my trust in Him. How do I know who God is? I know Him from His Word and it leads me to worship. Worship replaces my fear and now I trust in God and I shall not be afraid. Now we hear the echo of what Jesus said, 'Do not fear those who can kill the body' from Matthew 10:28 and Luke 12:4. What can flesh do to me? One might say 'They can kill me' and I would say good then that is promotion day for you for all they do is just send you onto glory. Now I'd like to look at Proverbs 3.

Proverbs 3:21–26 says *[21] My son, do not lose sight of these— keep sound wisdom and discretion, [22] and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck. [23] Then you will walk on your way securely, and your foot will not stumble. [24] If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. [25] Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin of the wicked, when it comes, [26] for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.*

Here we are brought back to the Lord's wisdom, presence and power and we are told that when the Lord is our strength then our feet will not stumble, the way that we walk with the Lord will be secure and you're sleep will be sweet. If my wife can get her feet level with her head

she's out, she's asleep. Sometimes she doesn't even need to get her feet level with her head, for if she gets her eyes closed long enough she's asleep. I remember my dad saying on one family vacation when there was all this noise happening, he saw my wife asleep in a chair and said 'When that girl got saved she got a good dose of it because she can go to sleep at any time.' I thought that was a good insight.

Did you get a good dose of it so that when the Lord is your confidence your sleep is sweet? It's amazing how that confidence in Him just empties our life of all that would trouble us so that even when we lie down our sleep is sweet. Do you know what keeps many of us awake? It's not just fear but for some it's the fear of fear. To translate the first part of Proverbs 3:25 it means do not be fearful of fear and therefore many try to avoid this at all cost. What is the answer of the fear of fear? It is the Lord who gives us the ability to lie down in the presence of our enemies securely in Him and we can even sleep with sweetness, though they would trample us and assault us. Now let's look at Isaiah 41, another favorite of mine during a difficult time of my life. Isaiah 41 and 43 are two of the greatest chapters dealing with fear but we'll only look at one of them.

Isaiah 41:11–13 says *[11] Behold, all who are incensed against you shall be put to shame and confounded; those who strive against you shall be as nothing and shall perish. [12] You shall seek those who contend with you, but you shall not find them; those who war against you shall be as nothing at all. [13] For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you."*

The 20 texts I had set aside originally for this study acknowledged all the five fears I gave you at the beginning of this study but all of those texts had the same answer to all those fears. The answer is big God, small me. If I try to answers my fears with a big me that will never work. I Peter 5:6 says *[6] Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.* Big God, small me – it is God in you, God holding you, God as your refuge, God taking your right hand and God with you.

If you take all of those texts there were three things said about God in all of them. The first thing is who God is dismisses fear. If God be for us then who can be against us? Romans 8:31. It is because of who God is. I would love that as you pray for me as I preach that I am always faithful to the Word and that you will always be confronted with how big God is. Many, in order to feel close to God, we don't preach the bigness of God. This is why I love God centered worship on the Lord's Day morning where we lift up the transcendence of God.

How great is our God! I believe this is what sets the thermostat of your life and what inoculates you to the fears and challenges of this world. You know who God is through the Word of God and then everything else disappears in comparison. Satan will puff himself up like the birds that puff themselves up to appear bigger than they are but the reality is that you know who your God is and there is none like Him.

Secondly, is where God is in relationship to us. He is with you and that's why it was so important for Jesus to say when He sent us out to evangelize the world in Matthew 28:18–20, *[18] And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, **I am with you always, to the end of the age.**"* I will never leave you nor forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:6, Hebrews 13:5).

I say this reverently that God in all His glory and majesty cannot be a comfort to me unless I know that same God is with me. More than with me, He is for me for if God be for us

who can be against us? Romans 8:31–32 says [31] *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* [32] *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?* God is with you, in you, He's your right hand, He's alongside of you, you are in Him, He's your refuge, He's around you, He's your light and salvation. God resides in small me. His power, presence and peace are within me. He brings direction and purpose in our life.

Thirdly, is what God does to you, in you, for you and through you into the world. He empowers you, protects you, goes before you and He assures you that the enemy is never allowed to do anything that He is not using to grow you and develop you. He will not quit working in me and on me because He is also working through me. These three areas become the antidote to fear.

Finally, the antidote to my fears are given with two direct takeaways from two passages of Scripture. First I want to look at Philippians 4 and show you in context how to dismiss our fears that the world and Satan try to use to entrap us. Satan wants to intimidate us to paralyze us. Because of who God is, where God is and what God does, what should we do?

Philippians 4:4–7 says [4] *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.* [5] *Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;* [6] *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* [7] *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

When the text says to be anxious for nothing it is saying to get rid of fear and anxiety. We don't need anxiety attacks. The Bible is not disallowing valid concerns that we have in a broken world. The Bible wouldn't tell you to cast all your cares upon the Lord (Psalm 55:22, I Peter 5:7) if you didn't have some cares to cast upon Him. Paul wrote the book of Philippians and in II Corinthians 11:28 he says he has concerns for all the churches and so the same Paul who tells us not to be anxious also tells us he has concerns for the churches and doesn't apologize for these concerns.

In a broken world there is a place we have concerns for our children, for how our life will be put together and arranged and they are valid concerns but we don't let them become anxieties and fears. We do that by remembering that big God and what Christ did for us on that cross so right now you can go to Him who has been tempted at every point like you (Hebrews 4:15). Take to Him everything that is on your heart and cast your cares upon Him.

So let's bring this back to evangelism. Lord, I really want to talk with this family member. God you are with me and aren't You the One who said 'when they deliver you up I'll give you what to say and how to say it'? Lord, would You guide me, I'm not asking for revelation but inspired illumination. God, go before me for you know this relative better than me and would you give them a heart just to listen to me and if they don't help me not be intimidated by what they say. Cast those cares on Him for this God who is glorious and great, who is in you, around you and you are in Him, tells you to call upon Him. Talk to Him for He longs to hear you. If you seek Him, knock and ask, you will find Him (Matthew 7:7–8).

The second passage I'd like to look at is in I John 4. What is the antidote to fear as a Christian? Most, reflexively and intuitively, probably would say 'courage.' They would likely say courage is the opposite of fear, but the opposite of fear for a Christian is love. I John 4 shows us why this is so. I John 4:18–19 says [18] *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.* [19] *We love because he first loved us.* Here's your clue to the perfect love.

The perfect love is not your love but the perfect love is His love which provokes and invokes your love. What is the perfect love of Christ? It is so glorious that it has removed all condemnation against you. Therefore we need not fear because of the love of Christ for us. The text says there is no fear in love and perfect love (the love of Christ) casts out fear, then how much fear does love cast out? It casts out all fears – the fear of man, the fear of the world, the fear of evangelism, the fear of fear, the fear of failure – because there is NO fear in love, with one glorious, blessed and necessary exception and that is the precious fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). That fear of the Lord actually goes hand in hand with the love of the Lord.

Do you see how great this God is? We stand in awe of Him and that God is the God who loves you and is in you. Sometimes we can get across the imminence of God that He is within us and we make God more like us but we need to see God as who He is and His bigness, then realize that God is in you. He is not a tame God but that God is in you.

Here I think of the C.S. Lewis book The Chronicles of Narnia. When they ask about Aslund (the lion) who is on the move, the question about Aslund who represents the Lion of Judah (who is Christ who died for us so that we could have everlasting life), “Oh he is such a great and magnificent lion, but is he a tame lion?” The response was ‘Oh my, he is not a tame lion, he is the great lion for our souls and has won the victory for us.’

This God is in you, goes before you, is for you, comes after you, surrounds you and He loves you. That is what casts out all fear. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be in Your Word together. Thank You God that we can confess our fears to You and we can affirm our fears. Many times we’re motivated to share the Gospel but fear paralyzes us. Lord, we want to be set free from fears so help us to call upon You in prayer so that we’re anxious for nothing. Help us to go into Your Word to know by Divine revelation the majesty of our God and how He has saved us from all condemnation and how nothing can separate us from Him. O God our God we praise You and thank You that You are the God of glory and because of who You are we can tell others what You have done for sinners through Jesus. Free us from our fears – from the fear of the world, the fear of man, the fear of failure, the fear of sharing the Gospel with others. O God our God fill us with Your presence and free us even from the fear of fear itself, in the name of Christ our Lord, Amen.