

Most of us spend a good deal of time being motivated by fear. We do the speed limit because we don't want a ticket, we pay our mortgages because we don't want to be foreclosed and evicted, and we are nice to people because we don't want to be alone. When it comes to our faith, much of it is motivated by a desire to avoid hell. The fear of the negative as a motivator does bring about, at times, some positive results. That said, it has an inherent weakness in that if the fear is removed, so is the motivation. In heaven, fear will not be there to motivate us, so we must make love our motivating principle. Let's spend some time this week looking at ways to achieve that.

## Day 1

### Seek Glory Not Safety

To change our motivating force, we must transform our thinking. When I was a child, I wanted to start wrestling, and my father took me to an afternoon wrestling club. Upon entering the gym and seeing the other kids' skills, I became afraid of looking foolish and did not join the club. Rather than seeing the possibility of gaining the skill and glory the other kids already had, I instead focused on the safety of not looking foolish. I believe we often experience these moments. We have the opportunity to help or encourage someone, but we are afraid we don't have the right words and will look foolish. We could share the gospel with someone, but are afraid we will be asked questions and won't know the answers. Throughout these interactions and situations that pop up more often than we want to admit, we consistently seek safety and not glory. It is very difficult to change our motivation from fear to love if we constantly reinforce the power of fear and the desire for safety in our lives. If we want to fit into heaven, we must begin to be motivated always by love, and let go of the safety of running from the things that make us afraid.

Verses: Matthew 5:16, Romans 8:18, 1 Corinthians 10:31

Prayer Topics: Courage, Challenge, Change

## Day 2

### Listen with Faith

I have found that when we get into heated arguments, whether in person or online, we often go too far or come across too harshly because we are afraid of losing the argument. There is a fear within us that the person might say something that destroys our mental model of reality, and that is a painful and frightening thing for us to consider. It is strange, when we think about it a little more deeply, that this fear would be so strong in us. If we do indeed have the wrong mental model of the world, then it would do us nothing but good to come to that realization, and begin to have a more accurate understanding of reality. We would make better choices, and have more success, if we really came to see reality more clearly. What do we have to lose, but our pride? In a more general sense, we are always in a dialogue with reality, and it is always trying to teach us. Psalm 19 talks about the creation of God uttering speech, and we often find ourselves in an argument with God's words revealed in creation. I often find myself trying to accomplish a task, and just as often find myself frustrated in completing that task. Reality is arguing with my understanding, and rather than welcoming the lesson, I get angry at my lack of progress. The key is to be open to the lesson by believing that the love of God is the teacher, and that I have nothing to fear in being taught. If I can put aside the fear of being shown to be wrong, and be grateful for the love of God manifested in the lesson, I can make much better progress toward glory.

Verses: Psalm 19:1-6, 1 Thessalonians 5:21, Ephesians 1:17-18

Prayer Topics: Clarity, Humility, Wisdom

## Day 3

### Embrace the Freedom of Vulnerability

I was watching a video online wherein a man was lamenting the fact that he no longer felt safe in just carrying a handgun, and now had to try to carry his rifle, his body armor, his helmet, and his night vision goggles with him wherever he went, and it was too heavy. It was hard not to laugh at how preposterous it all seemed, especially since this man lived in a rural area where there was little chance of crime and personal danger. Many people seem to encounter the world in this way, imagining the very worst that could possibly happen and then expecting it to happen no matter how unlikely that is. When I was a kid, a fear spread that people were putting razor blades in Halloween candy, and some hospitals offered to x-ray kids' candy, or so we were told. This became a common fear, even though researches can find no instances of children being seriously injured or killed by candy that has been tampered with, even though a few crazy people have tried to injure kids in this way since the 50's. My own experience in the late 70s and 80s of parents fear about tampered candy seems to have been instigated by the death of Timothy O'Brian in 1974 of cyanide poisoning from ingesting Halloween candy, only this candy was not provided by a stranger but by his own father who used the urban legend of tampered candy as a cover but was later convicted and executed for his murder. Rather than letting our fears dictate our actions, we should instead understand that perfect safety is not possible, and that while it makes sense to take precautions against common occurrences, pursuing perfect safety against statistically minute dangers reinforces the power of fear in our lives. Death is not the end, don't let the fear of it control you.

Verses: Isaiah 41:10, 2 Timothy 1:7, 1 John 4:18

Prayer Topics: Safety, Peace, Faith

## Day 4

### Meditate on the Goal

If we overcome the fear of death, what will motivate our actions? The goal of bringing the kingdom to earth should be our motivation. Pursuing this goal should be the reason we do all the things that we do. We have been added to the kingdom, adopted by the King, and share in the glorious inheritance of all that He has. Expanding his kingdom, making it more real in our lives and in the lives of others is a goal that will take all our lives for as long as we live. The problem is, we often have a history of being motivated by fear, and this history does not go away easily. To start being motivated by our love for kingdom and King, we must spend time meditating on the goal, and how we achieve it in our lives. If this does not occur, we will find it very difficult to replace fear with love as a motivating principle in our lives. How will you contribute to the goal of spreading the kingdom? What will that look like today? What part can you accomplish now, and what will the next step be? If we are not meditating on the goal, it is safe to say something besides the goal is motivating us, and it is probably some kind of fear. We are not going to something, but away from something. Spend some time today meditating on the goal, and make a practice of it going forward, and you will see fear replaced as a motivator in your life.

Verses: Philippians 3:13-15, Hebrews 12:1, Matthew 10:7-8

Prayer Topics: Plans, Actions, Results

## Day 5

### Practice Love

Take every opportunity today to practice love. Say the things you are usually afraid to say, do the things you are usually afraid to do. Think about what a life of letting the motivation of love rule instead of fear will look like. That is all.

Verses: 1 Corinthians 16:14, 1 Corinthians 13:13, John 15:13

Prayer Topics: Mercy, Joy, Abundance