

NBC Devotional
May 31, 2023
“Making Room for God's Love”

I wanted to share with I John 4:18. You are probably familiar with it. The scripture says, “There is no fear in love. But perfect love casts out fear.” I love this scripture in the Message version. It says, “God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God, and God lives in us. This way love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we are free of worry...” It goes on to say, “Well-formed love banishes fear, since fear is crippling.”

Fear and love have been part of my life, it seems like, forever. I was raised in a very dysfunctional home. I had a lot of fear as a child, as a young adult, and was married for 25 years and had a lot of fear. I've had decades of fear in my life, so much, that I really did not know how to embrace love. I appreciate how this scripture talks about love residing in us and making its home in us. I believe that because I have had so much fear in my life, there was not any room in my home, in my heart, in my soul, to allow love to reside and live there.

I have an interesting story. I have loved Jesus all my life, went to church, read my Bible, and prayed, and I could never, as my book talks about, get my head on straight. What I mean by that is that I have had this continual wrestling with myself. It's kind of like the angel on one shoulder and the devil on the other shoulder. Like I said, I loved Jesus, but I couldn't quite get it figured out.

Over time, especially after my divorce, I decided that I wanted to be better instead of becoming bitter. So, I worked on my stuff. I did some counseling. I did therapy. I did this thing called healing prayer. If you've never heard of healing prayer, it is what I call therapy on steroids where we invite Jesus into our trauma and into our pain, and where some amazing healing happens.

I had figured out, over the years of studying about my interior journey, that the fear has to be healed so that the love can come in. This fear, this trauma, this wounding that we have in our lives, are layers just like an onion, which need to be healed one layer at a time. As I have healed, I have discovered that it leaves room now to have love come into my home and reside there. I get so excited about this because I think this is about our journey of transformation. I think this is our journey of sanctification. I've started taking these classes about sanctification, and I have loved learning more and more about it. I think it is truly about living out of this place of love. And for some of us, it can be a hard place to stay in because we knew fear first, we knew the dysfunction of the pain first, so when we get that healed, it just makes a huge difference in our lives. I want to give you some tools to help balance some of that fear, so that love can come in and reside in us and make its home in us.

I have learned, as you all probably did, that through COVID, we had to face and deal with fear. This thing came in, swept the globe, and we did not know what was happening. We just knew it was spreading and that people were dying. This created a lot of fear; at least it did in me. I have learned that we have to face our fears, and in some respect, we have to make friends with it.

I have learned how to breathe and how to relax. I did a program for two years called the Soul Care Institute, and during this time, we did different retreats and read a lot of books. We learned how to make space for our souls and how to relax and to breathe; to be still. And you know, like the Bible says, being still brings a whole lot of health for our bodies and a whole lot of calming, and peace to us. It helps us to have more awareness and that awareness is a beautiful thing.

Some more tools include: trusting God, letting go of stuff we hang on to, applying the truth to situations, phoning a friend if we need to talk through stuff, and getting in touch with a therapist if needed.

There is an acronym for FEAR which is: False Evidence Appearing Real. There's another acronym I really like, which is: Focus, Expose, Approach and Repeat. So, it is Focus, instead of freaking out, it is Exposing the lies, instead of escaping, it is Approaching the fear, instead of avoiding it, and you just Repeat, where you practice this over and over again.

John 10:10 is my home church's (True Life Community Church of the Nazarene) theme scripture of having life and having it more abundantly. We all know this scripture, "The thief comes to steal, to kill and to destroy. But I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." If we look at this scripture, it could be that fear comes to steal, to take our joy, and to take our peace, to kill; to kill and destroy, perhaps what God created in us...our beautiful, original goodness; this beautiful work that God has done in us. I think fear wants to destroy our purpose in life by immobilizing us so we cannot walk out that purpose. John 10:10 goes on to say, "I have come, Jesus has come, Love has come, to give us life and life more abundantly, to the full."

Life is hard. Fear happens. It is part of our humanity. But I think if we have the right tools, we can embrace love. We can have this perfect love that casts out fear. And we can obtain that by abiding in the vine, keeping that connection with our power source, our God of love, who loves us amazingly. And as we heal, we will have that love to give back.

Pam Jantz