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THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

who search the Scripture so as to walk in the grace and truth of Christ Jesus.

Lily Tomlin
(comedian)



“The biggest source of stress in life is reality and those who chose to live in it.”

How well do you handle Stress?




Some signs of stress

- Feed - adrenalin junkies
- Fantasize - imaginary world
- Fight - shame & blame
- Fold - give up
- Fret - whine & worry
- Freeze - shut down
- Flee - run away

Carl Jung

“Deep down below the surface of the average conscience a still, small voice says to us, ‘Something is out of tune’.”

Anxiety / Stress

- One of the characteristics of the **happiest** communities on the planet is “freedom from stress.”
Thrive (Dan Buettner of National Geographic Explorer)
- Whining** about the past and **worrying** about the future translates to stress in the present.
- A major cause of stress among Christians is their **misunderstanding** of God and what is expected of them.

The origin of Toxic Stress



Imperfect World + Imperfect People
with **Unrealistic Expectations**

Jeremiah 2:13

“For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”



“fountain of living waters”

“broken cisterns that can hold no water.”

“family”

“adventure”

“Messiah Jesus”

“natural gifts”

“Kingdom values”

“government”

“material wealth”

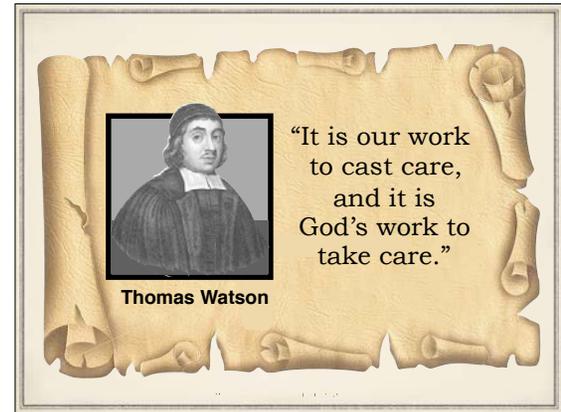
“social success”

“Faith, hope, love”

“physical pleasure”

Our functional Messiah is:

- 1. What most makes us feel alive.**
- 2. What dictates our big life decisions.**
- 3. What we make our greatest sacrifices to.**



Strategies for addressing anxiety

<p>Manage the fear from the outside</p> <p>Desensitizing a person to the triggers.</p> <p>(controlled exposer)</p>	<p>Exorcise the spirit of fear</p> <p>Dramatic intervention through prayer.</p> <p>(deliverance ministry)</p>
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Strategies for addressing anxiety

<p>Manage the fear from the outside</p> <p>Desensitizing a person to the triggers.</p> <p>(controlled exposer)</p>	<p>Manage the fear from the inside</p> <p>Rehabilitating a person’s hopes and faith.</p> <p>(spiritual mind renewal)</p>	<p>Exorcise the spirit of fear</p> <p>Dramatic intervention through prayer.</p> <p>(deliverance ministry)</p>
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Two Different Responses

<p>Change your World</p> <p>Manipulate the Environment Get Relief from others</p>	<p>Change your View</p> <p>Renew the Mind Reinstall Jesus as Messiah</p>
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The problem is not work but rather how we view work.

We must learn to bring the Sabbath to our work.

We do this by not worshipping our work but worshipping God in it.

We cannot let work take a Messianic role in our lives.

We must respect & submit to God’s purposes as we do our work.

Faith requires risk, and the stress that comes with it.

We should expect this and let the Holy Spirit assure and comfort us with Jesus’ words.

John 14:27

“Peace I leave with you; **My** peace I give to you; **not as the world gives** do I give to you. **Do not let** your heart be troubled, **nor let** it be fearful.”

Building a fear
killing faith.

What not to do.

Matthew 6

Mistake #1

Leading with our heart
rather than
our choices.



Matthew 6

“¹⁹ Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ **for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**”

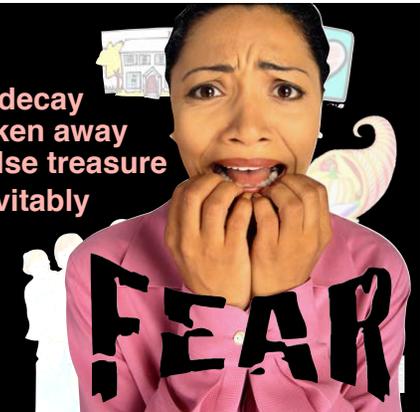
If it can decay
or be taken away
it is a false treasure



If it can decay
or be taken away
it is a false treasure



If it can decay
or be taken away
it is a false treasure
that inevitably
invites



Vision
Commitment
Investment
Passion

A heart
full of fear
will lead us to
make defensive
decisions.

If we are led by hope
& faith our hearts will follow.



Mistake #2

Working hard and / or
trusting God

but for the
wrong thing.



Matthew 6

“²² The lamp of the body is the eye; **if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.** ²³ But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”

1. **Seeing** - is the key to both good and bad believing and behaving.
2. **False hope** - is the byproduct of a short term, narrow context, and worldly perspective.

The problem is not our lack of faith.

It is that our faith is in something other than God and / or for something other than His kingdom.

Mistake #3
Believing that we can have it both ways.



Matthew 6

“²⁴ **No one can serve two masters**; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. ²⁵ For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?”

Serving two masters will double your anxiety not your security.

Matthew 6

“²⁴ **No one can serve two masters**; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. ²⁵ For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?”

We **despise** our spiritual treasure when we place our hope in this life's treasures.

Genesis 25:34

“Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright”

Mistake #4
Neglecting or fretting over material needs.



Matthew 6

“³¹ Do not be anxious then, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘With what shall we clothe ourselves?’ ³² For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for **your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.**”

Matthew 4:4

“Man shall not live by bread alone but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”

Godly character does not neglect nor is it anxious about material needs.

2 Thessalonians 3:10

“For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order; if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.”

Godly character does not neglect nor is it anxious about material needs.

Mistake #5
Failing to keep the main thing the main thing.



Matthew 6:33

“But **seek first His kingdom and His righteousness**; and all these things shall be added to you. “Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.””

When the good keeps us from the best it is no longer good.

Luke 10

“⁴¹ But the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; ⁴² but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.””

Take home

- ✓ Take your baptism seriously and invest your life in things that can't be taken away.
- ✓ When anxious, ask if you are trying to have it both ways.
- ✓ Work hard, trust God and fear not.

Worrying

does not take away tomorrow's troubles; it just takes away today's peace.

APT TO TEACH DIDAKTIKON
A bishop then must be ... apt to teach. 1 Timothy 3:2

Next
Luke 15:11-32

Welcome to my site
This is a work in process. I am frequently updating content as I gain more or better understanding. I encourage you to return often and to share your insights and ask questions.
Jim Abrahamson
Chapel Hill, NC

Home About Bible Insights Hard Questions Hot Topics Theology

Feeling the heat & Seeing the light

hope



YOU GOTTA FAITH IT TILL YOU MAKE IT

Matthew 6

¹⁹ Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth,

The exhortation #1: Don't invest your hope in this world.

where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;

Reason #1: It can be destroyed or taken away.

²¹ for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Reason #2: It will capture your heart.

²² The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

Reason #3: It will infect your whole life in a dark way.

²⁴ No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

Reason #4: It will lead you to hate the values of the Kingdom of God.

²⁵ For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on.

Reason #5: It will produce anxiety and fear.

Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?

Reason #6: It will reduce your existence to material survival which is hardly living.

²⁶ Look at the birds of the air, . . . Observe how the lilies of the field grow; "

Reason #7: It will take time away from exercising creativity, courage, and confidence.

³⁰ But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith?

Reason #8: It is unreasonable for those who will live by faith.

³¹ Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' ³² For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

Reason #9: It will number you with the non believers who are preoccupied with these concerns.

³³ But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness;

The exhortation #2: Make the kingdom of God your priority in this life.

and all these things shall be added to you.

Reason #1: You will make it just fine so long as you stick with kingdom values.

³⁴ Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Reason #2: It will give you of real security and peace you long for.

The mark of a Christian in modern America:

Perfect peace for imperfect people in an imperfect world

Step one in your plan to change the world:

Change.

Matthew 6

¹⁶ And whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance in order to be seen fasting by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ¹⁷ But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face ¹⁸ so that you may not be seen fasting by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you."

Signs that our Peace is from God

✓ **Our response in the face of stress.**

Contentment - rolling with the punches

Courage - confidence to take risks

Creativity - energy to explore new ways

Caring - sharing the burdens of others

Cooperation - being a team player

✓ **The degree to which we protect our "sacred cows."**

✓ **Consistency in life.**

Help for finding peace in the kitchens of life

✓ **Recognize that inner peace is a priority in the Kingdom of God.**

Romans 14

¹⁷ for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. ¹⁹ So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another."

Help for finding peace in the kitchens of life

✓ **Recognize that inner peace is a priority in the Kingdom of God.**

✓ **Replace business with Quiet Time.**

✓ **Set aside a Sabbath Day.**

✓ **Commit yourself to be a model to others.**

Care-giving

- ✓ This mandate focuses on our responsibility to other humans.
- ✓ Humans are social beings.
- ✓ This mandate has to do with social responsibilities and expectations. (Human rights, civil government & discourse, biological family, etc.)
- ✓ Social justice (care for the poor and powerless) is a major theme in Scripture.

Godly character is

The heart of Christ reproduced in the believer by the indwelling Spirit in obedient response to God's Word.



Charles Spurgeon

“Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strength.”



Alice Caldwell Rice

“It ain't no use putting up your umbrella till it rains!”



Andy Stanley

“Peace is a fruit of the Spirit, not the by product of accumulated wealth.”

Stress management award



2,387th place

Thanatophobia



Thanatophobia



The fear of death

Hebrews 2

“¹⁴ since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; ¹⁵ and might deliver those who through **fear of death** were subject to **slavery all their lives.**”

1 John 4:18

“There is no fear in love, but perfect **love casts out fear,**”

Death is what we fear & love is what we seek.

Where are we going?

1. Character and Christianity
2. Character and the image of God
3. Character and the Body of Christ
4. Challenges that shape and show character.
 1. Vision - direction & expectations
 2. Fear - faith
 3. Relationships - community
 4. Conflict - differences
 5. Change - growth
 6. Success & Failure - stress
 7. Private life - the heart

1.
The origin and
nature of fear -
Genesis 3:8-13

2.
A Christian
response to fear -
1 John 4:18
Hope, Faith, Love



1. The origin & nature of fear

Genesis 3:8-13

Genesis 2

“¹⁶ The Lord God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for **in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.**”

Death is the absence of life.

Sensual

Separation
from body

Social

Separation
from others

Spiritual

Separation
from God

Hell
is isolation from life
(eternal death).

Jeremiah 2:13

“For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”

Genesis 3

“⁸ They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰ He said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was **afraid** because I was **naked**; so I **hid** myself.”

Death signs

- **fear, vulnerability,**
and **self-defensive strategies.**

**Too many things
can go wrong
for me to feel
safe when I am
left alone in life.**



Genesis 3

“¹¹ And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹² The man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.” ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Our defensive strategies further isolate us
from God and each other.

Fear sabotages our lives, ministries, & blessings.

Matthew 25

"²⁴ And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed. ²⁵ And **I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent** in the ground; see, you have what is yours.' ²⁶ But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, . . . ²⁹ For to everyone who has shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.'"

Some toxic signs of anxiety and fear

- ✓ **Need to control** - minimize the unknowns
- ✓ **Need for closure** - get it settled ASAP
- ✓ **Black and white** - gray areas are unsettled
- ✓ **Resisting change** - low risk tolerance
- ✓ **Worry / whine** - things will or have gone bad
- ✓ **Conspiracies** - organized doom
- ✓ **Low creativity** - avoid risk of failure
- ✓ **Cup is half full** - bad things will happen
- ✓ **Social withdrawal** - depression, illness

2. A Christian response to fear

Genesis 3:8-13

How does Christ free us from fear?

Ephesians 1

"¹⁸ . . . what are the riches of the glory of His **inheritance** in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the surpassing greatness of His **power** toward us who believe."

"inheritance" "power"

heaven	earth
eternal life	abundant life
we are "in Christ"	Christ is "in us" (not in the circumstances)

Psalm 23:4

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me."

Matthew 14:27

"Take courage, it is I;
do not be afraid."

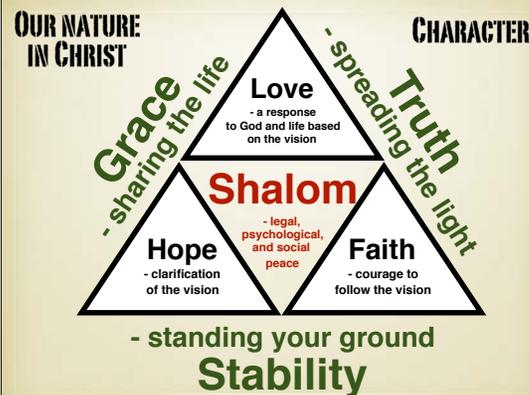
Sensing the presence of Christ in (with) us is the source of our courage in the face of fear.

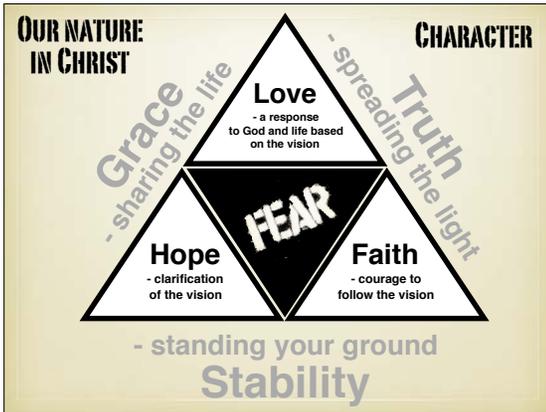


Nelson Mandela

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear."

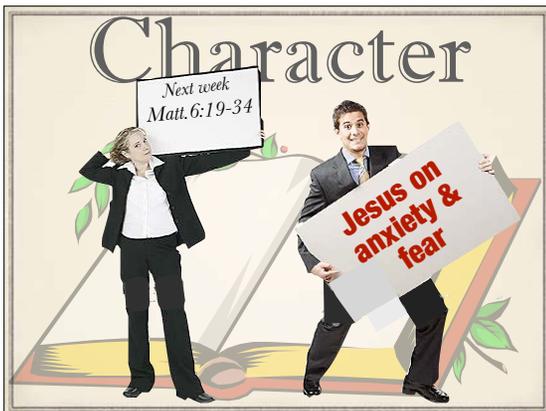
Anxiety (fear) is a dis-ease of soul that comes when the pressure of a fallen world meets the posture of an insecure life.





Christian character is built on and expressed through **the managing of fear** with living hope, courageous faith, & loving community.

- Application**
- ✓ Treat fear as an opportunity.
 - ✓ Prepare yourself for anxious moments.
 - ✓ Be accountable to people who understand.
 - ✓ Picture Jesus with you in times of fear.



The end of

FEAR

hope
vision of the kingdom

faith
steps of courage

love
support of community

We are not just afraid of the unknown but also of the known.

1 Chronicles 21:13

“David said to Gad, “I am in great distress; please let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are very great. But do not let me fall into the hands of man.”

Anxiety can be triggered by:

- present conscious external factors,
- subconscious past internal memories.

MERRY CRISIS
AND A HAPPY NEW FEAR

We may not all struggle with fear to the same degree but we all deal with fear to some degree.

Leaders who do not recognize this and who do not help others manage their fears will probably not be followed.

Strategies for addressing fear

Manage the fear from the outside

Desensitizing a person to the triggers.

(controlled exposer)

Manage the fear from the inside

Rehabilitating a person's hopes and faith.

(spiritual mind renewal)

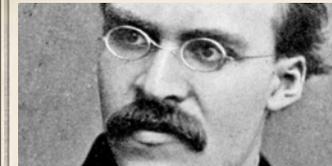
Exorcise the spirit of fear

Dramatic intervention through prayer.

(deliverance ministry)

Remember

- ✓ **Fear is about expectations** - See fear as an invitation to renewed hope in Christ.
- ✓ **Fear is about isolation** - Receive God's love and seek the support of His people.
- ✓ **Fear is about courage** - Respond to it with lives of faith.



Friedrich Nietzsche

“Faith: not wanting to know what is true.”

In the morning of January 3, 1889, (at age 45) while in Turin, Nietzsche had a mental breakdown which left him an invalid for the rest of his life.

Fear of the Unknown

Darkness

Death

Change

1 Chronicles 21:13

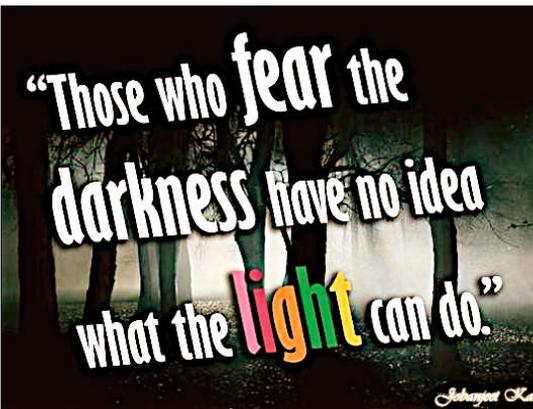
“David said to Gad, “I am in great distress; please let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are very great. But do not let me fall into the hands of man.”

Exposure

Pain

Rejection

Fear of the Known



Basic soul-food groups:

faith, hope, love

1. Faith is the courage to live out our hope.
2. Love is what our hope looks like when lived out.

fear

is triggered and removed
by the object of our
faith, hope, and love.



Scripturally
based faith



sensually
based faith

Anxiety

a general state of the
dis-ease of the soul

Fear

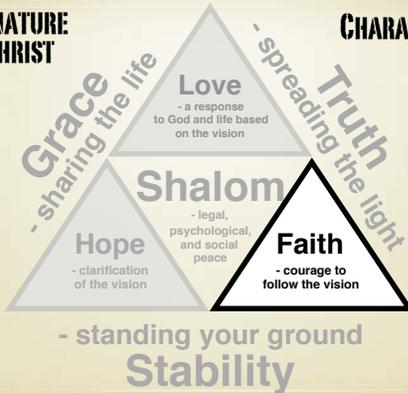
a specific threat

ends when faith begins

Matthew 14:27

OUR NATURE
IN CHRIST

CHARACTER



2.

Building a fear killing faith.

Matthew 6

¹⁹ Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ **for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**

1. Godly character knows **true treasure.**

- If it can decay, or be taken away it is probably a **false treasure.**
- Our heart will follow our **faith choices.**

Matthew 6

²² The lamp of the body is the eye; **if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.** ²³ But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"

2. Godly character has both **light and sight.**

- **Our hope** sets the object and subject of our faith.
- Strong faith in the wrong hope is **idolatry.**

Matthew 6

²⁴ No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. ²⁵ For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?"

3. Godly character does not try to **have it both ways.**

- **Our hope** can be true or false treasure.
- We can lead our hearts with our **faith choices.**

Matthew 6

³¹ Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' ³² For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things."

4. Godly character does not neglect nor is it anxious about **material needs.**

- **Worldliness** is consumed with this world.
- We know that the small stuff will work out because God has provided for it.

Matthew 6:33

“But **seek first His kingdom and His righteousness**; and all these things shall be added to you. “Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

5. Godly character is **keeping the main thing the main thing**.
- When we **order our priorities rightly** we tend to live our lives properly.
 - Live in the **present**.

What are people afraid of?



Dying

Physical pain

Social rejection

Physical risks

Physical Illness

What are people afraid of?

- ✓ **Change** - I do not feel confident in rebuilding control in a new situation.
- ✓ **Losing something of value** - I can't live without
- ✓ **Failure** - My respected image is at stake when I take on responsibility.
- ✓ **Pain** - Physical suffering, social rejection, psychological sadness.

Most popular “Christian” paths to removing dissonance

- ✓ **Retreat & rebel** - I have lost hope in getting it all together in this life.
- ✓ **Pass the blame** - I am not responsible for my mess.
- ✓ **Look for a quick fix** - All I need is to find the key to the power of the Spirit.
- ✓ **Try harder** - I just need more faith, commitment, and discipline.

Satan's sneaky pack of lies

- ✓ **Shame & Blame** - Who sinned - me (shame) or you (blame)?
- ✓ **Unrealistic expectations** for God, others, and ourselves.
- ✓ **A toxic church culture** that is perfectionistic, pragmatic, and punitive.
- ✓ **Fake it till you make it**. Deny or ignore the dissonance.



Important fear killers

- ✓ **A safe community** - where people know they are understood, accepted, and valued.
- ✓ **Trusted leadership** - where people feel informed, supported, and equipped.
- ✓ **Clear realistic expectations** - where people know where they are going and what to expect.
- ✓ **Faith** - where Christ is the functional (not a figurehead) senior pastor.

How do you respond to the ideas and feelings of others?



Yes if.



No because.

Be slow to speak



Be slow to speak

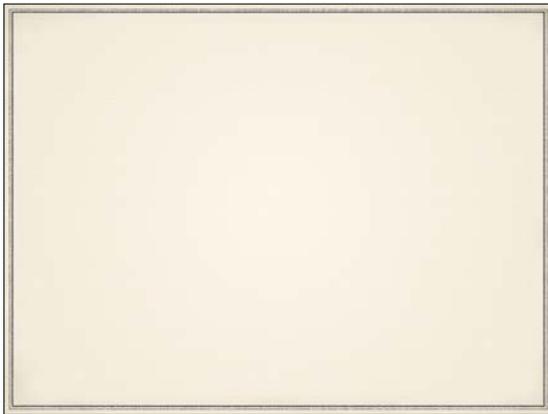
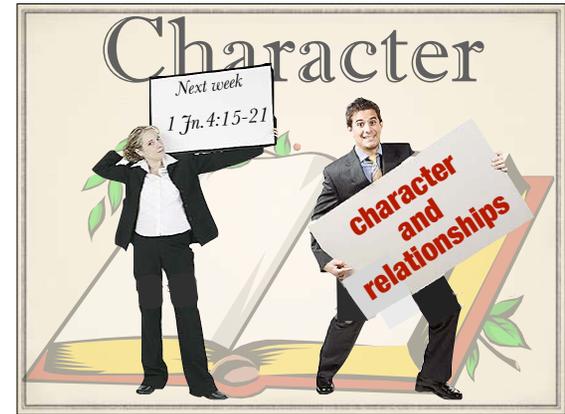


and quick to listen.



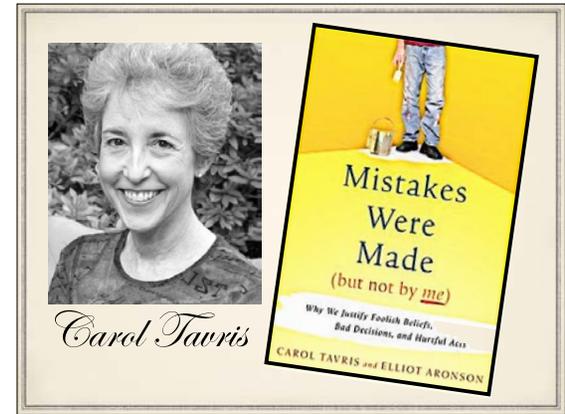
Take home

- ✓ Take your baptism seriously as a statement of your new hope in Christ's inheritance & power.
- ✓ Identify and repent of misplaced hope or prepare for cynicism and despair.
- ✓ Get comfortable with what should be, can be, and is.



1. **The origin of fear** - Genesis 3:8-13
2. **The end of fear** - Matthew 6

- ✓ **Identify** - true and false treasure
- ✓ **Walk** - in the light
- ✓ **Resist** - the world
- ✓ **Trust** - the heart of God
- ✓ **Prioritize** - investments



Ernest Hemingway

“Courage is grace under pressure.”

Thanatophobia (death)

Glossophobia (public speaking)

Trypanophobia (needles)

Heterophobia (opposite sex)

Acrophobia (heights)

Mysophobia (germs)

Astraphobia (thunder / lightning)

Matthew 6

“²⁵ For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, ²⁹ yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith? ³¹ Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' ³² For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”

Stress comes from
unrealistic expectations



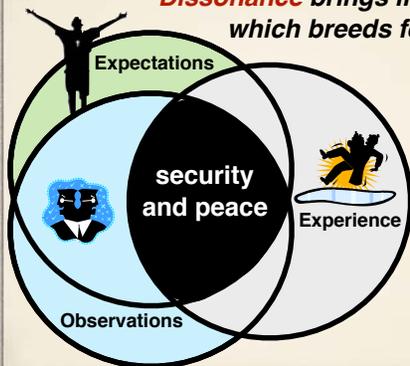
Stress comes from
an insecure world



Stress comes from
messing up



Dissonance brings insecurity
which breeds fear



1. 
**Seeing
is the key to
believing & behaving**

Ephesians 4:14

“As a result, we are no longer to be **children**, **tossed** here and there by **waves**, and **carried** about by every **wind** of doctrine, by the **trickery** of men, by **craftiness** in **deceitful** scheming;”

Proverbs 29:18

“Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, But happy is he who keeps the law.”

Matthew 6

“22 The lamp of the body is the eye; **if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.** 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”

1 Peter 12:1-2



“1 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, to present your bodies as a living, holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the **renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

**Christian character
starts in the mind.**

**It is a vision of Christ
(the image of God)
installed in us and
manifested through us.**

2.



**False hope
is the root of
cynicism and despair**

Bane
Batman's foe in
"The Dark Knight"



**"To create despair
you need hope."**

**Satan
inspires
hope**



**Satan
inspires
hope**



**in anything and
everything but Christ.**

*Some popular "false hopes"
where we expect the deep longings
of our soul to be satisfied*

My heritage	My government
My family	My church
My leaders	My talents
My friends	My work
My net worth	My physical health

*should rather be issues where
our hope in Christ is revealed.*

Two false hopes

"I don't really
need God"

"God will get me
what I don't
really need"

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Eve's temptation **Jesus' temptation**
Gen.3 *Matt.4*

Two false hopes

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**confusion about
the King** **confusion about
the kingdom**

Paul's theology

Philippians 3:7

"But whatever things were gain to me,
those things I have counted as loss for the
sake of Christ."

is reflected in his testimony

Philippians 4:11

"Not that I speak from want, for I have
learned to be content in whatever
circumstances I am."

The problem is not our lack of faith.

It is that our faith is in something other than God and / or for something other than His kingdom.

Don't just trust God to answer your prayers

but pray that He will make you an answer to someone else's prayer.



3.

A vision of hope sees what we should be.

Ephesians 1

“18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is **the hope of His calling,**”

Knowing the Hope of Christ's calling is a sight issue, a heart issue, & a prayer issue.

What is the Hope of His calling?

Ephesians 1

“18 . . . what are the riches of the glory of His **inheritance** in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His **power** toward us who believe.”

“inheritance” “power”

heaven	earth
security	significance
we are “in Christ”	Christ is “in us”

“Anthony De Mello, a Jesuit priest from India tells us the story of a monk who in his travels once found a precious stone and kept it. One day he met a traveler, and when the monk opened his bag to share his provisions with him, the traveler saw the jewel and asked the monk to give it to him. The monk did so readily. The traveler departed overjoyed with the unexpected gift of the precious stone that was enough to give him wealth and security for the rest of his life. However, a few days later he came back in search of the monk, found him, gave him back the stone, and entreated him, ‘Now give me something much more precious than this stone, valuable as it is. Give me that which enabled you to give it to me.’”

4.



A vision of hope sees what we can be.

What should we realistically expect?

Matthew 19:8

“He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.””

1 Corinthians 11:19

“For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you.”

5.



A vision of hope sees what we are.

The parable of the Talents

Matthew 25:14-30

✓ We don't all start at the same place.



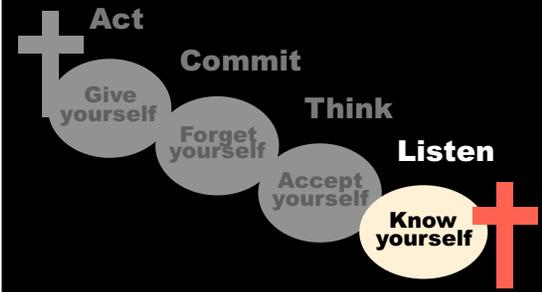
✓ To whom much is given, much is expected. *Matthew 13:12*

**Don't outrun your gift,
your calling, or your faith.**

Romans 12:3

"For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you **not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think**; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith."

**Character is not centered on us
but it can't exist apart from us.**



Our character is shaped by:

How we listen to ourselves

How we talk to ourselves



Our character is shaped by:

How we listen to ourselves

How we talk to ourselves

Where does my anger come from?	I have the power of Christ in me.
What am I afraid of?	Trials in life are opportunities.
What do I really want and why?	Jesus will use me if I let him.

6.



**A vision of hope sees
what we might be.**

Mature disciples know how to manage fear & help others with it.



This is our topic next week



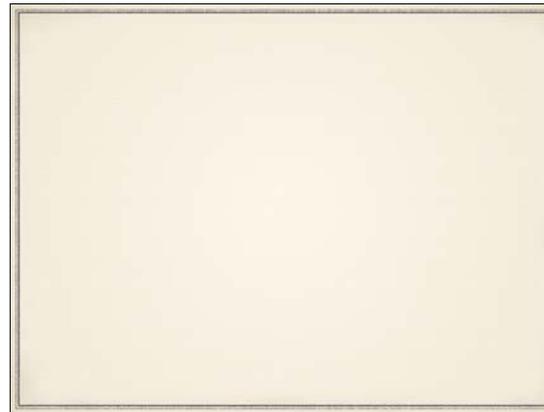
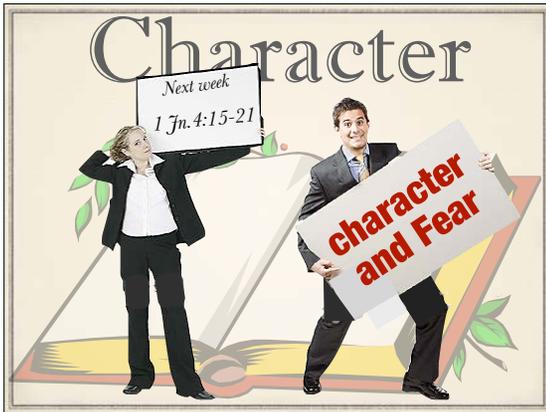
Vance Havner (revival preacher) 1901-1986

"The vision must be followed by the venture.

It is not enough to stare up the steps - we must step up the stairs."

Take home

- ✓ Take your baptism seriously as a statement of your new hope in Christ's inheritance & power.
- ✓ Identify and repent of misplaced hope or prepare for cynicism and despair.
- ✓ Get comfortable with what should be, can be, and is.



James 4
Misplaced hopes lead to:

1. **Social conflict** - vs.1-10
 “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” vs.6
2. **Judgmental relationships** - vs.11-12
 “who are you who judge your neighbor? vs.12
3. **Presumptuous planning** - vs.13-17
 “But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.” vs.16



What is the Hope of His calling?
Ephesians 4

“13 until we all attain to the **unity of the faith**, and of the **knowledge of the Son of God**, to a **mature man**, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the **fullness of Christ**.

1. **Unity** - The church united as one.
2. **Intimacy** - A personal closeness with Christ.
3. **Maturity** - Mirroring Christ’s power, perspective, and posture in this life.

Christian leaders must see five things.

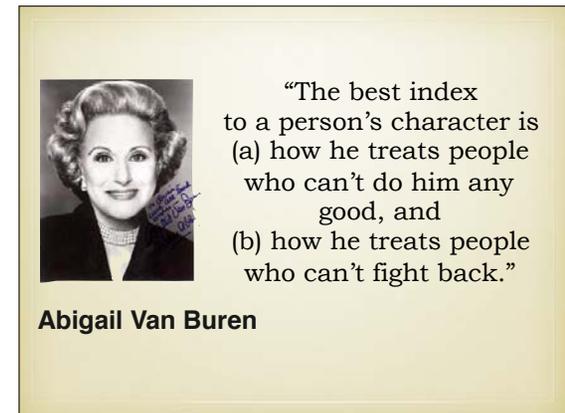
1. **They must see what should be.**
HOPE
Communicate a clear, compelling vision or hope.
2. **They must see what can be.**
FAITH (hope + courage)
Motivate with expectant faith in God and others.
3. **They must accept what is.**
LOVE (hope + action)
Graciously accept the reality of disappointments.
4. **They must be aware of what might be.**
FEAR (hope + caution)
Patiently help others manage their fears.

Followers must engage

1. **HOPE** -
They must show up for community, growth, & ministry. Its not about me. Its about Jesus and us.
2. **FAITH** -
They must expect God to work in and through them. Without risk there is little faith.
3. **LOVE** -
They must respond to what is. Graciously accept the reality of disappointments.
4. **FEAR** -
They must fight their fears as spiritual warfare.

James 4

“13 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” 14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. 15 Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that.” 16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. 17 Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.”





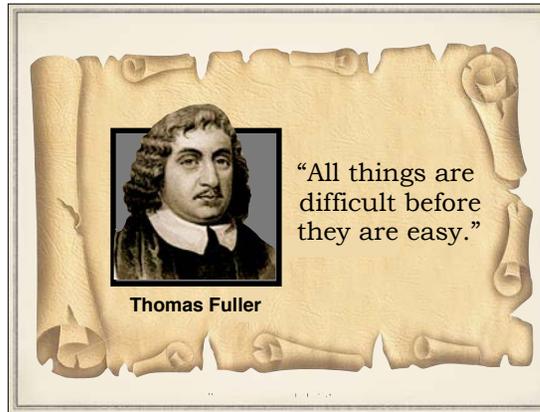
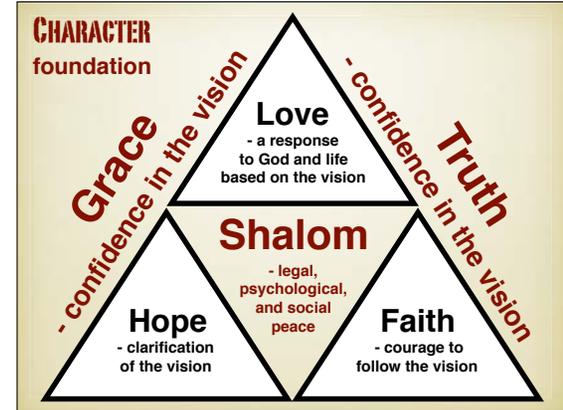
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1 Corinthians 12:4-6

“Now there are varieties of **gifts**, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of **ministries**, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of **effects**, but the same God who works all things in all persons.”

Motivations	Ministries	Manifestations
The Spirit given ability to edify the church	The office or position from which a gift is exercised	The result of the gifts' use in the life of the church
Given at the moment of salvation	Given at the time of ordination	Given when the Holy Spirit works
teaching	pastor, elder, deacon, parent, group leader, missionary, etc.	healing, evangelism, prophecy, mercy, administration, etc.