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Coping with Fear and Anxiety



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Faith over Fear

Fear grips every human though the degree of it may vary! According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "Fear is an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous and likely to cause pain or a threat." Very often, we assume things that are nonexistent and worry about them. Anxiety weighs the heart down!

Where did it all start? When God created Adam and Eve, fear was non-existent. They enjoyed the Garden of Eden and moved around freely enjoying creation. They were not anxious about what they would eat or wear or how they would live. But fear gripped them when they sinned, and they hid from God. So, the origin of fear can be traced back to them. Fear takes control when we lose God's presence and try to live on our own or achieve things without Him. It is interesting to note that the phrase 'do not fear' is mentioned in the Bible 365 times, one for each day, because God knows our fragility.

We all have different fears like fear of failure, fear of the future, fear of health, fear of death, and so on. Students are under constant pressure to perform and excel and to be on par with others and are later anxious about placement, the perfect life partner, and well-settled life. Once placed, stability of jobs, excellence/performance in career, work pressure, professional jealousy, standing for the truth, balancing family, job and other engagements, etc., cause anxiety.

Fear can be overcome only by faith in God. When we know we are engraved on the palm of God's hand and that nothing happens in our life without His knowledge, we can trust Him against all odds. I am reminded of the story of a little girl who was travelling in an airplane when turbulence hit the plane hard. While all the others screamed and panicked, the little girl was at peace. When asked why she was not scared, she replied, 'I don't need to worry because my Dad is the pilot and he's taking me home!' That is the assurance we need to develop when fear and anxiety take a toll on us because God says, "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Is.40.10

I invite you to dive more into the theme as you unfold the pages.

I bid goodbye to Campus Link as the Editor and thank all the readers for your continued support for the magazine. I covet your support for my successor from the forthcoming issue.



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INSIDE

Why are you Fearful? 5

- Evangeline Rajasekar

Facing your Giants 11

- Susanna Deepthi

Trust over Tide 14

- Theophilus Gera

Fighting Fear with Truth 17

- Deborah Joel

**Through the Funambulism of
Life 20**

- Stuthi Lilian Joseph

A unique Identity 23

- Peter Joseph

Fear of Missing Out 26

- Yohaan Varghese

The Kite 30

- Jesintha Mercury

The case of self Worth 32

- Jannie Sanjana Stephen

Now you are! 35

- Pristy Paul

Why are you fearful?

"Why are you fearful?" Jesus asked His disciples in Mathew 8:23-27.



***J**esus, You must be kidding . . . we are in a severe storm. The waves are threatening to cover the boat. I really don't get how you could sleep at a time such as this! How could you not understand the seriousness? We are about to die! Now that you are awake, I was hoping you'd realize it! You are scolding us instead?*

What am I missing?" I walked out of the boat wondering! A pounding heart, rapid pulse, tense muscle(s), dry throat and mouth, butterflies in the stomach, feeling nervous, perspiring, trembling, confused, irritable, weak, or even faint... who living on earth, is a stranger to experiencing one or more of these symptoms? We have all experienced what we commonly term 'fear.' I can well imagine a time,

or rather many a time when I had been afraid of my own shadow, after something made my blood run cold, when I felt like a bundle of nerves, had butterflies in my stomach, and my heart in my mouth. When suddenly that heart missed a beat and got me quaking in my boots and shaking like a leaf. That was something that scared the daylights out of me before I was scared out of my wits and then reached my wits' end but still tried to move on whistling in the dark.' This is my story when I am fearful. Hope the emotive language evoked an emotional connect with the topic we are about to delve into, and hopefully deal with too, 'fear'!

Please read the disclaimer before proceeding further: This article by no means claims that all fear



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and anxiety related issues could be resolved by reading this. This is also not an attempt to spiritualize all fears being a result of sin and say 'Read your Bible, confess and pray it all away.' I understand some fear and anxiety issues like Anxiety Disorders, Phobias, Panic disorders, some traumas, etc., have deep roots and would need a professional intervention through therapy and / or medicine. If you are battling fear and anxiety that is affecting your normal functioning and you have tried to find a relief for some time with no effect, may I suggest you consider meeting a trained counsellor or psychiatrist. You will no means become a second-class Christian. You will also not be choosing God's second-best. God continues His healing ministry through physical and mental healthcare professionals. Earlier intervention could help better!

The article aims to help us understand everyday fears, their causes, costs, and combats.

What is fear? *"Fear is a basic, intense emotion aroused by the detection of imminent threat, involving an immediate alarm reaction that mobilizes the organism by triggering a set of physiological changes."* (The American Psychological Association's Dictionary of Psychology)

Causes of fear: From a new-born who fears separation from the mother to a person on death-bed, who fears separation from his/her loved ones, we are haunted with many fears. Larry Crabb in his book "Inside Out" suggests we have three types of needs: casual needs (things primarily), critical needs (relationships), and crucial needs (unconditional love and purpose). Most of our fears are

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Hon. Editor

about the meeting of one or more of these needs – Will I be able to meet my needs? How? When? and What if I cannot? Let us list some of our most common needs – Food, clothes, shelter, good grades, job, money, family, life partner, love and a purpose in life. We fear bad news, failure, abandonment, pain and suffering, future, death, judgement etc since it threatens one or more of our needs.

Cost of fear - helpful or harmful?

Fear, primarily is an adaptive emotion (that helps us adjust into our own best interest) that facilitates (helps us to progress forward) our defensive resources to protect what's important to us. Fear primarily keeps us from harm. We don't touch a snake, tame a tiger or trespass an electric fencing. Fear persuades us to attend school and work on time, pushes us to find and keep a job, prepares us for the future by saving and making wise financial choices. Fear stops us at the red signals, shelters us from trouble and steps us up when confronted by danger.

Fear can turn debilitating (it slows or stops us) or maladaptive (that prevents us from adjusting to our own best interest). This happens when the amount of fear is disproportionate to the degree of threat, when fear is all pervasive,

and when fear persists during safer times. These fears can deter our healthy and optimal functioning.

Let us scan through a passage in the Scriptures, Numbers 13 & 14, to look for symptoms and effects of debilitating fear. The Israelites are on the verge of entering the promised land and twelve spies are sent out to scout out the land. Of the 12 spies who went to Canaan, ten returned, with a fearful report.

Debilitative fear swells the fear-factor & shrivels the self-factor:

Number 13:25-33 reports that they saw some giants (v.28), the enemies are stronger (v.31), the land devours its inhabitants (v.32) all the people they saw are of great height (v.32) and they conclude "we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them" (v.33). Everything about their fear is swelled up and this shrivels their self-image. ***We tend to magnify the objects of our fear and feel insignificant.***

Debilitative fear skips the God-factor & shifts my allegiance-

factor: Numbers 13 & 14 tells us that God is not factored in their report. They only refer to God wondering why He'd brought them there to die and wishing He'd let them die in Egypt (v. 2&3). God's presence, protection, provision, promise, powerful acts



Lead

are all forgotten: Their memory completely skips God. Their fearful allegiance to the only One who is worthy of it, is shifting speedily to fearing the inhabitants of Canaan, causing them to rebel against the Lord, despise and disbelieve Him (v. 9, 11 & 12). **We tend to discharge** (at least temporarily) **God and let our fear take charge.**

The symptoms of debilitating fear, therefore looks something like this: object of my fear swells large, my image and resources shrivel, God is skipped and my allegiance shifts towards the object of my fear as if to subside it. In this setting, their system triggers the classic– flight-flight-freeze response. Let us check out the Israelites' responses:

The freeze-mode: The Israelites were closest to the promised land, but were shaking with their fears. All they needed to do was trust God like they did at the Red Sea and move on. Instead, they wept all night, grumbled, complained, wished they were dead in Egypt (Numbers 14:1-3).

What are the promises of God, your fears are holding you back from? A

Debilitative fear can hold us captive in a freeze-mode. Many precious minutes are wasted speculating, arguing, complaining, and questioning as fear halts and immobilizes us.

move out of your comfort zone to a dream destiny, a great course/career, a life-partner outside of your idea?

The flight-mode: The Israelites are now talking about choosing another leader and returning to Egypt (Numbers 14:4). Yeah, you heard me right – to Egypt, a place of slavery from where they cried aloud to be saved (Ex 2:23) and when they were out, celebrated God's saving grace (Ex 15). They are in a flight-mode right now. Have you ever wondered why Jonah did not stay put in disobedience but rather travelled to Tarshish? He was on a flight mode too!

Debilitative fear can haunt us into a flight-mode. We flee from God and mostly to the wrong place necessitating a return trip. *Are you able to identify with the Israelites and Jonah? How many round-trip miles & resources could you have saved in life if you had obeyed and moved forward instead of fleeing?*

The fight-mode: Fearing the inhabitants of Canaan they plan to stone the poor minority who voiced their faith (Numbers 14:10). God intervenes, punishes, and sets them on a wandering mode. Now they muster up their courage to transgress God's command. Despite their leader, Moses, and the ark not accompanying them, they move ahead to fight and conquer

the promised land but get chased down (Numbers 14:39-45). I'm sure you can sense that their fear-gears were completely confused by now. Perhaps, you've been there and done that too!

Debilitative fear can hustle us into fight-mode. *What are the wrong battles you are fighting and striving? God may not help you fight the battles He's not ordained for you and definitely not even accompany you when you defy His words to move into a fight!*

In short, debilitative fear is costly and its responses counterproductive. That mandates us to find ways to combat it.

Combat for fear: To tackle or deal with debilitative fear we need to identify the root cause of such a fear. In Genesis chapter 3 verse 10, it is the first-time ever, humankind experienced fear and shame and for that matter any negative emotion. What exactly happened there? Adam and Eve, trusted the serpent and disobeyed God, shifting the allegiance factor, and ate that forbidden fruit. Now they were on a flight-mode running away from God and hiding in fear. When God comes looking for them, they claim to be afraid. When confronted they play the blame game. I call it the fight-mode!

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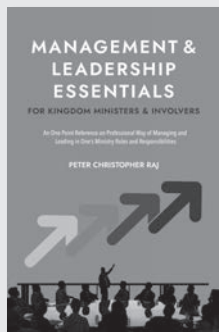
King David shows us a better way instead. He throws himself at God's arms pleading guilty. "Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great;" 2 Samuel 24:14. Instead of the classic fight-flight-freeze response modes, David encourages us to fall into the arms of the One who can help. Give God back the charge of your life and shift your allegiance to God, its rightful Owner, and He will help you see your 'self' in its rightful image, your 'fear' in its rightful size and your resources aplenty because He can provide.

I get back into the boat now and try to decipher the logic behind "Why are you fearful?" The message rings out clear. God Himself is **present** in the boat and is mighty to save. I see the wind and the waves (a.k.a. the swollen fear-factors) bow at His command **provisioning** my safety. When I shift my fearful allegiance back to Him, I realize, no waters can shrivel His **perfecting work** in my life and in the end (by the way it is still not the end), He will take me safe to Shore – His **Paradise!** And then I wonder, why was I fearful?



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Have you encountered a giant in your life? Have you felt like the little boy David facing the giant Goliath? An overpowering and overwhelming giant? A giant . . . you might wonder! In this day and age? Yes, a giant which makes you feel small and fearful, intimidating you. I am not referring to a colossal 9-foot-tall creature with more than 10 fingers and toes. I am referring to problematic incidents, situations, or people we face in our everyday life. The final exams or interviews which you dread, or fear of running out of money, the bully in college who constantly humiliates you, or the fear of losing a loved one. Fear is a common emotion most of us

go through. It could be something in the past, or something we face in the present or maybe about the future. The fear of failure, of embarrassment, of disappointment, of making the wrong decision, of commitment, and of being exposed. The list goes on . . .

Fear is the emotional response to real or perceived danger or imminent threat. The feeling that something is going to get us, and that we can't do anything to stop it. When we are overwhelmed by fear we are paralyzed. It affects our ability to think and reason. It makes us anxious, leading to palpitations, sweating and physical discomfort. Fear can also lead to negative

thinking, hopelessness, loneliness, insomnia, excessive eating or excessive sleep. Some may even engage in maladaptive behaviours such as smoking, drinking or using drugs.

Is fear bad? Fear in itself is not bad. It is actually a basic survival instinct which urges us to protect ourselves from a threat or predator. The problem arises when we let fear take control of us. When we allow room for fear, it takes control and dictates what we do. We all vary in what we fear and what causes us to fear. It could spring from our past childhood incidents, trauma, a stressful life event or what we have inherited. Our personalities also play a role. Some of us have a strong need to be in control, to be perfect, and to please. Some are resistant to change or overthink with 'what if' questions. All these can give rise to fear. We are, however, not a product of the past. Where we come from does not determine where we are going or how God is going to use us.

How can we overcome fear and face the giants in our lives? The familiar story in the Bible of the 12 spies sent to spy out the land of Canaan teaches us few lessons. The report of the ten spies created fear in people. However, Joshua and Caleb gave a positive report of Canaan.

There are some psychological principles and Biblical truths that we can learn from this story. Six R's for you to apply in your situation:

1. Recognise and accept your situation: The spies saw giants. People, reportedly, were big and threatening. It was a fact. Some of the challenges and issues we face are real.

We must recognize them as they are and accept them without denying them. When we identify the fear and its root cause, it helps us deal with it better. Name it to tame it!

2. Reject negative thoughts: When we focus more on the problem we tend to exaggerate and sometimes think of the worst that can happen. They say, 90% of what we fear may not happen. The ten spies reported that the giants were so huge and that they would devour them. They were so scared that they forgot the Lord who was powerful and would not allow that to happen. They focused on the negatives and were overcome by fear.

3. Redefine your resources: Don't just focus only on the negatives but instead relook at your situation with the positives (resources available). The Israelites had experienced the

hand of our powerful God, they had heard of the miracles God had done for their forefathers, and they had each other in the community but they forgot it all. What are some of the resources that God has blessed you with? Perhaps a supportive family, maybe mentors who guide you, a fellowship which prays for you and friends who cheer you. You are not alone. Tap on the resources, seek counsel and Godly advice to face the situation with boldness and courage.

4. Replace Fear with Faith: Faith and Fear are opposite poles. They cannot operate together. Both fear and faith believe in the unseen. Only fear sees things negatively whereas faith is the positive factor. It is vital to replace our fear statements with faith statements. Joshua and Caleb were confident that God was with them and would help them. Fear exists when we have no control over our lives or what is going to happen in future

but the realization that God is in control will reinstate faith.

5. Refocus and set goals: Joshua and Caleb were determined and ready to possess the land. They were working towards it. It is imperative to start moving towards the goal and not let fear make us procrastinate. An idle mind is the devil's workshop. Set your mind on what can be done and move on with it.

6. Rely on God: Most importantly, rely on God through prayer and meditation of His Word. 2 Timothy 1: 7 says "For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline" (NLT). Once you identify your fear/ giant, place it in God's all - powerful hands. 365 Bible verses remind us not to fear, one for each day! As we hold fast to His unfailing promises and unchanging truth, let's face our giants with boldness and courage. We can overcome them with His strength and power.



Susanna Deepthi is a counselling psychologist who works in the area of mental health among young adults. She was a student leader of EU during her college days. She is married to Samuel Simeon, and they reside in Chennai.



Trust over Tide

We have all felt fear and anxiety at least once during our lifetime. Especially during the novel COVID-19 pandemic, the fear of contracting the virus and the anxiety to know about trends in the virus has made us all pass through a tough stage. In recent years, the United States Department of the Treasury has frequently defaulted on debt, putting the recession at stake. In 2022, I saw a video where the boss of a company organized a Zoom meeting and mentioned that all the employees who were part of this Zoom meeting would be removed from the company. Later, there were massive layoffs due to the fear of a recession.

Fear is one of the basic emotions of a human being, like happiness, joy,

sadness, etc. It can be triggered in the nervous system when we are threatened, sense danger, or feel unsafe. Similarly, anxiety makes it difficult for us all to go through a day.

In the book “Elephant in the Brain,” written by Kevin Simler and Robin Hanson, the authors try to explain that, for an alpha male to retain its position, it will not allow a beta male to be stronger than itself. The fear that beta overrides alpha is always hidden behind strict authoritarianism or hierarchy among the creatures. The same is true of human beings.

If we fail at a task, we are always low and anxious about the further consequences that it will lead to

because we are afraid of being overridden by others. But the resurrection gives us the only hope of doing it all over again. The hope that any good task that we perform (through many failures) will bring glory to Christ, for which we will be rewarded as per our deed, should make us move through even the toughest of situations.

We have various instances in the Bible where people have trusted in the Lord during their times of distress and trouble. Let us look at an instance of calming the storm. Israel is full of amazing places. One such place is the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee, also known as Lake Tiberias, has a length and width of 21 km, and 13 km is the scene of many biblical sights. It is one of very few (probably the only one) freshwater lakes that gets heavy tides due to the sudden flow of air from the Golan Heights. Even Peter, who was a disciple and an expert fisherman, feared the power of the tides. The disciples feared to such an extent that they finally . . . woke up the person whom they loved very much in a panic state to help them (see the contrast; they might have said that all of us are perishing rather than we are perishing). They were quite surprised by the fact that, despite the heavy tides, Jesus was resting peacefully (due to his

hectic schedule), and probably the waves were even afraid of waking him up. Jesus woke up and rebuked the disciples. The trust that disciples have in Jesus is far greater than their trust in themselves because they believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God (Mt. 16:16).

The biggest fear a human can have in life is the fear of death, and the fear (anxiety) of death has been coined as thanatophobia. We (Christians) are different from others in that we don't fear death since it will not be the only end to life. The supernatural miracle of the Resurrection of the Lord gives us renewed hope, in which our faith was built by believing in fact without seeing.

"In God, I trust" (Ps. 56:4) echoes the faith we have in him. We do not believe in a demi-god that can put people at stake (God or Baal on Mount Carmel, 1 Kings 18:20-40).

The God we believe in listens to us, leads us through all our fears, and delivers us from our anxieties through his mighty hand. We may be facing heavy turbulence in our lives like the psalmist, but he didn't work like us but gave us his famous oracles, which should be our guiding light, i.e., "Trust in the LORD" (Ps. 37:3).



Satan, through his various tactics, makes all of us go through fearful situations. Make sure to pass through all such calamities with faith intact. Our role model, Christ, also suffered like us, and he endured everything until the end of his life. Similarly, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." (Phil. 4:6). Our

God has led saints to pass through difficult and perilous times; he will even lead us if we trust and obey him and him alone. Saint Paul said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith." (2 Tim. 4:7). We should also go through fearful situations and situations that trigger our anxiety only to fight with it to earn the Crown of Righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8).



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Fighting Fear with Truth



Debilitating. Dreadful. Overwhelming. Should I fight it? Do I have it in me to overcome it? Perhaps it's best to avoid it. These are some thoughts that are commonly associated with fear and anxiety. Fear is a powerful, negative feeling towards a particular object that makes one increasingly distressed and alarmed.

A giant fear that impacts almost all of us in more than one way, is the one we often brush aside without realising how it's made inroads into our lives. In fact, we are guilty of actively growing it over the years. This one is called the fear of 'what others will think'. From deciding which course to pursue, what job offer to consider, who I ought to marry, how I groom myself, what

brands I choose, to how I will respond to a joke, behave in a specific social setting, or struggle with sharing the gospel, this fear can hold us in its grips, without our even knowing it.

'What others may think' often underlies the reason for our desires, (even when the desires themselves are legitimate ones) such as why I want to get married, have a child or even a grandchild. Besides, praying, participating in a worship service and serving God can also be motivated by fear instead of love for God. What's more, we kid ourselves by using Christian language such as 'God's will' while furthering our own feeling of importance or seeking to be esteemed by others. How hypocritical is this!

From the time of the fall, we have felt nakedness. Experienced shame. The need to cover up came right after that first sin. The dread of being exposed before God and the fear of what others would think crept into the human mind and has stayed put ever since.

From the time we are born, we hear of others' opinions and judgements and soon imbibe a specific way of thinking and evaluating, based on our upbringing and culture. Media furthers this with its subtle bombardment. And we find that this often shapes our thoughts for us. Conformity to culture is not a bad thing. But are we the elephants that remain fettered to the pole by a feeble twine? The question is, what compels us, constrains us, and motivates us to action? What are we ashamed of and why? What shapes our priorities? None of us, while journeying on the sanctification path is completely free of the fear of others' evaluations of who we are.

A thinker once said, 'Man is incurably religious'. The need to worship and fear is innate. God called Israel to be holy and commanded them to worship Him alone. They were commanded to not make any graven images. Had they fully followed his command, they would have indeed been 'bold as lions'. But they ran after the

Baals and Asherahs, becoming as foolish as the gods they lusted after. Growing up, I have wondered why they were so atrociously cuckoo, failing so miserably. In indignation, I stood tall among them in my mind. Perhaps, you have felt this way too. Because at first glance, it appears that we are in no way like them, but are way better. It took deeper studies to reveal how the Israelites' sinfulness reflected the filth of my own heart.

As a pastor's kid, I was often told to watch out and consider how I'd come across in the eyes of other churchgoers. Soon this thought grew and consumed me. My main motivation was to fare well in the eyes of others and earn their approval. This eventually led to a downward spiral. Like the proverbial monkey holding on to too many cookies in the jar, I was holding on to things that weighed me down. Such wasted energy! Years later came the realisation that I am chosen to be holy and blameless before Him. Only He can keep me grounded. I am called to fear God and not give His place to another. I ought to live to glorify Him. That alone is my life's purpose. I was so busy keeping up my image that there was no mental space left to glorify my Maker. People around me were my Baals and Asherahs. I had multiple high places to tear down.

I needed to repent. Since then, God has been faithfully training me to look to Him as my Captain and my ever present help.

The fear of others can be powerfully combated and won when we replace the wrong fear with the right one - fearing God. Surely the songwriter experienced this before he wrote 'twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved'.

- Study the attributes of God and marvel at His unique awesomeness, greatness and perfection. Enjoying His bigness puts all things in perspective.
- Speak scripture to yourself and submit to the truth.
- Do not elevate education, riches, looks or peoples' words - either positive or negative, above what Christ has done for you on the cross. He alone establishes the worth of His chosen, purely on the basis of what He has done. How dare we re-define that?
- Ask God to shed His light into the unfrequented, dark crannies

of your heart; there could be some strongholds He could help you uncover. He is faithful and just to forgive when we cry out to Him in repentance.

- Seek Him to help you occupy yourself with 'what God thinks' instead of 'what others would think'. He is ready to transform our thinking if only we would ask.

Finally, know that transformation is no 'twirl of the wand' magic. It is a slow process. With conviction and God's empowerment, King Josiah invested many months of tireless work to cleanse Israel and usher in reforms. Thoughts hard-wired over years of brooding become second nature. When presented with similar situations, the mind spontaneously responds in set patterns once we've shaped it to do so. Hence change and re-wiring takes time. But progress is certain if you allow God to work in you as you constantly cling to scripture, making it your truth. Also, ask God for people with whom you can be vulnerable.

May we grow more joyful and fearless as we fear God and let His Word govern our minds.



Deborah Joel is a Special Education Coordinator at an international school in Bangalore. She is married to Prabhu Dhanaraj. Both of them have served in various capacities in UESI.



Through the Funambulism of Life



Having been born into the circus life, Maya, a 19-year-old, liked to think of herself as an established funambulist, more commonly known as tightrope walking. Coming from a family of acrobats, she was mesmerized thinking of the “view from above” walking on high ground. Being the only child to her aging parents, they were quite hesitant to stoke her fascination. Yet, despite their evident disapproval, Maya snuck out of her little tent on the night of her 10th birthday, declaring to herself that she was in fact quite grown up to do what her heart desired the most. Her heart was thumping as her small limbs held onto the ladder. Up and up she climbed towards the moon peeping in from the tent. Looking down, her

stomach lurched; she could see the whole circus theater. She would do this, she had waited her whole life for this moment!! The rope was before her and all it took was a small step of courage. She had seen her mom do this, even her older cousin, so naturally, she should be able to do it. And so saying she took her first step on the rope.

Fear washed over her, there was no turning back now. It was either moving forward or going down. She wished for her mother and prayed for her father to somehow come to save her. But her mouth made no sound, too scared to lose balance and fall. A crow flew in as if to watch the tragic show. Its sudden appearance startled Maya who slipped and fell into the

darkness below. Regret and shame washed over her as she slipped. She closed her eyes in hopes to bear the inevitable fall.

Looking back, Maya knew that was a moment life changed for her. A close brush with death, the fear of falling, of never being able to get back up, all because she was completely unaware of the safety net tied below her. It was the net that saved her life, that gave her strength to climb that rope yet again, a net that gave her the strength to face the fall.

Many of us weather the storm's life, completely unaware of the safety net of God. Psalm 91:4 talks about a God who promises to cover you with his feather. A God who promises refuge to those who seek Him. What a great hope we have, knowing that we are never alone but that we have a God who seeks to protect us. His faithful promises are your armor and protection (Psalm 91:4).

Fear and anxiety are not just experiences of the "young generation". Many face their battles with fear; and with it often comes self-doubt, questioning your life's purpose, questioning all the choices and decisions you've made, and feelings of worthlessness... Fear /Anxiety is a whole package deal, nobody gets to pick and choose their struggles.

A recent conversation with a well-established doctor reaffirmed the same. Despite having accomplished over two decades of service in the pediatric ICU and a postdoctoral, he desired to learn more. However, leaving his family and a highly-paid job to pursue another Postdoctoral fellowship was a mammoth task. As he took this step, he too was faced with the colossal waves of self-doubt, fear of failing, of having bitten off more than he could chew. And yet, as our conversation continued, he recounts how his faith was renewed having taken this daring step. After all those years of service, he finally realized what it meant to be a part of 'God's plans'. In his words "It was like a burden was lifted off my shoulder".

Even King David, a man after God's own heart, wasn't immune to anxiety. Yet in his despair, he reminds himself "Why are you downcast O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Salvation and my God.

How wonderful it is to have a Father who knows you and walks with you. A Father tells you not to fear, or be discouraged because he is right there with you as you walk on the tight ropes of life. A God who promises to strengthen you, help you, and protect you wherever you go.



From the greatest King to a doctor who left his job, to parents caring for their child, to a child praying for their parents . . . everyone goes through some form of fear and anxiety over an uncertain future. It is the burden that life brings to each one of us. And yet God reminds us that he is there to take on the heavy yoke and make our burden light. That is the hope we live in. Even as the heavy burden of our worries, failed plans, missed opportunities, and regrets of life are lifted. Let us pick up the weight of submission to

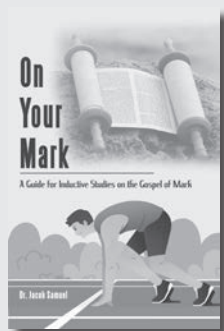
his plan for our lives, to minister and to serve people wherever he has placed us. The story of the Christian life is about faith, hope, and love (1 Cor 13:13). Faith in a God who will hold you through the highs and lows of life; Hope in his promise and the fulfillment of His purpose for your life; and Love that flows from Him into us, and onto those around us; a love that gives us the strength to face the bumps and falls of life.

Oh taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! (Psalm 34:8)



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A unique Identity



It appears that, to be a disciple is being alone in the world as a stranger and wanderer facing persecution and insult from those who oppose us. In line with this thought, Peter said that the disciples are strangers and wanderers and, Paul adds further saying that we are not the citizens of the world. Jesus said that he is not from this world; it means that he is from above and his kingdom is heavenly.

As disciples, we are strangers to the world, then the question arises, 'what is our identity as a disciple? 'where do we belong, how we

belong to and why we belong to', it is important and significant to understand this to be clear with our journey as a disciple.

A unique disciple:

A disciple, as a title, is not an isolated word; it is connected with the person whom he is following. The 'disciple mark' was first given to the follower of Moses and in the NT Jesus Christ calls his follower, a disciple.

Jesus' disciples are not mere followers of a few instructions or set of commandments; They are the followers of Jesus Christ who

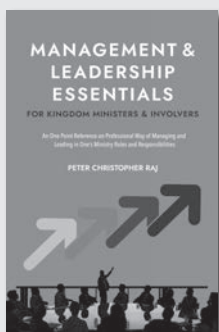
promised them to be his disciples forever and ever. The relationship of the disciple and Jesus Christ is a unique one. The absence of this unique relationship will lead to a one-way relationship and the disciple will become a devotee.

Jesus' disciples are followers of Jesus Christ to be his disciples and make disciples of all nations. The

fruit of making disciples ends with an ultimate relationship with him in the new heaven and new earth.

Jesus' disciples are not followers of a different path but the path Jesus took of persecution and crucifixion to reach his father in heaven. Just like Jesus, we must go through persecution and trials to reach the destination of being with Him.

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A Unique relationship:

Jesus' disciples don't choose to follow him. It is He who has called us to follow him. Jesus calls Peter, John, and Andrew to follow him. He takes the initiative to open our hearts to receive Him as our personal Saviour. The initiative comes from him because we are dead in sin and are trespassers. After we accept him, he seals us with his Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13).

Once we become his children, there is no need to create our own identity or chase after other identities. God's child is the greatest identity that God has given us.

Our relationships with our close ones have questions, doubts, and limitations hence the assurance of a relationship with Jesus is a significant one for his disciples. The relationship with Jesus is extended to his Father through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts and testifies to our spirit calling him 'Abba father',

A Unique identity:

As we call him 'Abba Father' through the Holy Spirit, we become the heavenly father's child.

Jesus' main aim is to reveal His Father, to show that He and His Father are one, and He is the only way to the Father. He also promises us to take us to His Father's house (John 14:2-4). Jesus is the eternal son to the father, then we become the Father's child. By this, the Father's son Jesus becomes our elder brother (John 1:12, John 20:17). We get included in the divine family through the identity of God's child and we belong to God's divine family.

As disciples, we look like fools before the world but we are God's children. God is our Father; Shepherd and He is the creator of us. Being God's child gives me the answer to the question of who am I? where am I coming from? Where am I going? and what is the purpose of my life. All these questions get answered with the unique identity of 'I am God's child'.



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FEAR OF MISSING OUT



"Oh, she's such a teacher's pet." "I've been working here for 2 years but I don't get the credit I deserve." "They went for the trek but didn't invite me." "I'm always everyone's last choice." If these are the kind of thoughts lurking around in your head then you and I have this in common: we suffer from FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out). As a concept, it's been around for a while and we trick ourselves into believing that we don't have this silly fear but it's a reality for many people. We desire attention, recognition, fellowship, and love and it's because we were not created to live alone.

The fear of missing out is that feeling of anxiety or worry that others are seemingly having more

rewarding/fun experiences without you. Here is some more information about FOMO:

- FOMO is experienced by 69% of millennials.
- Travel (59%), parties and events (56%), and food (29%) are the biggest things that create FOMO among millennials.
- FOMO is experienced by 56% of social media users.

People often experience FOMO when they hear other people talk about the time they spent together or the inside joke we don't get or when getting sidetracked in a group conversation. Also, when they see other social media users' highlights in various forms (posts,

stories, reels, etc.). They have a feeling of anxiety when they come to know that others are having rewarding experiences without them. Browsing social media sets up a person to experience FOMO even though social media isn't the only reason causing FOMO.

In the Bible, the serpent manipulated Eve with a seemingly legitimate question: "Did God *really* say 'Do not eat of this tree?'" Eve dwelt on the fact that the fruit looked delicious and was likely to benefit her by gaining wisdom. She and Adam, in turn, wanted it badly. Once they entertained doubt and FOMO, it led to temptation, and they took matters into their own hands. The

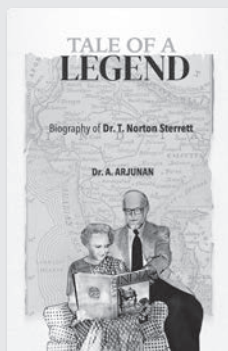
devil can use FOMO to lead us to sin, to disobey our heavenly Father.

Jesus reminds us in Matthew 6:25-33, *"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all."*

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Paul tells us in Romans 8:28 - "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

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Paul also argues that the physical circumstances in which we live are beside the point. Christ strengthens Paul to live selflessly no matter what. *"I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength"* (Philippians 4:11b-13).

All other passions need to fall into line with the Christian's primary purpose of "glorifying God and enjoying Him forever." God wants good things for us *"there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil – this is the gift of God."* (Ecclesiastes 3:12, 13)

Some ways we can deal with our FOMO is:

1. Don't let your emotions take you away from reality. When you are feeling left out or like you're missing out on something amazing, ask yourself some version of the following questions:

- Do I really want to be there instead of here?
- Is that what's really important right now?

- Am I feeling jealous of someone else's fun or success? Is that really my lane to run in?
- How can I stay focused ahead in my own lane?
- What do I want that I don't have right now?

Most of the time if we go through the process of asking ourselves the tough questions, even when we are upset and emotional, the answers bring freedom.

2. Switch to JOMO:

Joy of Missing Out allows you to let go of your thoughts of other people's lives, and focus on what you're doing and why you're happy where you are. And while we have all likely experienced FOMO, we have also likely experienced the joy and relief of canceling plans we never actually wanted to attend. Instead of being disappointed in what you missed out on, try enjoying and living in the moment. Don't miss out on the people and the opportunities in front of you. Do things you enjoy or things that you need to do but have been putting it off for a long time.

3. Jesus is fun:

Jesus knows you inside-out. He knows what lies ahead of you. He knows what's best for you. Talk to him, and share your thoughts,

insecurities, strengths, weaknesses, and desires. He wants to converse with you with no walls. You are never alone if you know Him. 1 Peter 5:7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Let your fear of missing out drive you to God today. Let your FOMO teach you to pursue purity so you can see more of God. Let your FOMO prompt you to repent fearlessly, refusing to wait for another second to see your Father sprint toward you. Let your FOMO drive you to make radical decisions because you would hate to miss out on a single drop of grace.

"Because He lives
I can face tomorrow
Because He lives
All fear is gone
Because I know
He holds the future
And life is worth the living
Just because He lives"

You can truly enjoy life when you know He lives, and your tomorrow is in His hands.

This article is missed in the FOMO edition by mistake, its edited and can be published with the relevant themes, probably in coping with fear and anxiety issue



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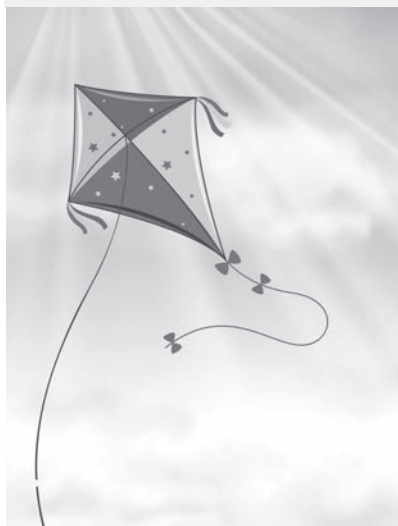
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The Kite



One day my maker made me a Kite out of normal paper. He did His best to make me beautiful. He gave me wings to fly in the sky. He painted me like a butterfly. I was ready to fly in the sky. But I had fear deep inside me. I said to my maker 'Master you are not with me while I am flying in the sky then how can I fly?' Then the master replied, 'Dear lovely kite I will hold you connected always through the thread, when you fly, I may not be visible, but if you miss the connection with me

So be careful to stay connected with me through the thread and not to rebel and go ahead with the flow of the wind, against your limit on seeing worldly pleasures.'

through the thread you will fall somewhere else.

Having listened to all these instructions, the master slowly relieved me through the thread. Though I struggled to fly initially, my master kept encouraging me. I started to fly and see the world for what it is and enjoyed it. I had great courage to connect with my master through the thread and my master was so happy about me. My master didn't allow me to fly to heights where I couldn't balance. But, this made me feel bad. I forgot my master's instructions and only saw the deceitful world. I started to rebel against the master and cut my relationship[connection] with the thread.

After that I couldn't bear the force of the wind against me resulting in me flying erratically. I couldn't fly with balance and felt that something was wrong and that I was falling. I fell where I didn't want to . Now people who appreciated me at one time did not even look at me now. I was neglected and abandoned. Now only I realized my mistake and my master's loving word. I cried a lot. I thought my master would hate me and think ill of me. But that thought went totally wrong when my master came in search of me. It was His grace that I fell near

my master's place and my Master found me. He gave me first aid and removed my broken wings and instead gave me new wings to soar. I was so touched by the way he cared for me. I decided not to leave my master by staying connected, while flying. I thank God that my broken relationship with my Master was restored.

Dear friends, Remember your Creator and stay connected with Him through His Word. Do not feel bad when he does not allow you to reach some heights. It's for your

safety only. Do not rebel against God by not obeying his command. He created you to live for him. He loves you the way you are!

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. John 15:5-7



Jesintha Mercury and her husband Mercury are UESI-TN staff based at Chennai. They are blessed with a daughter, Jovitta.

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The case of self Worth



Man has two aspects to his nature that need to be duly addressed when we talk about his identity- human depravity and divine design. Be it low self-esteem or self-righteousness that history has shown to man's tainted name, it is a lack of acknowledgment of one of these two aspects that models these patterns. A lovely song about the Cross comes to mind when I think of this, "My Worth Is Not In What I Own", which goes,

"Two wonders here that I confess,
My worth and my unworthiness,
My value fixed, my ransom paid,
At the cross."

Some prominent things define our earthly identities. These things show how another human sees, regards, and treats us. Some characteristics of these identities are changeable, and some are not. Human pursuit as we understand it today has

been much about the pursuit of improved earthly identities in the hope of man's glory. A high-paying job, an aesthetic-looking body, fancy cars, and homes are the 21st-century individual's bucket list, not for the sufficiency of life but for the pleasures of it. However, in the Parable of Sheep and Goats (Matthew 25:31-46), Christ speaks of our true identities and how it we head to our final destinations. To this end, we do not see mankind persisting. While we live in contention of flesh and spirit, when we place our identity in the matters of the flesh, we will stumble and fall, for the ways and schemes of this world are wicked and fleeting.

We continue to live our mortal lives in the hope of eternal glory and a Christian's identity must be in Christ alone, just as there is One salvation, faith in Jesus Christ, that spares us

from his divine wrath and righteous anger. The Psalmist cries, *O my soul, you have said to the Lord, "You are my Lord, My goodness is nothing apart from You."* (Psalm 16:2). In this goodness of God our identity lies, an identity that gives our lives purpose and our souls, calling.

The mental health crisis we see today is evidence of this- both in an unbeliever and the believer appeasing his carnal self. Unless we embrace our true identities that are in Christ Jesus, we will be of faltering worth in our sight.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10). The new creation that we are, walking in the call to do all things for God's glory, there is a greater danger for the Christian who seeks his glory in those good works. Our flesh deceives us when we speak of our good works with a desire to be applauded by men- our mouths proclaim, "I boast in Christ Jesus" and our heart yearns for its glory. Let us be wise here, fellow believers. In true humility and absolute obedience, Christ prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, that he be glorified and that the Father be glorified in Him (John 17:1-5). Christ has promised us eternal glory in Him (Romans 8:30) and we would

be foolish to yield ourselves to our glory in good works.

The beauty of creation and the intrinsic worth of a man is described by David in Psalm 139:13-15, where he says, *"For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth."* To the King of a glorious nation, a man that went from rags to riches, David rejoices in his own self, not in pride but in the handiwork of God in him. So should we. "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). We have much cause to rejoice in our self-worth for it is God's redemptive work.

To what end can we dwell in our self-worth? A much-mentioned passage in the secular world today is Jesus' command, "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31), from which extrapolation is made in this statement- "You cannot love another unless you love yourself". Self-love conversations today, as wholesome as they sound, are not

Biblical. In his letter to Timothy, Paul talks of the end times with a generation of people who are lovers of self (2 Timothy 3:2). The sacrificial love of Christ cannot be depicted in the lives of those who love themselves. Self-love patterns lethargy, lack of accountability, greediness in us. But in hating ourselves we become people of the cross, quick to gospel and selfless in our deeds, and our joy and hope will be in the Lord, who will bless the labour of our hands.

In the worth bestowed upon us, we live as living sacrifices and view others as worthy of love. The response from self-worth will then be servanthood to mankind unlike self-love, where one always comes before others. "Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord, and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the

form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped" (Philippians 2:2-8). In acting from self-worth, one is not oblivious to or reckless about his own needs but is always mindful of those around. In a world that preaches self-love, it is important that our EU groups and open homes are safe and loving places. Our intention when we gather as believers should not be to merely receive from the fellowship but grow in the Lord and give to one another.

Quoting a few more lines of the song,

*My worth is not in what I own
Not in the strength of flesh and bone
But in the costly wounds of love
At the cross.*

"What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honour" (Psalm 8:4,5). Such love God has for us, unworthy as we are. Let us be diligent, doing all we do for God's glory, honouring God in our lives and in the worth He has given us.



Jannie Sanjana Stephen is an MS student at IIT Madras. She began her journey with UESI as a student at Shiv Nadar University, Greater Noida, where she was part of Greater Noida EU. Currently, as an intern in Bangalore, she continues to be part of EGF. She enjoys writing poetry and discourses with Biblical criticism.

Now you are!

Once you were not His, but now you are,
Chosen, Royal, Set-apart, His Own!
You are His envoy to the unknown,
Unknown once you were, now you are not!

You had a plan for yourself, but He has a greater one,
To be His Own, to envoy His Glory to all,
For you are the envoy of Him Who took you out of the fall
So, your plans are now to Him, to Whom you belong,

You were not able to see, you were in the darkness,
He bestowed His marvelous light,
Cut opened the veil that covered your sight,
You were blind, but you now are able to see!

Be in exile from the passions of the flesh, away you be from it,
The flesh is against you, against your soul,
Your heart is fragile, and flesh may gain control,
So be a sojourner with the beloved ones and abstain from the flesh!

Ref: 1 Peter chap. 2



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PIT TO PALACE

The life of Joseph was a life lived fully dependant on God and His faithfulness in all situations of life, good or bad. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul says, "Now these things occurred as examples.

(ie. in the lives of the Old Testament children of God) to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. (1 Cor. Ch 10:6)". Surely, his life is a good example for all believers in Christ to follow in their lives.

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