


7-DAY DEVOTIONAL · PART 2 OF 3

# Fearless: Courage for Anxious Hearts

Pastors Hazen and Hannah Stevens · GateCity Buckhead

gatecitybuckhead.com/fearless

Scripture: ESV

# Welcome

"Do not be anxious about anything." It sounds impossible until you see how God's love, prayer and the Holy Spirit work together to guard your heart. In this 7-day plan, Pastor Hazen and Hannah Stevens of GateCity Buckhead explore perfect love that drives out fear, Peter walking on water, casting your cares on God, and a powerful story of supernatural freedom from doubt. Part 2 of the Fearless series.

These devotionals are adapted from *21 Days of Fearless Living* by Hazen and Hannah Stevens. Anxiety is real, and you are not weak or faithless for feeling it. God meets us in the middle of it.

## How to use this devotional

- Set aside about ten minutes a day. Read the Scripture passage first, then the devotional.
- Do the call to action. Write your answers down if you can.
- Pray the prayer out loud, then keep talking with God in your own words.
- Go through it with a friend, your small group or your family.

If you are in crisis or thinking about harming yourself, please reach out today. In the U.S., call or text 988 any time.

DAY 1

# Perfect Love Drives Out Fear

**Read: 1 John 4:16-19**

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love." (1 John 4:18, ESV)

John makes a surprising connection. Underneath a lot of fear is a picture of God that is not true: a God who is waiting to punish us, who is disappointed in us, who might pull away.

When we do not fully grasp His love, we live braced for rejection. And that bracing becomes anxiety.

The answer is not trying harder to not be afraid. The answer is to experience His love more deeply. As our picture of God is healed, fear starts to lose its grip.

God is a loving Father. His love for you is not based on your performance. It is steady, generous and patient. He is not keeping score. He is drawing you close.

> **TODAY'S CALL TO ACTION**
>
> Where do you still expect God to be harsh with you? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you a true picture of the Father's heart toward you.

> **PRAYER**
>
> *Father, heal the places in me that still expect punishment from You. Let me experience Your perfect love, the kind that casts out fear. Amen.*

DAY 2

# Eyes on Jesus

**Read: Matthew 14:22-33**

It was three in the morning. The disciples had been fighting the wind and waves for hours. Then they saw a figure walking toward them on the water, and they cried out in fear, "It is a ghost!"

Jesus spoke immediately: "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." (Matthew 14:27, ESV)

Peter answered, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." And Jesus said, "Come." (Matthew 14:28-29, ESV)

Peter stepped out of the boat and walked on water. But when he looked at the wind and the waves, he was afraid and began to sink. "Lord, save me." (Matthew 14:30, ESV) Jesus reached out immediately and caught him.

Faith and fear are connected. When Peter looked at Jesus, he did the impossible. When he looked at the storm, he went under. The storm did not change. His focus did.

And notice: even when Peter sank, Jesus caught him right away. Your failures in faith do not disqualify you. Jesus is quick to reach for you.

**TODAY'S CALL TO ACTION**

What has your attention right now, the waves or Jesus? What is one practical way you can turn your eyes back to Him today?

**PRAYER**

*Jesus, You say, "Take heart; it is I." When I start to sink, catch me. Turn my eyes back to You, and give me faith to step out where You call me. Amen.*

DAY 3

# Turn Worry Into Prayer

**Read: Philippians 4:4-9**

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7, ESV)

Paul gives us a practice, not just a command.

**Pray about everything.** Nothing is too small. Take each worry and turn it into a specific request.

**Add thanksgiving.** Gratitude shifts our focus from what we fear to what God has already done. It reminds us of His track record.

**Receive His guard.** The word "guard" is a military word. Your heart and mind are under attack, and God's peace stands watch over them.

**Choose what you think about.** Verse 8: "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." (Philippians 4:8, ESV)

You cannot always stop an anxious thought from showing up. But you can decide where you let your mind settle.

> **TODAY'S CALL TO ACTION**
>
> Write down three things you are worried about. Turn each one into a prayer. Then write down three things you are thankful for. Read the list of thanks out loud.

> **PRAYER**
>
> *Lord, I bring You everything that is weighing on me. Thank You for all You have done. Let Your peace guard my heart and my mind today. Amen.*

DAY 4

# Cast Your Cares

Read: 1 Peter 5:5-10

"Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7, ESV)

Peter puts three movements together, almost like steps in a dance.

**Humble yourself.** "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you." (1 Peter 5:6, ESV) Humility is admitting we are not self-sufficient. We cannot carry everything.

**Cast your cares.** The word means to throw something off. You are not meant to carry your worries. God invites you to hand them over because He cares about you.

**Stand firm.** "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8, ESV) The enemy loves to use anxiety to wear us down. But Peter reminds us that believers all over the world are going through the same kind of suffering. You are not alone, and you can resist.

A friend once told me about a picture God gave him. When he went low in humility, like stepping down into a trench, the enemy's attacks flew over his head. Our humility before God becomes our shield.

> **TODAY'S CALL TO ACTION**
>
> What care are you still carrying that God is asking you to throw onto Him? What would it look like to let it go today?

> **PRAYER**
>
> *God, I humble myself before You. I can't carry this, so I give it to You, because You care about me. Help me stand firm today. Amen.*

DAY 5

# Fan the Flame

**Read: 2 Timothy 1:3-7**

Timothy was a young leader facing pressure from every side, and Paul could tell fear was holding him back. So Paul wrote, "I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you... for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." (2 Timothy 1:6-7, ESV)

Fear does not only make us anxious. It makes us small. It keeps us from using the gifts God has put in us.

Even with an outgoing personality, I have had seasons where I hesitated to step out. I have prayed for people to be healed and not seen the result I hoped for. I have felt the sting of feeling foolish. Those moments can make us want to pull back.

But Paul names what the Holy Spirit gives instead of fear: - **Power**, so the results do not rest on us - **Love**, so we stay focused on people, not ourselves - **Self-control**, a sound mind that is steady and wise

Courage is not the absence of fear. It is obedience in the presence of fear, powered by the Spirit.

> **TODAY'S CALL TO ACTION**
>
> What gift or calling has fear caused you to set aside? What is one small step you could take this week to fan it into flame?

> **PRAYER**
>
> *Holy Spirit, You have not given me a spirit of fear. Fill me with power, love and self-control. Help me use what You have given me for Your glory. Amen.*

DAY 6

# Pray for Boldness

**Read: Acts 4:23-31**

Peter and John had just been arrested and threatened by the most powerful leaders in Jerusalem. Their orders were clear: stop talking about Jesus.

So what did the church do? They prayed. But notice what they did not pray. They did not ask for safety. They asked for boldness.

"And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." (Acts 4:29-30, ESV)

The place where they were meeting shook, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they preached boldly.

For years I prayed this prayer regularly in our prayer meetings. Boldness is not a personality type. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Fear often tries to silence us around the people we love most, our friends and family who do not know Jesus. But God loves to answer this prayer.

**TODAY'S CALL TO ACTION**

Who in your life needs to hear about Jesus? Write their names down and pray Acts 4:29-30 over them and over yourself.

**PRAYER**

*Lord, look upon the things that intimidate me. Grant me all boldness to speak about You. Stretch out Your hand to heal and to show Your power. Amen.*

DAY 7

# Freedom From Doubt

**Read: Psalm 18:1-6, 16-19**

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*Today's devotion is from Hannah Stevens.*

"I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer." (Psalm 18:1-2, ESV)

In the summer of 2005, just after college, I was working at a summer camp and asking God what He wanted for my life. That summer God brought Hazen into my life, and with him a calling into ministry.

I said yes. I felt clarity and peace. And then the doubts came. Fears and skepticism flooded my mind and pushed against the decision I had made.

One night in worship, I cried out to God the way David does in Psalm 18. I asked Him to be my fortress and my deliverer. And I sensed Him ask me, "Hannah, what do you want?"

I told Him everything: my fear, my unbelief, my doubts. And I asked Him to take them. In that moment it felt like a vacuum pulling every doubt and fear out of me. I could not think a doubtful thought. I remember running through the woods that night, sure my feet would not slip.

Not every freedom comes that suddenly. But I want you to know it is possible. "He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters." (Psalm 18:16, ESV)

**TODAY'S CALL TO ACTION**

If God asked you today, "What do you want?", what would you say? Tell Him.

**PRAYER**

*Lord, You are my rock and my deliverer. I bring You my doubts and fears. Reach down from on high and draw me out of many waters. Set me free to trust You completely. Amen.*

## Keep going

Part 3 of the series, **Fearless: Free From Fear and Shame**, picks up where this one leaves off. Find all three at **gatecitybuckhead.com/fearless**.

## Read it in the Bible App

All three Fearless plans are also available free in the YouVersion Bible App from GateCity Buckhead.

## Pray with us

GateCity Buckhead prays together online through the week, and we would be honored to pray with you. See the times at **gatecitybuckhead.com/digital-community**.

## Visit us

Sundays at 11am at Atlanta International School, 2890 N Fulton Dr NE, Atlanta. Plan your visit at **gatecitybuckhead.com/new-here**.

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