

FEAR AND TRUST

"When I Am Afraid"

Key Passages

Psalm 56:3-4 — "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise—in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"

Psalm 27:1 — "The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?"

Study Focus

The new year had barely started when the letter arrived: another evaluation, another specialist, another round of appointments that might produce more answers or might just produce more questions. Paul set the letter on the counter and stood still for a long moment. He wasn't exactly afraid—he'd done this before. But he recognized the tightening in his chest, the familiar background hum of anxiety that had become so constant he'd almost stopped noticing it.

Fear is woven through special needs parenting in ways that most people never experience. It is not always dramatic, acute fear—though that comes too. More often it is chronic, low-level, ever-present: What will next year look like? What if this therapy doesn't work? What if the school district fights us again? The new year, with its fresh calendar and unwritten pages, can feel less like a clean slate and more like an open field of unknowns.

Psalm 56 is honest about the experience of fear. "When I am afraid" acknowledges reality. But its construction is important: fear is the occasion for trust, not the absence of it. David doesn't say "I am never afraid." He says that when fear comes, trust is his chosen response. This is not denial; it is decision.

Psalm 27 grounds fearlessness in the nature of God rather than the safety of circumstances. "The LORD is my light"—illuminating what is hidden. "The LORD is my salvation"—providing rescue. "The LORD is the stronghold of my life"—not a temporary shelter but a permanent, reinforced reality. Paul picks up the letter again—as someone who is not ultimately alone in what it means.

Discussion Qs

Couples

1. What fears are you each carrying into this new year, and have you named them out loud to each other?
2. How do you support each other when one of you is in a cycle of anxiety and the other is feeling more stable?
3. What would it look like to respond to fear with trust together—as a joint spiritual practice?
4. How has fear affected your relationship over the past year—has it brought you closer or created distance?
5. What is one specific fear you can pray over together this week, asking God to be your stronghold?

Dads

1. What fears about your child's future do you carry most heavily, and how do those fears affect your daily life?
2. How do you manage chronic, low-level anxiety without letting it drive your decisions or relationships?
3. What does trusting God look like for you practically—not as a cliché, but as an actual daily choice?
4. When you feel afraid, where do you go with that? Who do you tell, and what do you do with it?
5. How has God been your "stronghold" in specific moments when you were afraid this past year?

Moms

1. What fears keep you awake at night, and have you been able to talk about them openly?
2. How do you distinguish between healthy vigilance and fear that has moved into anxiety or control?
3. When you are afraid, what helps you choose trust—and what makes that genuinely hard?
4. How do you help your child experience security and calm when you are internally managing your own fear?
5. What would it free in you to genuinely believe that God is the stronghold of your life and your child's life?

Application: Write down your top fear about this year. Then write Psalm 56:3 over it: "When I am afraid of _____, I put my trust in you." Pray it daily this week.