

Real. Present. God.

Fear

Leader Notes

by Rebecca Duport

Sub themes: Anxiety, Identity, Psalm response to fear, Protection and Spiritual Warfare

Current Issues: Measuring Up/Success & Other Cultures/Religions

Teens (and all people) face true fears which involve rejection, shame, abandonment, not being good enough, failures, acceptance, pressure to succeed, future, etc. Temptations lead us to abide in other things and our fears deter us from looking to Christ. Christ helps us conquer those fears! There is no fear in love, and Christ promises to love us and help us.

Note to leaders: Read through each lesson a week or so in advance to prepare and consider additional connections and personal examples you can include in the lesson for leading with your group. These lessons can be used as a series of Bible studies for a youth night or Bible class. They could even be used over the course of a weekend retreat for students.

Lesson 1: Naked and Afraid: Whom shall I fear?

Students will identify what they are afraid of and experience God's presence in times of fear.

Lesson 2: Spiritual What-fare? WARFARE -- What is it anyway?

Students will discover what the Bible means when it tells us about the temptations we will face.

Lesson 3: Fear Full - Ways to Avoid Temptation?

Students will learn practical steps and how God is in control of the trials they face.

Lesson 4: A Fearless Life: Living as a Child of God

Students will explore ways to abide in Christ as they live to fear and love God in their life.

Leader's notes are in red throughout.

SESSION 1 – NAKED AND AFRAID WHOM SHALL I FEAR?

*Leader Preparation: pencils with erasers and 3x5 cards with Psalm 23:4 printed on the back.
Hold on to items until later in the lesson under the “LOOK” section.*

HOOK

What would you be afraid of if you were a contestant on the reality show “Naked and Afraid”?

(“Naked and Afraid” is an American reality series that airs on the Discovery Channel. Each episode chronicles the lives of two survivalists—1 man, 1 woman—who meet for the first time and are given the task of surviving a stay in the wilderness naked for 21 days.)

Answers may include being naked in front of a stranger, trying to survive, the unknown, death, illness, injury, pressure to win and succeed, etc.

SAY: The definition of FEAR (from dictionary):

an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat.

synonyms: terror, fright, fearfulness, horror, alarm, panic, agitation, trepidation, dread, consternation, dismay, distress;

False Evidence Appearing Real

- *archaic: a mixed feeling of dread and reverence. “the love and fear of God”*

be afraid of (someone or something) as likely to be dangerous, painful, or threatening.

BOOK

READ Genesis 2:8-25 English Standard Version (ESV)

READ verse 25 again... “and the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”

Why were Adam and Eve NOT afraid of being naked?

Answers may include they were sinless and obeying God’s command.

READ Genesis 3:3-24

Were Adam and Eve “Naked and Afraid” or “Bare and Bold”?

Answers may vary...guide students to understand that before sin they were bare and bold, after the fall, they were afraid of their nakedness and hid from God.

SAY: Adam and Eve were hiding from God, and fear entered the world from disobedience of God and shame. The origin of fear came after the fall...

Adam and Eve became afraid (they were hiding from God)

Why did they become afraid?

After the fall, they had disobeyed God, they had sinned.

What is the consequence of fear in relationships?

LOOK

Give each student a 3x5 card (prep in advance with verse on back) pencils with erasers.

SAY: True fears teens face involve rejection, abandonment, not being good enough, failures, acceptance, pressure to succeed, the future, etc. Please spend the next 2-3 minutes writing down the answer(s) to the following question: What do you fear? You can write as many things as you want on one side of the card. You do NOT have to share this card with anyone.

(Give 2-3 minutes to complete individually)

SAY: Would anyone like to share with the group what is written on their card? You don't have to.

(As the leader, it would be helpful if you set the tone of the sharing time by sharing one of your "fears" with the group. This gives students the ability to see if their fears will be taken seriously or if this is going to be a joking time.)

Once students have completed the task, ask them to turn over their card. Have Psalm 23:4 already printed on the back in advance or ask them to write it down.

Read Psalm 23:4 together.

Now return to their "fear words" on the other side and have students erase each of their fears—a reminder that Christ and His love for us can help us erase those fears.

Key Point:
God is present in our life and gives us refuge and strength to face our fears and overcome them in Christ. No matter what we have done, and no matter what fears we face.

TOOK

Play the song "Whom Shall I Fear [God of Angel Armies]" - Chris Tomlin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOkImV2cJDg>

(Options: distribute the lyrics, allow students to meditate on the words, sing along, etc.)

READ: Psalm 33:20 - "We wait in hope for the Lord, he is our help and our shield."

SAY: God is present in our life and gives us refuge and strength to face our fears and overcome them in Christ. No matter what we have done, and no matter what fears we face.

Close in prayer with a word of encouragement to live out their faith through what they studied.

SAY: Dear God, I ask a special blessing for each of us as we boldly face the fears we have identified in this study. Help us to remember that You are by our side, our Real Present God, and to be bold in our faith and to trust in You no matter what is going on in our life. Amen.

CHALLENGE

Knowing that we need Christ to face our fears, spend time each day asking God for help to face and overcome the fears in our life.

SESSION 2: SPIRITUAL WHAT-FARE? WARFARE—WHAT IS IT ANYWAY?

Leader Preparation: A leaf or paper leaf for each student, writing instrument (pencil, pen or marker writes on the leaf). Also needs a match and bowl—or area to burn these leaves near the end of the lesson. Have a bucket of water readily available and plenty of ventilation if indoors.

HOOK

NAME YOUR FIG LEAF

SAY: Adam and Eve were ashamed of their nakedness (see lesson 1) and hid from God. Fear entered the world from their disobedience of God. A leaf of a fig tree is often depicted as concealing the genitals in paintings and sculpture. The early reference is from Genesis 3:7. Often a “fig leaf” is a thing designed to conceal a difficulty or embarrassment.

Pass out a “leaf” to each student with writing instrument.

SAY: We, too, hide from God what we are ashamed and embarrassed of. Today we are going to “name our fig leaf.” Just like Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves with a fig leaf to hide from God when they realized they were naked, we are going to take a leaf and write on it what we are hiding from God.

Tell students that they will NOT be sharing these; this is private.

Give a few moments of silence for students to write their responses on their leaf. When finished, instruct them to fold leaf in half and “hide” them in their Bible for later in the lesson.

SAY: Here are some sample answers other teens have written that they are hiding from God: feelings, stress, mistakes, negativity, addiction, failure, regret, depression, family history, secrets, shame, rejection, brokenness, lust, laziness, insecurities, bad thoughts, loneliness, sadness, poor choices, anger, envy, materialism.

BOOK

SAY: Let’s explore what the Bible means when it tells us about the temptations we will face.

Fleshy Desire = our sinful nature

SAY: Our fleshly desires come from our innermost being. Sin does not just come about as a result of outside forces. It is borne from those hidden little niches residing in our thoughts and intentions, from the secret desires that only the mind and heart can envision. The bottom line is that, in our fallen state, the desires of our hearts do not come from God (Jeremiah 17:9).

How do we avoid these sinful desires?

We can’t! We’re born with it, and there’s no escaping it fully in this life. Naturally, we are opposed to God and we want to do all the things God tells us are not good for us to do.

The apostle Paul calls it our sin nature. Read together Romans 7:18-20.

Our evil hearts lead us to sin. Are all desires corrupt? Read Ezekiel 11:19.

Key Point:
God replaces the evil with good and sets our hearts on the path toward Him, removing our own desires and replacing them with His.

SAY: God can literally plant His own desires into the heart of man, the heart that, without Him, is desperately wicked and deceitful. He replaces the evil with good and sets our hearts on the path toward Him, removing our own desires and replacing them with His. This only happens when we come to Him in repentance and accept the gift of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. At that point, He removes our hearts of stone and replaces them with hearts of flesh. He accomplishes this by the supernatural implanting of His Spirit into our hearts. Then our desires become His desires, our wills seek to do His will, and our rebellion turns to joyous obedience.

Temptation = a work of Satan (“the tempter”)

Where does temptation come from?

1 Corinthians 7:5; Luke 4:13; 1 Peter 5:8

Where does it NEVER come from?

James 1:13-14

Sin = disobedience/opposition to God and His Word (dwelling or acting upon temptations)

What are the two types of sin?

Sins of commission and sins of omission

What is a sin of commission? Examples?

A sin we take action to commit, whether in thought, word or deed. Examples may include: if you visit another country in which traffic drives in the left lane, and you drive in the right lane, you are still breaking the law whether you know it or not. Adam and Eve knew God’s command and committed it anyway. Sexual sins: adultery, fornication, bestiality, homosexuality, bisexuality, molestation, pornography, theft, covetousness, murder, physical abuse, bullying, mental abuse, gossip, slander, backbiting, lying, manipulating, cursing, etc.

What are sins of omission? Examples?

Those in which we knew we should have done something good, but refused. Good things we don’t do (James 4:17). Examples may include failing to pray regularly or for others in our lives, failing to read and study the Bible regularly, failing to tithe or be faithful stewards in our finances. There are many other types of sins of omission. In summary, we commit a sin of omission when we neglect to do something God commands us to do.

Deeds, words, thoughts...ALL can be sin.

Romans 1:18-32; Ephesians 4:29-31, 1 John 2:9-11

Being tempted does NOT = sin.

Luke 4:1-13 Jesus was being tempted, He was not sinning. You and I are tempted, too. Just because you are tempted, does not mean you are sinning.

But, temptation can lead to sin. If this happens, what do we do? (Ask God for forgiveness.)

There is ALWAYS an escape! (1 Corinthians 10:13)

LOOK

Death = the consequence for our sin (sin nature)

What are the consequences for our sin? Is dying the only one?

Romans 6:20-23; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9

But, what about the things it costs us to follow God instead?

Sometimes there are “negative” consequences for resisting temptation. Examples?

Do we love God enough to be willing to bear those consequences?

TOOK

READ Hebrews 2:18.

SAY: Jesus is REAL. Because Jesus suffered when He was tempted He can help those who are also tempted. Fortunately, God does not abandon us in our struggles with hurtful desires and sinful tendencies. Instead, He provides us the grace and strength we need to resist and overcome sin when it crouches at the door of our hearts. The psalmist says, “Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him and He will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun” (Psalm 37:4-6).

Move group to an outdoor space, one by one place leaf in bowl and light it to burn. Have a bucket of water readily available. You can then finish the study outside while the leaves burn, but do not leave the leaves unattended.

SAY: At this time we are going to burn our fig leaves, but in reality, we have nothing to do with the removal of our sin. We don't have to deal with our sins on our own. Jesus does that. He takes our sins and removes them from us. Just as the fire turns our fig leaves to ash, Jesus forgives our sins and washes us clean.

Dump water on the fire to symbolize the washing clean of our sins.

SAY: Christ loves YOU. God knows everything about you. Even what you think you're hiding from Him. God has the power to forgive instantly; we may continue to struggle with the temptations, but God walks with us. Whether you're hiding this from God or from other people, that is where fear manifests itself and can consume your life.

Close in prayer with a word of encouragement to live out their faith through what they studied.

SAY: Dear God, I ask a special blessing for each of us as we boldly face the shame and temptations we have identified in this study. Help us to remember that You are by our side, our Real Present God, and to be bold in our faith and to trust in You no matter what is going on in our life. Amen.

CHALLENGE

Because Jesus suffered when He was tempted He can help those who are also tempted (Hebrews 2:18). Jesus is REAL – spend time each day asking God for help to face and overcome the temptations in your life.

Key Point:
God knows everything about you. Even what you think you're hiding from Him. God has the power to forgive instantly.

SESSION 3: FEAR FULL WAYS TO AVOID TEMPTATION

Leader Preparation: Prepare a handout with the “8 ways to avoid temptation” or project on a screen for students to copy onto paper or type into their phones during the LOOK section.

HOOK

Why do you give in to temptation?

Possible answers include: not really sure, to escape or get away from “real life”, because I enjoy it, to feel less pain, to satisfy people’s expectations, to take a shortcut to success, not enough willpower, human or sinful nature.

SAY: Here’s a look at some stats from the Barna Group¹ on why people give in to temptation.

- 50% - Not really sure
- 20% - To escape or get away from “real life”
- 20% - Because I enjoy it
- 8% - To feel less pain
- 7% - To satisfy people’s expectations
- 2% - To take a shortcut to success
- 1% - Not enough willpower
- 1% - Human or sinful nature
- (Other: 9%)

Most people (half of all respondents) admit they aren’t sure why they give in to temptation. Of those who did give a reason, few believe it’s because of their human or sinful nature.

SAY: Temptations lead us to abide in other things and our fears deter us from looking to Christ. Even though He abides in us, it’s our nature to look elsewhere for a home. Our fears tempt us to abide in other things instead of Christ.

Key Point:
Even though He abides in us, it’s our nature to look elsewhere for a home. Our fears tempt us to abide in other things instead of Christ.

BOOK

Read Matthew 4:1 - The Temptation of Jesus

1. Temptation is for everyone.
 - Jesus was tempted (purposefully)
 - Why shouldn’t we expect to be tempted?
2. Temptation doesn’t have to be a bad thing.
 - Temptation is always an opportunity to do right.
 - Temptation can make us better
 - Strengthen us
 - Make us wiser
 - Teach us about ourselves

¹ <https://barna.imgix.net/legacy-media/bu-010113-temptations-3.jpg?auto=compress>

LOOK

8 WAYS TO AVOID TEMPTATION...

Here's a great opportunity to walk through a common temptation or opportunity to practice.

Notes to leaders: Distribute these 8 items on a handout with additional space for them to journal their responses for each number as you process through the suggestions together.

1. Identify Temptation

(write it down, state clearly what your temptation is)

2. Pray About the Temptation

(write a prayer to God about your struggle)

3. Avoid the Temptation

(list ways you can avoid the temptation)

4. Use Your Bible for Inspiration

(using a concordance, online Bible app or other resource, search the Scriptures for direction, encouragement and inspiration in avoiding your temptation)

5. Use the Buddy System

(write down who you will share this with and ask to keep you accountable)

6. Use Positive Language

(Instead of saying "I can't," or "it's too hard," or "I give up"... use a positive growth mindset such as: "this is difficult for me, so I'm going to keep trying and working at it.")

7. Give Yourself Alternatives

God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:13
(Brainstorm ideas, activities, people, and places that are other options to avoid the temptation)

8. It's Not the End of the World

(Offer yourself forgiveness when you fail)

TOOK

SAY: God is in control of the trials you face!

Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him. (James 1:12)

Close in prayer with a word of encouragement to live out their faith through what they studied.

SAY: Dear God, I ask a special blessing for each of us as we strive to overcome and avoid the temptation. Help us to remember that You are by our side, our Real Present God, and to be bold in our faith and to trust in You no matter what is going on in our life. Amen.

CHALLENGE

Review the 8 ways to avoid temptation shared in this lesson and incorporate them into your daily life as a reminder to identify, pray, avoid it, search scripture, buddy up, be positive, seek alternatives and seek forgiveness.

SESSION 4: A FEARLESS LIFE LIVING AS A CHILD OF GOD

Leader Preparation: 3x5 cards or slips of paper and something to write with for each student

HOOK

SAY: In the Harry Potter movie *The Prisoner of Azkaban* there is something called a “Boggart.” Watch this video clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2nEZQ9O9Ns> This mystical blob transforms into anything a nearby person is afraid of. The purpose of this is so that the young wizards could learn how to overcome their fear and defeat it using a spell. Ron was afraid of a spider and of course Harry was afraid of a Dementor. They both ultimately defeated their fears, surrounded with much suspense. Unlike Ron and Harry, we don’t need a spell to overcome our fears. As a child of God, we have a God who is all powerful and all personal.

BOOK

Read John 15:4 (ESV).

Break students into groups of 2-3. Ask the following question to the large group to be discussed in their smaller groups. Ask each group to share their responses with the large group.

When Jesus says “abides” it’s another way of saying “remain in me.” What do you think this really means?

Possible answers: trust Him, stay close to Him, and be in relationship with Him.

Do you think it’s possible to not abide or remain in God and bear fruit?

Possible answers: no the fruit won’t be good, fresh or tasty.

LOOK

What causes you to hold back and not abide in God?

Possible answers: worldly desires and our human nature, not being in community with other Christians, focus has strayed from God.

Even though Christ abides in me, how do I comfort friends who are searching for a home outside of Christ?

Possible answers: living in example for them, loving them where they are at, pointing them to Christ through actions and words, praying for them.

SAY: Isn’t it amazing to know that God abides in me!

Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. (Psalm 33:8)

Real. Present. God.

Fear

Leader Notes

But God delights in those who fear Him—those who stand in awe of him—and instead of trusting in their own human abilities or resources, “hope is in his steadfast love.”

But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love. (Psalm 33:18)

So let us fear God—stand in awe of Him, take refuge in Him, and hope in His steadfast love. For it brings the Lord pleasure when we trust in Him for strength and help, not our own wits and resources.

TOOK

SAY: So what does this mean? In Luther’s Small Catechism, this question is asked after each of the Commandments. The response is: “We must fear and love God so that...”. God’s commandments help us live as a child of God.

SAY: We fear and love God only because Christ first died and rose from the dead redeeming us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Take a piece of paper and finish the statement in your own words.

How does the Holy Spirit empower and enable you to live free from fear?

Close in prayer with each student reading aloud the completed sentence they wrote in the previous section.

CHALLENGE

Find an opportunity each day to remind yourself that you are a Child of God and there is hope in Christ to overcome your fears.

Key Point:
Let us fear God—stand in awe of Him, take refuge in Him, and hope in His steadfast love. For it brings the Lord pleasure when we trust in Him for strength and help, not our own wits and resources.
