

Cornerstone Conversations

One of the things my boys did when they were younger was to build a 'guider' or perhaps you might know it as a go-cart, I'm sure you know the sort of thing I mean, a set of pram wheels, a couple of planks of wood and a piece of string to guide the wheels in the right direction. They had so much fun on it, but I used to hate it, as it used to scare me when they hurtling down the street on it, because you see we lived at the top of a hill and their guider had no brakes.

The reality TV show *'I'm a celebrity.... get me out of here'* features people who are willing to face their worst fears for notoriety and financial gain. I find it tough to watch people eat cockroaches, immerse themselves in a tank full of creepy worms with legs, and stay under water far too long with slimy eels crowding around their heads. It's just not my definition of high-value entertainment.

Yet thinking of the program does make me wonder: Would I be willing to conquer my fears to do what Jesus asks me to do, just as these contestants overcome their fears for a moment in the spotlight of national TV?

There is no doubt that fear is no friend of our effectiveness for Christ. We are often fearful about witnessing, giving our money away, saying no to our friends, forgiving a cruel offense, saying yes to a short-term missionary assignment, or risking being misunderstood if we speak up for biblical values at our place of work.

If Satan can get us stymied by fear, he doesn't have to do much else to shut down our spiritual progress and usefulness.

Overcoming fear begins with deciding that some things in life are more important than ourselves, things like the eternal destinies of others, the prosperity of the work of Christ in our world, the fact that the reputation of Jesus is more strategically important than my fleeting popularity, and that His integrity and righteousness showing up in my life is more important than cheating for some personal gain.

Once you and I realize that a self-surpassing passion for others and Jesus trumps fear, we can understand why the apostle John wrote that love casts out fear (1 John 4:18).

But loving can often feel like a risky, sometimes losing proposition, which is why we need another ingredient to release the power of the love that conquers fear. That ingredient is trust.

Trusting that God will protect you when you are fearful, that God will reward you when you feel at risk, that God will give you guidance and courage when you feel lost and intimidated, this is what it takes to defeat the fear that holds you back.

Are you afraid that when you love you will become vulnerable, misunderstood, taken advantage of, or misused? Trust God to watch over you, meet your needs, and give you His best, and those fears will become increasingly nonexistent.

When our lives are characterized by trust-filled love, fear ultimately will not be a factor. As President Roosevelt said in his inaugural speech, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself!"

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