



“Trust in the Lord with all your heart.”
Proverbs 3:5

Living for Jesus Means Placing Our Trust in Him

PETER

Today we’ll learn a new word. It is *phobia*. It means having a very great fear of something. For instance, some people have a phobia for heights or getting caught in a tight space. Other people have a fear of dirty hands or flying in airplanes. Do you have a phobia? One web site lists over five hundred phobias or extreme fears that people have. Some of them almost make us giggle. Here are a few strange phobias.

Alektorophobia is the fear of chickens

Alliumphobia is the fear of garlic

Consecotaleophobia is the fear of chopsticks

Arachibutyrophobia is the fear of peanut butter sticking to the roof of one’s mouth

Ereuthophobia is the fear of blushing

Linonophobia is the fear of string

These might almost seem funny, but they are all real fears that some people have.

Fear was certainly nothing new to people who lived in Bible times. In fact, the word *fear* appears over 250 times in the Bible. The words “do not fear” are mentioned 18 times, and the phrase “do not be afraid” appears 65 times. In the Christmas story, Gabriel told Zechariah not to be afraid. The same angel visited Mary and told her the same thing. Joseph was told not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife, and the angel told the shepherds on the hillside not to be afraid because they brought good news of the Savior being born. Fear was certainly something that was common to those people. If you ever wondered what God commanded of his people more often than anything else, the answer isn’t thou shalt not covet, commit adultery, or kill. The command mentioned most often in the Bible isn’t even one of the Ten Commandments. It’s the command not to be afraid.

One of Jesus’ boldest and bravest apostles was Peter. He was a man who seemed to always be strong and bold. He was like the he-man of the disciples, the man whose name meant “*rock*”. Yet late one night while fishing on the Sea of Galilee, Peter decided to try something new. He saw Jesus coming to him, walking on the water. Peter decided he wanted to try that too. He climbed out of the boat and sure enough, he began to walk on the water. But when he felt the wind whipping his face, he became afraid. He wasn’t so bold anymore. The water would no longer hold him up and he began to sink because of his fear. The Bible says: “*When he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’*” (Matthew 14:30). Peter knew that Jesus was right there with him. He knew help was only a few feet away. He knew Jesus has power over the wind and waves and that he was safe in the presence of his Savior. Yet despite all of that, his head told him that walking on the water was impossible. What he was trying couldn’t be done. He let just a tiny speck of fear enter his mind, and he almost drowned.

Fear is something that bothers us all at times. Children are afraid of being without mom or dad. They are afraid storms. Some children become afraid when they hear their parents argue, or when they become very ill. Many people are very afraid of dying, or hearing about war. All of us have times in our lives when we are fearful of something.

Yet when we live our lives for Jesus, we can shake off all those fears, because we know that he is in control. Jesus has promised to be with us always and to take away all our fears. Peter became afraid because he took his eyes off his Savior and looked at the wave instead. Living for Jesus means we should always place our trust in him. Jesus is the one who can wipe away all our fears. Listen to what David wrote after he was captured by the Philistines, “*When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid*” (Psalm 56:3,4).



“Forgive and you will be forgiven.”
Romans 12:19

Living for Jesus Means Forgiving Others

JOSEPH

Little Johnny’s mother raced into the bedroom when she heard him scream and found his little sister yanking hard on Johnny’s hair. She carefully unraveled the little girl’s hand and said to Johnny, “It’s okay, sweetheart. She didn’t really mean it. She doesn’t understand that it hurts.” Almost as soon as mom was out of the room, she heard the little girl scream. Rushing back in, she asked, “What’s wrong?” “She understands now!” exclaimed Johnny.

Getting even with those who have done wrong to us is something we learn as children. Like little Johnny, we feel we have to take revenge against those who hurt us. And children aren’t the only ones who feel the need to get even. Teens and adults face the same problems. That’s why there are many people in prison today. They felt the need to get even with someone.

The Bible is filled with stories about revenge. Esau wanted to kill his brother Jacob for taking his birthright. Jezebel vowed vengeance against Elijah. Herodius displayed the head of John the Baptist as her vengeful trophy, and Peter lashed out with his sword at one of the soldiers in the Garden of Gethsemane.

If there was ever a man who was wronged throughout his life, it was Joseph. If there was ever a man who would have had a reason to get even, it was Joseph. Yet instead of getting revenge, his life was one incredible lesson in how to forgive.

After years of clawing his way back from the pit of despair, Joseph reached the rank of second in all of Egypt. During those years, a severe famine arose that would reunite him with the same brothers who hated him and planned for his death. When Joseph’s brothers came to Egypt looking for emergency food supplies, their path led them right into the presence of Joseph. Joseph immediately recognized them but they did not know that he was Joseph.

Can you imagine the thoughts that raced through Joseph’s mind as he stared at his brothers? Now the opportunity for revenge was there in front of him. He couldn’t have written the script any better. Joseph’s life was filled with tragedy thanks to his brothers. He was thrown into a dark pit from which there was no escape, he was sold to strangers in a traveling caravan, he was traded as a slave in Egypt, he was falsely accused of adultery by his master’s wife, he was sentenced to prison, and worst of all, he was torn from the father and home he loved, and he was separated from any mention of the God he learned to know and love as a child. And now his brothers were standing right in front of him.

So what did Joseph say to them? He looked them in the eyes and said, *“I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you”* (Genesis 45:4,5). Those words didn’t sound at all like “get even” words. Those were the words of a child of God. Joseph didn’t have any plans for revenge although that’s what most people would have done. He knew that living for Jesus means we gladly forgive those who have hurt us. Jesus showed us how to forgive when he died on the cross in order to forgive us for what we have done. Today let’s try to follow what Paul once wrote, *“Forgive as the Lord forgave you”* (Colossians 3:13).