OVERCOMING FEAR!

Exposing the Emptiness of Fear and Living by the Truth

Pastor Dr. Emmanuel Mukisa, D.D.

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For inquiries, permissions, or bulk orders:

Email: books@wotmi.org

Web: www.wotpublishing.com

Tel: +256 742 302 566 / +256 786 821 888

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INTRODUCTION

Before You Yield to Fear

Fear comes with a suggestion.

A message has not been answered. A meeting has been called and no one has said why. A man notices something strange in his body. A loved one is late. A door of opportunity opens, and failure stands beside it.

At first there is only a circumstance. Then a thought comes:

"What if something has gone wrong?"

The mind gives the question a picture. The picture is repeated. An explanation is attached to it. Before long the man is living in a future that has not happened as though it were already here. His breathing shortens. His body tightens. His attention narrows. He begins to plan how to protect himself from a thing he has only imagined.

The experience is real. The conclusion behind it was never proved.

That is what we must understand about fear. It produces a powerful response to a suggestion no one has examined.

A loved one has not called. There may be a simple reason for the silence. There may be cause to make an enquiry. But between the silence and the facts, fear rushes in to fill the space with its own report. It does not say, "You do not yet know." It says, "This is what has happened," and presses you to receive it. Yield to it, and your thoughts, your feelings and your actions follow it. By the time the truth arrives, you have already lived through a disaster in your imagination.

What gave that imagined disaster such power? How did a possibility become so persuasive? Why can something that has not happened move a man so deeply?

This book answers those questions.

Why We Must Understand Fear

Many people have been told, "Do not fear." Many have told themselves the same thing a thousand times. But a command is obeyed best when you understand what you have been commanded to deal with.

If you do not recognise how fear comes, you will mistake its arrival for the arrival of truth. If you do not understand how a suggestion settles in the mind, you will accept its conclusion before you have tested its foundation.

Fear can rule a life for years and never be named. A man calls it caution. Sometimes it is caution. Often it is an expectation of harm that has taught him to withdraw from anything uncertain. Another says, "That is just who I am." But that description was formed through rejection, criticism and disappointment. What began as a response to one painful moment became the rule by which he reads every situation since.

The conversation is avoided because its outcome has already been imagined. The opportunity is refused because failure has already been declared. People are kept at a distance because one old wound now speaks for everyone who comes near.

Fear does not always announce itself with trembling. It hides in a conclusion, a habit, a delay, a decision. It dresses itself as wisdom while it quietly takes the throne of a man's life.

Yet fear is not the same as the sight of real danger. A warning may call for action, and understanding fear will make you better able to tell the two apart.

The Emptiness of Fear

One purpose governs this book: to expose the emptiness of fear.

Fear claims authority. It speaks as though it knows what has not happened. It takes a possibility and presents it as a certainty. It takes one fact and hangs on it a conclusion far heavier than the fact can bear.

A man has made a mistake. That can be acknowledged and corrected. Fear says, "This proves you will never succeed."

A relationship has hurt. The hurt is real. Fear says, "You will never be safe with anyone."

A need has arisen. The need may be serious. Fear says, "There is no way forward."

See the movement. Fear begins with something real and carries the man into a conclusion that was never established. It speaks with certainty where there is none. It presents itself as knowledge when all it carries is a suggestion.

Fear is full of urgency, full of pictures and full of feeling, and empty of the proof it claims.

Expose that, and you can face the problem without bowing to the verdict fear has fastened to it.

How Fear Gains Ground

A suggestion does not stay a passing thought. Entertained and accepted again and again, it begins to shape how a man sees himself and his world.

A man speaks in a meeting and is answered harshly. It hurts. Later he is invited to speak elsewhere. The memory rises and suggests, "It will happen again." He accepts it and stays silent. The silence brings relief, and the next time silence seems even more reasonable. In time it becomes his description of himself: "I am not someone who can speak before people."

That description was not who he was. It was built: an experience, a conclusion, a pattern of response. And what was built can be brought into the light and examined.

We shall trace the path of a fearful suggestion: how it arrives, how the mind gives it meaning, how it paints pictures of the future, and what happens when those pictures are received again and again as truth.

We shall see what it means to yield to fear. A man yields when he gives fear's suggestion his agreement and lets it direct his response. Sometimes the yielding is seen in what he says and does. Sometimes it is hidden in a conclusion he has quietly accepted about himself.

Here is the first light: the suggestion and your agreement with it are not the same thing. A thought may come to you. It does not rule you until you agree with it. You can examine it before you give it authority.

The Mind and the Body

Fear is not only an idea. The heart races. The breathing changes. The body tightens. The urge to escape rises. These come so fast that a man may not notice the thought that came with them.

So we shall look at what happens in the body when a threat is perceived, and why the body can sound an alarm before the matter has been examined. We shall see how past experience, repeated words and learned expectation shape what a man notices and how he responds. Two people walk into the same situation and come out with two different stories, because each carried in what he had learned.

But we will not stop at the body. Man is more than a set of reactions. He thinks, he believes, he gives meaning to what happens, and he decides. And he is a spirit. The Word of God speaks to the spiritual side of fear, and it is the Word that gives the final answer.

You do not need to be a doctor, a psychologist or a theologian to follow what is written here. I will make it plain, so that you can see it at work in your own life.

Who This Book Is For

This book is for the man who knows he has been afraid and wants to know why.

It is for the one who has lived under fear so long that he no longer sees it. It is for those whose fears are visible and those whose fears are hidden behind a calm face.

You may fear failure, rejection, sickness, loss or the future. You may fear what people think of you. You may carry an expectation that something will go wrong and not know where it began.

You may already know God and long to walk more fully in His Word. You may have picked up this book without faith in Christ, wanting only to understand fear. You are welcome here. Read on.

For the believer, the Word of God gives far more than encouragement to endure fear. It reveals who you are in Christ, the love of the Father, the Holy Spirit who dwells in you, and the life God has given you. From that ground fear is understood and answered.

For the one who has not yet received Christ, my desire is that you meet the good news of God's love and receive the life He gives through His Son.

What This Book Will Do in You

Understanding fear is not the goal. Freedom is.

You will learn to tell the difference between what happened and the meaning you attached to it. You will learn to recognise a suggestion and test the conclusion it asks you to accept. You will see how repetition makes an idea sound true, how imagination makes a possibility look present, and how avoidance brings quick relief while leaving the fear in place.

You will see what fear costs: the words it shapes, the decisions it makes, the opportunities it refuses, the people it keeps away. It writes a man's description of himself until he lives within walls a suggestion built.