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FIGHTING WITH FEAR

BECOMING
FEARFUL
& UNAFRAID

KATE DOWNING



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FEARFUL
& UNAFRAID

KATE DOWNING

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About the Author



KATE DOWNING is a Georgia peach by birth who surrendered her life to Jesus Christ as her Savior at a young age. She was called into full-time ministry in high school and has been pursuing that call ever since. She has a bachelor's degree in biblical studies and a master's in religious education. Kate has been serving in Student and Girls Ministry in churches across the country for the last fifteen years. Through teaching and writing, she loves to help others come to know Jesus and fall in love with God's Word. She currently serves as the Student Director at BattleCreek Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and works alongside several ministries helping to teach and equip the next generation of ministers of the gospel (2 Cor. 5:18).

Important Q&A:

Q: What food would you want to rain like manna from heaven?

A: Fried rice for sure and also kettle corn.

Q: If you were an action figure, what two accessories would you come with?

A: A mug of coffee (HEB Cafe Olé, iykyk) and my water bottle (hydration is key).

Q: If talent didn't matter, what job would you want to have?

A: It's a toss-up between professional surfer and tornado chaser.

Dedication: To my parents, Scott and Karen Downing, who led me to a saving faith in Jesus, taught me how to love and teach God's Word, and continuously point me back to the truth of Christ.

Hey, friends!

Welcome to this study all about fighting with fear. Whether you're a self-proclaimed dare devil or an unashamed scaredy-cat, you'll end up in a fight with fear at some point. Over the next few weeks, we're going to crack open the journal entries of someone who had an up-close and personal fight with fear. We'll learn from the life and experiences of a man named Nehemiah how fear is both our opponent and the greatest weapon God has given us in this fight.

Fear is often the basis of our anxiety, relationship struggles, doubt, and insecurity. It can rob us of our joy and hold our minds captive. But here is the good news: God has provided a weapon for our fight with fear—the fear of God. I know that might feel confusing. Fear being the weapon we use against fear sounds like an oxymoron. But it is the object of the fear you are battling that determines the effect of fear in your life. Don't worry if you're still confused. We're just getting started, so we'll talk more about this along the way as we learn to fear God more than anyone or anything else.

I wish we could walk through this study together, and I could tell you all the funny stories and wild things God has taught and called me to as I've been writing. Though we can't be together in person, I know with my whole heart that the same God who has spoken to me through His Word will speak to you as you spend time with Him.

The point of this study isn't to make you fearless. In fact, it's the opposite. I believe God's will is that you would be fearful of God. And as you learn to be full of the fear of God, you'll experience victory over and freedom from every other fear. So, this is my prayer that you would fight with fear as you learn to become fearful and unafraid!

Please, O Lord, let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant and the prayer of Your servants who delight to [reverently] fear Your Name [Your essence, Your nature, Your attributes, with awe].

NEHEMIAH 1:11a (AMP)

Let's fight!

Love, your battle buddy,

KATE

How To Use

Welcome!

We're so glad you've chosen to do this study. *Fighting with Fear* is a six-session study in which Kate Downing follows the theme of fear through the book of Nehemiah. We'll see how Nehemiah combats the lies of fear as we discover the truth of who God is and become fearful of God and unafraid of every other fear.

Getting Started

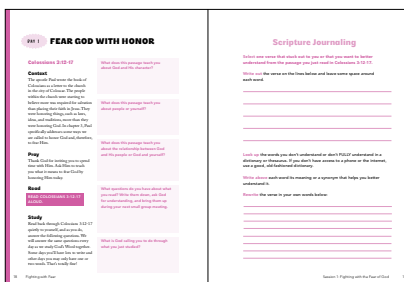
Because we believe discipleship happens best in community, we encourage you to do this study together in a group setting. Or, if you're doing this alone, consider enlisting a friend or two to go through it at the same time. This will give you friends to pray and connect with over coffee or through text so you can chat about what you're learning.

Here's a look at what you can expect to find in this study.



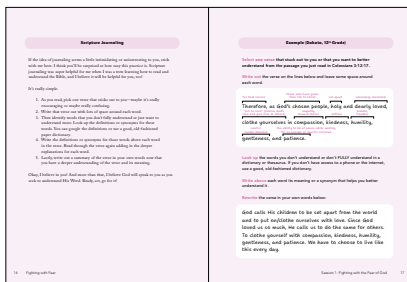
Group Time

Each session begins with a Group Time that allows you to start your week studying Nehemiah together. You can use the questions and prompts provided to help you apply what you've read. If you're doing this alone, maybe ask a friend or your mom to do this part with you.



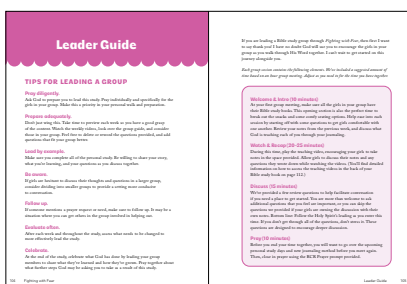
Personal Study

Each week you'll dive deeper into our study of fear with questions to help you understand and apply the text. You'll also be learning a new journaling method each week. Session 1 includes only three days of personal study to ease you into the practice, while the following weeks include five days.



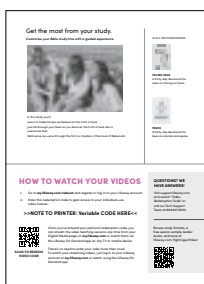
Student Journals

With each week of personal study, you'll be testing out a new journaling method. There are instructions to walk you through each method and a sample journal from a teen included each week.



Leading a Group?

You can find a leader guide on page 104. The leader guide offers several tips and helps. To find additional resources for leaders, visit lifeway.com/fightingwithfear.



Video Access

You'll find detailed information for how to access the video teaching sessions that accompany this study in the back of your Bible study book on page 112.

Getting to Know Nehemiah

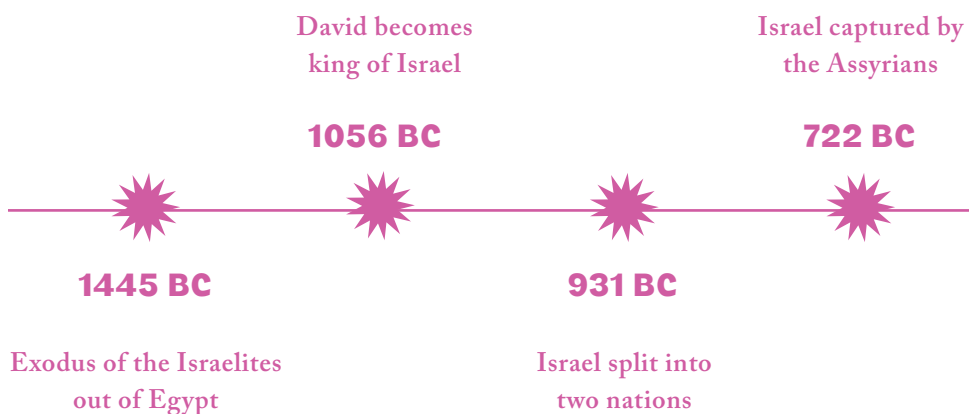
Nehemiah was a Jew born into captivity in Persia. It's likely that his great-grandparents were taken from Jerusalem when the Babylonians invaded in 586 BC.¹ Much of the book of Nehemiah was written by Nehemiah as a first-person account of his return to Jerusalem and his leadership role in rebuilding the city. The entirety of the book is likely a compilation of Nehemiah and Ezra's writings since the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are one singular book in the Hebrew Bible.²

Date

The events of the book of Nehemiah take place between 444-430 BC. The book was most likely written soon after the events in 430 BC.

Historical Background

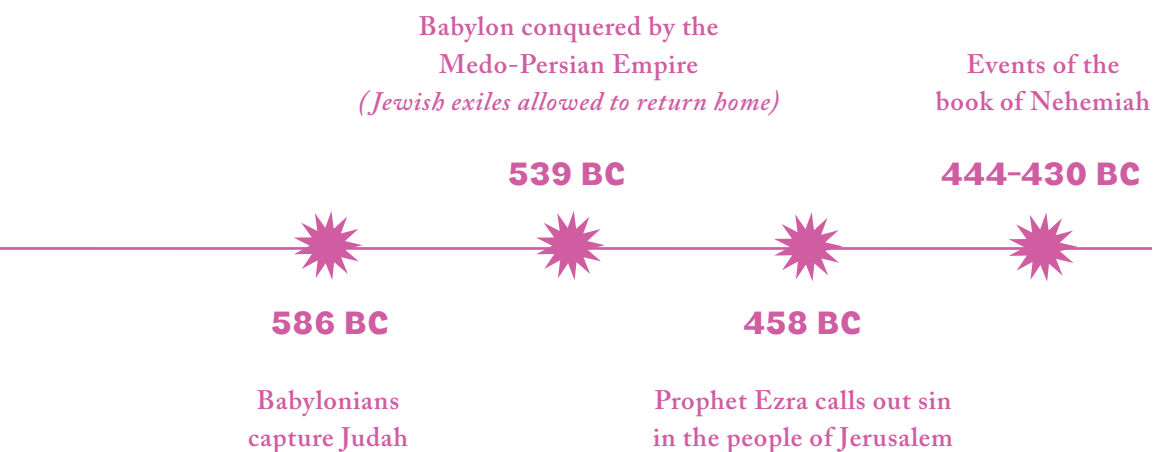
Because of their disobedience (failure to fear God), the nation of Israel was split into two kingdoms in 931 BC: the Northern Kingdom, known as Israel, and the Southern Kingdom, known as Judah. Both kingdoms continued to rebel against God, and as a result, God allowed them each to be taken captive by foreign nations.



Israel was captured by the Assyrians in 722 BC and Judah by the Babylonians in 586 BC. After another fifty years, Babylon itself was conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire. Soon after, many of the people of the Southern Kingdom, Judah, were allowed to start returning to their homeland.

Though it was a great gift from God that the Jewish captives were allowed to return to Judah, the Jews still failed to fear Him. They chose instead to worship other gods, break the commandments, and do whatever they wanted. After almost one hundred years, a prophet named Ezra called out the people's sin and taught them how to fear God by trusting and serving Him alone.

The people started following God again, but the city of Jerusalem was still in shambles and vulnerable to attack from surrounding nations. This is where Nehemiah comes into the picture. God used Nehemiah to lead the way in rebuilding the city and, more specifically, the protective wall around the city of Jerusalem.





FIGHTING WITH THE FEAR OF GOD

SESSION 1

GROUP TIME



01

Welcome

You belong here! And nothing says you belong like some snacks. I hope you came hungry because we are starting this off right with one of my favorites. I learned to make this in college, and I call it a microwave miracle!▶

Now that we have a snack, let's get to know one another a little better.

If you were an action figure, what two accessories would be included?

What is one thing you want to gain from this Bible study?

SNACK RECIPE

Microwave Popcorn Rice Crispy Treats

- * 1 bag of microwave popcorn
- * 1 cup (or as much your heart desires) of mini marshmallows
- * Optional: Candy of your choosing

Instructions:

1. Pop the popcorn according to instructions.
2. In a large microwavable bowl, mix the popped popcorn with the marshmallows.
3. Microwave in 30-second increments until the marshmallows are melted.
4. Optional: Top with candy.

Intro

Welcome to our very first week together! I wish I could be there in person to tell you how grateful and excited I am to be on this journey with you. We are about to dive into one of the coolest books of the Bible to learn some practical tools for overcoming the lies of fear. Most importantly, we will get to know the truth of who God is as we learn to be fearful of God and unafraid of every other fear.

Before we dive into the book of Nehemiah and begin to learn to fight fear with the fear of God, we need to learn what the fear of God is. Fear sounds like the enemy. It sounds like the problem in our lives. *If I wasn't so fearful, I would try out for the school play or share the gospel with my friend who desperately needs Jesus.* Maybe you've thought, *If I wasn't so consumed by fear, then I could live a happy life.* But what if I told you being consumed by fear is actually the way you were created to live? Sounds crazy, right? But stick with me here.

We were created to fear, in fact, to be controlled by it. The problem isn't fear itself. It is the object of our fear that makes all the difference. So that's where we're starting today: identifying the object of our fear.

Take a minute to write down the objects of fear you are fighting with right now.

The fear of _____.

The fear of _____.

The fear of _____.

The fear of _____.

Watch

Use the space below to take notes as you watch the Session 1 video.



Recap

Fear can be both our greatest enemy and our strongest weapon. It all depends on the object of our fear. To fear people, the future, or the things outside of our control is to be controlled by those people and things. We were never designed to be controlled by the opinions of others or the circumstances around us. We were created to be controlled by our Creator, our God. Therefore, we were designed to fear Him. As we get to know God and learn how to set our attention and affection on Him, our fear of Him will grow.

Over the next few weeks, we'll look at different aspects of God's character to counter the lies fear often tells us. We will grow in our understanding of who God is so that we might learn how to fear Him above all else and, therefore, how to fight with fear.

Discuss

READ PSALM 23.

What does this psalm have to say about fear?

What does this psalm have to say about God?

What are some of the objects of fear that have been controlling you lately?

How can fear be a good thing? Specifically, how can the fear of God be the best weapon in your fight with fear?

Look at our definition of the fear of God. What does it mean to honor, delight in, and obey God?

.....➔

Fearing
God means
setting your
attention and
affection on
His character
so that you
honor, delight
in, and obey
Him above
all else.

Pray

If that last question was hard to answer confidently, don't worry! We are going to take some time this week to understand what it means to honor, delight in, and obey God in our personal study days. Since spending daily time with God may be new to you, we are going to ease our way into this incredibly important practice. Over the next week, we'll spend three days learning what it means to honor, delight in, and obey God so we can better understand how to fear Him. Let me encourage you to commit to these days. It won't take long, but it will change your life. And it will be fun!

Each week of personal study is going to be a little different as we test out different journaling methods. Next week, we'll see how Nehemiah himself journaled, but for now, we're going to practice a method I learned in high school that I still love and use to this day called Scripture journaling.

And now, let's close our time together in prayer. Thank God for Nehemiah's example, and ask Him to move in you over the next six weeks as we study together and learn to fight fear.



Scripture Journaling

If the idea of journaling seems a little intimidating or uninteresting to you, stick with me here. I think you'll be surprised at how easy this practice is. Scripture journaling was super helpful for me when I was a teen learning how to read and understand the Bible, and I believe it will be helpful for you, too!

It's really simple.

1. As you read, pick one verse that sticks out to you—maybe it's really encouraging or maybe really confusing.
2. Write that verse out with lots of space around each word.
3. Then identify words that you don't fully understand or just want to understand more. Look up the definitions or synonyms for these words. You can google the definitions or use a good, old-fashioned paper dictionary.
4. Write the definitions or synonyms for those words above each word in the verse. Read through the verse again adding in the deeper explanations for each word.
5. Lastly, write out a summary of the verse in your own words now that you have a deeper understanding of the verse and its meaning.

Okay, I believe in you! And more than that, I believe God will speak to you as you seek to understand His Word. Ready, set, go for it!

Example (Dakota, 12th Grade)

Select one verse that stuck out to you or that you want to better understand from the passage you just read in Colossians 3:12-17.

Write out the verse on the lines below and leave some space around each word.

for that reason those who have given their life to Christ set apart extremely cherished
Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved,
"put on love" (receive God's love and give love to others) empathy toward others selfless humble, freedom from pride
clothe yourselves in compassion, kindness, humility,
careful, tender-hearted the ability to be at peace while waiting for an answer or specific outcome
gentleness, and patience.

Look up the words you don't understand or don't FULLY understand in a dictionary or thesaurus. If you don't have access to a phone or the internet, use a good, old-fashioned dictionary.

Write above each word its meaning or a synonym that helps you better understand it.

Rewrite the verse in your own words below:

God calls His children to be set apart from the world and to put on/clothe ourselves with love. Since God loved us so much, He calls us to do the same for others. To clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. We have to choose to live like this every day.

FEAR GOD WITH HONOR

Colossians 3:12-17

Context

The apostle Paul wrote the book of Colossians as a letter to the church in the city of Colossae. The people within the church were starting to believe more was required for salvation than placing their faith in Jesus. They were honoring things, such as laws, ideas, and traditions, more than they were honoring God. In chapter 3, Paul specifically addresses some ways we are called to honor God and, therefore, to fear Him.

Pray

Thank God for inviting you to spend time with Him. Ask Him to teach you what it means to fear God by honoring Him today.

Read

READ COLOSSIANS 3:12-17 ALOUD.

Study

Read back through Colossians 3:12-17 quietly to yourself, and as you do, answer the following questions. We will answer the same questions every day as we study God's Word together. Some days you'll have lots to write and other days you may only have one or two words. That's totally fine!

What does this passage teach you about God and His character?

What does this passage teach you about people or yourself?

What does this passage teach you about the relationship between God and His people or God and yourself?

What questions do you have about what you read? Write them down, ask God for understanding, and bring them up during your next small group meeting.

What is God calling you to do through what you just studied?

Scripture Journaling

Select one verse that stuck out to you or that you want to better understand from the passage you just read in Colossians 3:12-17.

Write out the verse on the lines below and leave some space around each word.

Look up the words you don't understand or don't FULLY understand in a dictionary or thesaurus. If you don't have access to a phone or the internet, use a good, old-fashioned dictionary.

Write above each word its meaning or a synonym that helps you better understand it.

Rewrite the verse in your own words below:

FEAR GOD WITH DELIGHT

Psalm 112:1-10

Context

We don't know who wrote this poem of praise to God, but it was likely written before the people of Israel were taken into captivity. We'll read more about this in the weeks to come. Here the author tells us that the person who fears God is someone who delights in His commands. To fear God is to delight in who He is and what He says.

Pray

Thank God for helping you take this time to study His Word. Ask Him to help you focus and listen for His voice.

Read

READ PSALM 112:1-10 ALOUD.

Study

Read back through Psalm 112:1-10 quietly to yourself, and as you do, answer the following questions.

What does this passage teach you about God and His character?

What does this passage teach you about people or yourself?

What does this passage teach you about the relationship between God and His people or God and yourself?

What questions do you have about what you read? Write them down, ask God for understanding, and bring them up during your next small group meeting.

What is God calling you to do through what you just studied?

Scripture Journaling

Select one verse that stuck out to you or that you want to better understand from the passage you just read in Psalm 112:1-10.

Write out the verse on the lines below and leave some space around each word.

Look up the words you don't understand or don't FULLY understand in a dictionary or thesaurus. If you don't have access to a phone or the internet, use a good, old-fashioned dictionary.

Write above each word its meaning or a synonym that helps you better understand it.

Rewrite the verse in your own words below:

FEAR GOD WITH OBEDIENCE

James 1:19–25

Context

The book of James was written by Jesus's half-brother (born to Mary and Joseph), James.¹ He grew up with Jesus, yet didn't come to believe in Him as His Savior until after Jesus's death and resurrection. James wrote this book to Jewish Christians who were struggling to live like Jesus. Just like us, they were battling selfishness, jealousy, favoritism, and many other sins, so James is reminding them how to live as believers. In this passage, James specifically lists some ways we are to live and reminds us that we are to be "doers" of God's commands, not just hearers. This means we must obey God's commands. To fear God means to obey Him.

Pray

Set a timer on your phone for two minutes and spend that time thanking God for the opportunity to study His Word. Ask God to help you obey as you learn to fear Him.

Read

READ JAMES 1:19-25 ALOUD.

Study

Read back through James 1:19–25 quietly to yourself, and as you do, answer the following questions.

What does this passage teach you about God and His character?

What does this passage teach you about people or yourself?

What does this passage teach you about the relationship between God and His people or God and yourself?

What questions do you have about what you read? Write them down, ask God for understanding, and bring them up during your next small group meeting.

What is God calling you to do through what you just studied?

Scripture Journaling

Select one verse that stuck out to you or that you want to better understand from the passage you just read in James 1:19-25.

Write out the verse on the lines below and leave some space around each word.

Look up the words you don't understand or don't FULLY understand in a dictionary or thesaurus. If you don't have access to a phone or the internet, use a good, old-fashioned dictionary.

Write above each word its meaning or a synonym that helps you better understand it.

Rewrite the verse in your own words below:
