

## **Slide #1 Introduction**

# **WHY ARE YOU SO AFRAID?**

Mark 4:35-41

## **Slide #2**

Karen Fair tells about her three-year-old daughter, Abby, who was having trouble sleeping through the night. She kept waking up because she was afraid. Each time Karen tucked her into bed again, she would remind her that Jesus was with her and that He would keep her safe. Well, the sleepless nights continued, with Abby seeking comfort in her parents' bedroom.

## **Slide #2 Click**

Finally, one night Karen asked her daughter if she had prayed for Jesus to take her fear away and help her fall asleep.

## **Slide #2 Click**

“Oh yes Mommy,” Abby assured her. “He told me to come and get you!”

## **Slide #3**

In our lesson for the day Jesus has been teaching by the lake. When evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let's go over to the other side.” Leaving the crowd behind, they got in their boat and headed to the other side.

## **Slide #3 Click**

Suddenly a furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.

## **Slide #3 Click**

Jesus was in the stern, the back of the boat sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don't you care if we drown?”

## **Slide #3 Click**

Jesus got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

## **Slide #3 Click**

Then he turned to his disciples and asked, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” Then, says Mark's Gospel, they were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

#### **Slide #4**

That has always fascinated me. Jesus' disciples, many of whom were sturdy fishermen, were terrified by this storm.

#### **Slide #4 Click**

This may not have been the run of the mill Sea of Galilee storms, but perhaps something much worse. But even as bad as this storm was, there was something else that frightened the disciples even more.

#### **Slide #4 Click**

Jesus calmed the storm, and that really sent shock waves through them. They were terrified of his power over the wind and the waves. To me that adds so much credibility to the Gospel narrative. It shows the disciples in all their humanness. They didn't know how to take Jesus. Right away they ask, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Before we deal with the question the disciples asked, we need to deal with the question Jesus asked them,

#### **Slide #5**

"Why are you so afraid?" That is a question I could ask many of you. It is a question I could also ask myself: Why are you so afraid?

#### **Slide #5 Click**

1. **Fear is at the heart of most of the problems that human beings have.**

#### **Slide #5 Click**

The opposite of faith is not doubt.

#### **Slide #5 Click**

The opposite of faith is (Click) **fear**. Think about it for a moment and try to tell me any problem in the human heart that is not based in fear.

We have all kinds of fear, fear of people who are not the same as we are, fear about our own adequacy and self-worth, fear about our ability to cope with life, fear concerning the future and the areas of life over which we have no control.

#### **Slide #5 Click**

At the heart of worry, resentment, hatred, guilt and almost every negative emotion--emotions

that eat at our well-being and peace of mind--is fear. And so often our fears are out of proportion to reality.

### **Slide #6**

Someone had made a recent trip to the beach. He said upon his return, "I discovered I scream the same way whether a piece of seaweed touches my foot or **(Click)** if I'm about to be devoured by a great white shark."

We have a tendency to turn molehills into mountains primarily because deep down we are afraid. Most of the problems we have are caused by fear. It may be the fear that someone's going to take advantage of us, it may be fear of failure, it may be fear of looking foolish, fear that we won't fit in, fear that we will be abandoned. Few people aren't driven by some fear or another. **(Click)** Jesus says to us, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

### **Slide #7**

2. **That is to say, the way to conquer fear is through faith.** Faith is the only true antidote I know of for fear.

### **Slide #7 Click**

Writer Gwendolyn Mitchell Diaz tells about a trip she took with her family one summer. They loaded up their van and headed north to visit friends and relatives. On the way home they stopped in Boone, North Carolina, and spent a few days sightseeing at Grandfather Mountain, the highest peak in the Blue Ridge Mountains. They were told that if they dared cross a long suspension bridge called Mile-High Swinging Bridge, they could stand on a rocky ledge that offered a tremendous view of the valley thousands of feet below.

### **Slide #7 Click**

It was late afternoon when they arrived at the bridge, and a storm was blowing in. The wind was beginning to gust significantly. Gwendolyn took one look down the eighty-foot-deep ravine spanned by the bridge, clutched her baby Jonathan, and refused to set foot on it. Her older sons Zach and Matt took off running onto the bridge. They were about halfway across the swaying boards when the wind became so strong it made them stagger. But they loved the challenge and the thrill and fought their way to the other side. Three-year-old Ben had started running after them. However, he stopped suddenly and clung to the nearest post. He wasn't so sure he wanted to continue the dangerous trek.

Dad, seeing what fun Zach and Matt were having as they fought against the wind, reached for Ben's hand and said, "Let's go. I'll take care of you." "It was obvious that all kinds of what-ifs started tumbling around inside Ben's mind as he stood glued to the post

contemplating Dad's offer," says Gwendolyn. "But suddenly he reached up, grabbed Dad's big hand, and started skipping across the bridge into the gusting wind. Ben had obviously transferred all of his what-ifs to Dad and decided to let [Dad] worry about them. The swaying bridge, the extreme height, the blustery wind, the impending storm—all these weren't his problems anymore. It was completely Dad's responsibility." (3)

### Slide #8

Maybe that's what Jesus meant when he said, "Unless you change and become like a little child you shall never enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 18:3) To have that kind of trust, to turn it all over to Daddy, Abba--if we could live like that most of the things that keep us awake at night would simply disappear. Fear is the biggest problem in our lives. The best way to conquer fear is with faith.

### Slide #9

3. But not just faith in anybody or anything. **(Click) The only kind of faith that really matters is faith in Jesus Christ.**

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**(Click)** "Who is this?" asked the disciples about Jesus. "Even the wind and the waves obey him!" **(Click)** Suddenly they realized there was something about Jesus that was different. He must be God since He could calm storms. **(Click)** There is no problem, no difficulty or issue in life that He can't handle

### Slide #10

In one of the *Chicken Soup For the Soul* books there is a touching story about a young man, a veteran, ready to marry and settle down. But this young man had a problem--a problem directly caused by fear. He was a responsible young man but he couldn't keep a job and he was discouraged. Why was he in such a state? It was because he stuttered quite badly.

He heard that a candy company in Plant City, Florida, was looking for a route driver. And he'd heard that the owner of the company, a man named Miller, was a former stutterer who had somehow learned to control his stutter. A fellow sufferer, this young man decided, would certainly understand and hire him. He set his heart on getting that job.

In his interview Mr. Miller asked him why he wanted the job. The young man said, "B-b-because I need the m-m-money." For a long time, Mr. Miller didn't say anything. Then finally he looked him straight in the eye. [Young man]," he said softly, "I'm not going to give you a job." The young man stared at him, dumbfounded.

"Oh, don't get me wrong," Mr. Miller said. "I think you'd do well. It's just that I don't

have an opening right now.” Then he reached into his desk drawer and pulled out a piece of paper, worn and tattered. “I’d like you to take this home and read it,” he said. “Read it every night for a month.” Hardly hearing Mr. Miller’s words, the young man reached out numbly, took the paper and stuck it in his pocket. He turned, told Mr. Miller goodbye and slumped out of the Miller Candy Company.

That night he felt totally dejected. Who wants a stutterer around? Nobody. And as long as he stuttered he would be a nobody. After the interview with Mr. Miller, he was prepared never to utter another sound. He took the piece of paper Miller had given him out of his pocket, ready to tear it to shreds. But something made him look at it. It was a prayer--a very well-known prayer, but one he didn’t know at the time. **(Click)** It read like this: “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” He read the words again. Then again. They were like the light at the end of a tunnel.

**(Click)** He pondered the first phrase: “Accept the things I cannot change.” He could work at easing his stuttering, he knew, but he probably could never really change the way he talked. He would need to accept that.

**(Click)** Then he read the second phrase: “Courage to change the things I can.” What he could change were his fears--fear of stepping out of his shell, fear of trying to be somebody, fear of thinking bigger than he had been doing.

**(Click)** Then he came to the third phrase, the one most overlooked: “God, grant me the serenity to know the difference.” Here, he knew, was the key to the whole prayer. When, he wondered, was the last time he actually had reached out to God? Years earlier, when he was a kid, the young man had prayed that he would wake up one morning and talk differently. When it didn’t happen, he forgot about God. But suddenly now he had the feeling that God hadn’t forgotten about him.

Soon he was asleep--a deep and restful sleep. But though serenity came that night, it didn’t hang around all the time. And change didn’t come overnight either. He kept reciting that prayer, reminding himself of its words and their meaning, till he finally could place himself in God’s hands, in trust, without fear of what might happen to him.

One thing he had learned as a young boy was that when he sang in church he did not stutter. It seems that when a stutterer speaks, air gets trapped in his throat. But when he sings, for some reason the breathing apparatus works normally and there is no stutter.

This young man loved to sing the songs he learned at church, and he discovered he had a gift for writing songs. And so one day he decided to exercise the courage that he had been praying about--the courage to change the things he could.

Armed with some of his songs, he went to Nashville in hopes of getting somebody to listen to his work. And listen then did. He got his first big break in 1970, **(Click)** when singer Glen Campbell invited him to accompany him on his new television show. As they rehearsed for the show, they would swap jokes. Campbell discovered that this young man had a terrific sense of humor and his stutter only added to the humorous impact that he had. Campbell wanted him to start talking and singing on his show. The young man was terrified. He called his wife and told her he wanted to back out. She assured him that they were all behind him. "Don't be afraid," she said, "And remember that little prayer, God, grant me the serenity."

Some of you know that this is the true life story of country music superstar **(Click)** Mel Tillis. He will tell you that without his faith in God he would have been defeated long ago, defeated not by forces on the outside, defeated not even by his stuttering, but defeated by his fear. **(Click)** "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

"Why are you so afraid?" Jesus asked his disciples. He asks that same question of us. Are you letting your fear keep you from being all God created you to be? Fear is the biggest problem in our lives. The best way to conquer fear is with faith. But not just faith in anybody or anything--faith in God--faith in Jesus Christ.

"Who is this?" asked the disciples about Jesus. "Even the wind and the waves obey him!" Yes, they do. Nothing can stop the person whose faith is in this almighty Lord.