



from
COVID
to
COURAGE

day one

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DAY 1 - The Human Condition.

Meditation.

It was "Cut Off Jean Short Day" at work. Yes, PAC had those back when we were young and foolish (2013?). There was zero buy-in from the female staff but myself, Kehler, Stafford (former Neepawa Campus Pastor now Lead Pastor at Morden Alliance), and Peter Ralph (former youth pastor now Lead Pastor at Kindersley Alliance) were all in, disturbingly all in. We are talking "suns out buns out" shorts. Pockets were visible below the denim and you had to be careful when you sat down because it wasn't denim thong day. For the record, we have not, nor will we ever have that day.

Lest you think we were more stupid than we are. We did this mid-summer when church traffic was at a minimum. This also meant WPS staff and students weren't around. If you are going to have a cut off shorts day this was the perfect time.

Except for the prospective High School English teacher (Ms. Brown) who was being interviewed and then toured around the building. I didn't see her, but apparently on her tour she almost saw more of Chris, our Executive Pastor, than anyone would want to. Thankfully, he saw the tour coming and heard our Principal Lydia say, "Let me introduce you to Chris". This gave him just enough time to get out of his office chair and hide behind his door. There, wedged between the open door and the wall he leaned his torso out and introduced himself as if it was the most normal thing in the world for him to be wedged into the corner of his office. Thankfully, the conversation didn't go on too long since the angle he was forced to stand at took tremendous core strength. His welcoming smile was actually a gleaming grimace.

You will likely never find yourself perched half naked behind a door in your workplace getting introduced to a new hire. His dilemma was specific, in one way. But in another way, his dilemma is universal. We always feel vulnerable. We are always hiding. We are always afraid. We always have been. Consider Adam's response to God in Genesis 3:

"I was afraid because I was naked; so, I hid."

These are not the first words ever. Earlier, Adam gushes with excitement when he sees Eve. But this is more of an "Oh Baby" exclamation; understandable given she looks considerably better than the animals he has been naming. And of course, Eve speaks when she is arguing with the serpent. So, these aren't the first words ever, but they are the first words a human being ever says to God and, like everything we find in the first few chapters of Genesis, they help us understand who God is, who we are, and what we are facing.

"I was afraid because I was naked; so, I hid."

The first conversation we have with God is us telling Him we are scared.

Are you surprised? I'm not, and, I don't know that you should be either.

Listen closely on any day and you can tell fear is lurking in very shallow water beneath our prayers, our conversations, and our inner monologues. Consider the proven campaign strategy of getting people really scared and then telling them you will be their protector. I'm not taking a shot at anyone specific here. That election strategy probably works in most organizations. Of course, these days, you don't have to listen all that closely.

Covid-19 has us scared. We have seen the distractions, systems, and rhythms of our daily life shrivel up and blow away. They had the strength and durability of the fig leaves Adam and Eve were hiding behind. But if we are going to truly try to cast out our fear, we need to understand we are not just scared of Covid-19, it just ripped the fig leaf away and reminded us of how vulnerable we always were. Adam knew it. Even knew. You know it too.

So far, this devotional has been a real bummer. Thanks for your patience! I'll turn a corner.

Maybe you are not used to being scared. Maybe your fig leaves are bronzed and feel stronger than they are. Maybe the fear which is accompanying Covid-19 is new for you. Maybe you've never realized how fundamental fear is to human existence. Maybe you are wondering how much of what you call your "life" has actually been one big coping mechanism designed to keep you from being scared.

While your fear might be new to you, it isn't news to God. Yes, the first thing a human being says to God is "I'm scared." But, the most consistent thing God says back is "Do not be afraid." It's on the tip of His tongue the way "I'm scared" is on the tip of ours. Since that first terrified confession of fear in the garden, God has reached out to human beings with one consistent message.

Over and over, He says:

"Do not be afraid."

He says this because He knows we will be.

He says this because He knows reasons why we shouldn't be.

He says this because He wants us to calm down enough to listen to Him.

He doesn't want you to be scared.

And you don't have to be.

Fear is what you might be feeling. But it isn't what you have to keep feeling.

Over the next few days, you are going to shift your fear to courage as you focus your mind on His truth and invite His Spirit to align your heart with His truth. This is what this devotional will

help you do. Our goal here is to take the most fear filled thing many of us have had in our lives, turn it upside down, and take the opportunity to find new levels of boldness, peace, and courage.

Further Reading:

Genesis 3:1-10

Key Verse:

"I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid."

Calibration Prayer:

Holy Spirit, I confess my fear to you. I am unable to find internal equilibrium on my own. Guide my heart and mind as I meditate on God's truth. Thank you for your power to change how I feel. Thank you for the promise of strength. I will watch and wait... with expectation.