

Faith or Fear: Your Choice Impacts Others

Franklin D. Roosevelt's most famous quote was also one of the first things he ever said as president. Shortly after his first inauguration on March 4, 1933, FDR said, "So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is ... fear itself — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."

Fear was a real issue for the American people. This was the height of the great depression, a depression that had been going strong for over three years already. At that moment, 20 percent of Americans were unemployed, and many of those who were employed were concerned that they might be next in line to lose their jobs. People had a legitimate reason to be concerned. People had no idea of how and when the depression would come to an end. Perhaps a change in leadership would do the trick, which is a key reason why FDR won a landslide election victory over Herbert Hoover.

The fear was real, but FDR wanted to exude the confidence that, now that he was in office, things would change. His air of confidence reminds me of Mighty Mouse and his famous catchphrase: "Here I come to save the day!"



Every presidential candidate tries to exude that confidence. "Vote for me because I'm the one who can fix everything." There's a fallacy we embrace when we vote for someone because we're convinced he's some type of messiah who will fix all our woes. Such a candidate does not exist—but we do need leaders who can boldly lead us and navigate us through a sea of problems.

We want a leader who is not afraid.

Consider what life is like when leaders are as fearful as we are.

- The CEO who publicly expresses angst over the company's future will see employees scrambling for other places to work and investors moving their stocks to a more stable company.
- The pastor who publicly states the church is dying and he sees no hope for it will see church members looking for a new church home. The majority of those who stay will do nothing more than stay. They may be

present, but they see no need to support the pastor or help the church.

- The government official who shows fear or anxiety over an issue will discover that his anxiety is contagious. Those in the community will join him in wringing their hands in fear.

Fear is contagious.

When God called Abram to follow Him, Abram did so. He trusted God and "journeyed by stages to the Negev" (Gen. 12:9). But when famine hit, Abram's trust faded into fear. Instead of continuing to trust God in the place to which God called him, he hightailed it to Egypt. But Abram didn't go alone. He took Sarai, Lot, and his whole entourage. They knew of God's call on Abram's life, but they saw him running in fear—and they went with him.

But it got worse. Abram was also afraid an Egyptian might kill him so that he could take Sarai for himself. "Please say you're my sister so it will go well for me because of you, and my life will be spared on your account" (v. 13). Abram pulled Sarai into his fear and asked her to be deceptive.

No doubt Abraham was a man of faith, but he was human, and he had moments of faltering in his faith. God blessed Abraham despite these moments but think how greater it would have been if he had stood his ground when the famine hit. "God has called me to this place, and even though the land is in a famine, I will stay and trust Him."

Even as fear can be contagious, so can faith. Abram's faith in the face of fearful circumstances could've encouraged those with him to trust God. It's true for us too. Our response to circumstances is contagious. We can encourage others to stand strong by own own trust in the Lord, or we can lead them to be anxious and afraid.

This is not a call to recklessness. A fearless stance does not mean we toss caution to the wind. Rather, we lean on the Lord, knowing that He is with us as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

"The Lord is for me; I will not be afraid. What can a mere mortal do to me?" (Ps. 118:6).

Your confidence in Christ is a great testimony to others. Your trust in Christ will encourage others to also place their trust in Christ.