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By Elder
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5 Ways to CONQUER FEAR

No dark dart of fear stands a chance when you are protected with the Lord's brilliant armor.

Some years ago, I was in the mountains camping and hiking with my sons and friends. I wanted to head out on my own, so I informed the group of the terrain where I would be hiking and set off for the afternoon. As I enjoyed a beautiful, brisk, fall day, I hiked a considerable distance in just a few hours.

After a while, I determined I had better head back if I wanted to return to the campsite before dark. Too soon, however, darkness began to set in. I had a general idea where I was, and knew I couldn't be too far from the base camp, yet the darker it became, the more difficult it was to orient myself towards camp.

I stopped and tried to logically direct myself, which became more and more difficult in the dark. As my heart started to pound harder and my breathing began to increase, fear began to take over. I found myself walking faster, almost wanting to run, but without knowing which direction to head. Adrenaline coursed through my bloodstream. I realized I needed to take special care so as to not lose rationality or allow panic to overtake my emotions. This, unexpectedly, required considerable concentration.

By now it was dark enough and the temperature cool enough for me to know that our group would be comfortably settled around a campfire, and that if I found the right vantage point, the fire would be visible from a long distance.



LET THE KNOWLEDGE OF
WHO YOU TRULY ARE
AND WHO IS ON YOUR SIDE BURN AWAY
YOUR FEAR OF FAILURE.

It was with great relief that I spotted a golden flicker far off in the distance. Remarkably, this small speck of light provided the perspective necessary to immediately reorient myself and plot my return course. The fear that had been building inside of me dissipated faster than it came and was replaced with peace.


This type of fear is a normal part of life. In fact, many suggest it is a survival mechanism built into our DNA to protect us. I can rattle off a list of many common fears: fear of flying, fear of the dark, fear of heights, fear of spiders, fear of crowds, fear of closed-in spaces, fear of germs, and the list goes on. But I would like to address different types of fears, which hold more eternal significance, and then suggest several ways to conquer them.

CONQUERING FEAR OF FAILURE

A prevalent fear is the fear of failure. This fear can be so paralyzing that it prevents us from taking the bold actions necessary to succeed. Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, said, “Don’t let your fears overwhelm your desire. Let the barriers you face—and there will be barriers—be external, not internal. Fortune does favor the bold, and I promise that you will never know what you’re capable of unless you try.”¹

Now, I have a bit of bad news to share. If you take this advice and move forward with bold faith, you are most likely going to have a few failures in your life. You are going to take a few scrapes and bruises. There will be dark patches on the road ahead.

But you are sons and daughters of God. As such, you have an inexhaustible, divine source of strength burning inside of you. “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, . . . and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). “Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you” (D&C 68:6). Let the knowledge of who you truly are and who is on your side burn away your fear of failure. With God as your Father, no failure will be final.



FOCUSING ON THE
JOYOUS LIGHT
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CONQUERING FEAR OF RIDICULE

Today's cultural landscape is full of those who would mock and ridicule our beliefs. We worry that if we express our peculiar beliefs—and they are peculiar—that this will somehow become an embarrassment, or ultimately, a disadvantage in our relationships. But we shouldn't hide among the shadows, trying to blend in. "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid" (Matthew 5:14). Remember how far away I was from the campfire when I was lost, and how penetrating a single spark can be in the black of night.

It is more important than ever to be willing to express your values and beliefs—particularly in today's society, where people are stumbling around in the midst of darkness. You can express your faith with words, but especially by the way you live your life. "Be strong and of good courage" (Joshua 10:25). There are those out there who are hungry for the light of truth that you have. "Let your light so shine before men" (Matthew 5:16).

Remember that the flame of conviction, truth, and testimony inside you is bright enough to vanquish your fear of ridicule for your beliefs.

CONQUERING FEAR OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

I have sat in a number of meetings, in councils and committees, among brethren and sisters at Church headquarters, where we have discussed the prevalent fear of entering into marriage and starting a family. Many of you are worried about the economic and political climate we live in. You may worry that you'll need to finish school, or pay off debt, or buy a home, or establish your career before getting married and starting a family. For some, it is fear that marital bliss may not be so blissful, or even worse, that it could end in a divorce. Let me offer my perspective on these feelings.

Satan understands that the family is central to the Lord's plan of happiness. His strategy is to cast shadows of skepticism in your life. He is striving to sow the dark seeds of fear in your heart, anything to keep you from experiencing the most glorious, rewarding part of mortality: the bright holiness and happiness that comes from finding an eternal partner and bringing Heavenly Father's children into this world.

As you face the decision to start your own eternal family in the future, do not wait because you are afraid. Remember the scripture, "Be not afraid, only believe" (Mark 5:36). My marriage and family are the center of my life and are a literal personal manifestation of the great plan of happiness for me. I promise you that the same can be true for you. Focusing on the joyous light family life brings will cast out fear.



SERVICE AND
SELFLESSNESS COULD
ERADICATE FEAR

CONQUERING ADDITIONAL FEARS

In early General Authority training I received, I well remember these words from President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency: “Don’t take counsel from your fears.” These words have had a profound impact on my life. If I may, I would like to suggest two more ways you can conquer the fears I’ve already mentioned, and any others that may come your way.

First, armor up. I often stand in front of the mirror as I am preparing to begin the day and say aloud, “Time to buckle on the armor.” I visualize myself putting on the armor of God, grasping in my hand a gleaming sword of the Spirit and safeguarding myself with a shining shield of faith. Brothers and sisters, make the daily choices that arm you with spiritual power. No dark dart of fear stands a chance when you are protected with the Lord’s brilliant armor (see Ephesians 6:11–17).

Second, think more about the welfare of others than you think about yourself. Martin Luther King Jr. noted on the parable of the Good Samaritan: “I imagine that the first question which the priest and the Levite asked was, ‘If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?’ But by the very nature of his concern, the Good Samaritan reversed the question: ‘If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?’”² Dr. King understood that service and selflessness could eradicate fear.

YOU CAN CONQUER FEAR

And so we end where we began. Once again, out in the darkness, looking for the way back to camp, paralyzed by fear, and then rescued by the vision of a tiny spark of light—the fire of faith, the flame of testimony, the burning brilliance of divine strength, the shining gleam of spiritual armor, and the golden glow of selfless service. These will restore peace, provide direction, and eliminate fear. **NE**

From a BYU–Hawaii commencement address given on Apr. 18, 2015.

NOTES

1. Sheryl Sandberg, commencement address at Barnard College, May 17, 2011, barnard.edu/headlines/transcript-and-video-speech-sheryl-sandberg-chief-operating-officer-facebook.
2. Martin Luther King Jr., *Strength to Love* (1963), 20.