

HOW I TURNED MY FEARS INTO FAITH

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INTRODUCTION: I WAS STRESSED, ANXIOUS, AND AFRAID

Welcome to Level Up, the podcast that discusses our life in Christ.

Today, I want to talk about how I turned my fears into faith and how you can too.

For many years, I lived in a constant state of anxiety. My chiropractor would tell me, "Peter, your muscles are so tight from stress." My dentist would comment, "Peter, you're clenching your jaw and grinding your teeth." I remember sitting with my family in a movie theater watching Avatar in 3D, and I wasn't enjoying any of it because my mind was full of things I was worried about.

Fear, anxiety, anger, and stress are burdens that drained my energy and stole my joy. They were roadblocks to living by faith. My fears led me to lose out on so many good things.

Let me tell you how I turned my fears into faith. I encourage you to try these for yourself.

I FOLLOWED WISE COUNSEL

I praise God for a good friend with enough love and courage to confront me.

When I started in church ministry, I was lost. I was straight out of seminary, inexperienced, and clueless. I didn't know what I was doing. The result was a lot of anxiety that kept me up at night, stress was eating me up inside, and I was irritable with my wife.

My friend was on staff with me, and he took me aside and said, Peter, your anxiety is not good for you, and you're going to end up in the hospital. Then, he shared what to do about it. I've been applying his wise counsel ever since.

My friend taught me simple, practical ways to turn my fears into faith. I followed his advice, and I also ...

RESTED IN THE GOODNESS OF GOD

Our concept of God dramatically influences how we think and feel every day.

If we believe God is cruel or doesn't care about us, life will be scary because we feel alone or vulnerable. On the other hand, if we believe that God is very good, involved in our lives, and interested in our wellbeing, we can face both the storms of life and the everyday speed bumps with confidence and hope.

The God of the Bible is a covenant-keeper. He is always faithful to his promises, never failing to keep them. God makes a covenant with every believer (Hebrews 8:6-13). It was activated and sealed in the atoning blood of Christ - that's how committed God is to keeping his word. He promised to forgive our sins, to write his law on our hearts, and to be our God. In Christ, we belong to God, and he is faithful to us.

EVERYTHING BEGAN TO CHANGE when I got this concept of God's covenanted goodness to me. I stressed less and rested in a calm assurance that 'God has got this.' That led me to ...

CHANGE MY MIND

Our thinking determines our attitudes and emotions.

If our thinking is off-base, then we'll experience unhelpful emotions. If we're embracing lies or misunderstandings about life, we'll likely feel afraid, anxious, angry, or stressed. Thinking back, I must have developed ways of thinking that left me feeling alone and helpless. It wasn't true, but it was powerful.

On the other hand, if we fill our minds with accurate understandings of reality, our fears will likely turn into faith.

This is precisely what happened to me. I rejected my old thinking patterns and replaced them with truth-thinking. Bible passages were helpful as I memorized and applied them to my challenges. For example:

Psalms 56:3-4 (NLT) But when I am afraid, I will put my trust in you. 4 I praise God for what he has promised. I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me?

Psalms 18:1-3 (NLT) I love you, LORD; you are my strength. 2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the power that saves me, and my place of safety. 3 I called on the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and he saved me from my enemies.

Romans 8:38 (NLT) And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.

As new thinking patterns developed, I rewired my brain to face challenging situations, confident in God's love, goodness, and faithfulness. I experienced peace instead of turmoil.

REPLACE YOUR FEARS WITH FAITH

I found it was possible to replace my fears with faith. I believe you'll also find this to be true in your life. I intentionally tell myself the truth. The more I do it, the easier and more practical it becomes.

I've found it practical to use affirmations such as the following:

- God is good, and I always live in his goodness.
- Whatever happens, God's got this.
- God loves me. Nothing can change that.
- God protects me through all the storms of life.
- This challenge is big and powerful, but the Lord is bigger and more powerful.

I'm grateful for my friend's advice. I've been applying it for decades, and it works. If you're prone to anxiety or stress, why not try it?