



# PEACE IN A TIME OF FEAR

SUSIE FIKSE

Scrolling through social media lately, I'm pummeled with verses about fear and worry. I know they are intended to be helpful, but sometimes what my soul hears is not comfort, but harsh admonition. I can interpret "do not fear: as "don't mess up," "don't disappoint God by being afraid," or "don't be afraid or else!" And what happens then? More fear, worry, and anxiety pile on because not only am I afraid, but I feel shame for feeling that way and chastise myself for not doing better!

What if the scriptures that address fear and worry are less admonitions and more invitations? Our bodies naturally respond to scary things in the world with fear and anxiety. The bible often calls this "distress." We often call it stress.

What if we saw stress not as a problem to solve, but as an invitation to draw near to our heavenly Father? He is not up there thinking that we're doing it wrong when we are afraid or worried! He knows the fast

heartbeat, sweaty brow, and shallow breathing of stress.

Curt Thompson, a psychiatrist and Christian theologian, suggests that fear is not the problem, but where we direct our attention in our fear:

*"The good news is that Jesus' words are not about paying attention to God or he'll send you to hell. No, rather, pay attention to—direct the attention of your fear to—the one who... has authored your life. The one who knows you are afraid and wants to hear about it and comfort you. The one who never forgets you. The one who, as he said to the prophet Jeremiah, has known you before he even formed you; who delights in you; whose thoughts are ever about you; who only has good intentions for you; who is proud of you; who is so committed to your becoming a living, breathing icon of immeasurable beauty that brings life and joy and goodness to all whose lives you touch that he won't even allow death to get between the two of you. Not even a pandemic. It is that God to whom Jesus commands to direct our fearful attention."*

When I dwell on the abundance of God's love for me, my fear subsides. When I focus on the promise that He will provide everything I need, my anxiety recedes. When I remind

myself that God—my rock, my fortress, my salvation—is with me every moment, peace visits me, even if only momentarily. When I dwell on the abundance of God's love for me, my fear subsides. When I focus on the promise that He will provide everything I need, my anxiety recedes. When I remind myself that God—my rock, my fortress, my salvation—is with me every moment, peace visits me, even if only momentarily.

As I cozy up to God and rest in his arms, it's easy for me to want to hoard his comfort. But it is not just for my benefit, but so that, "we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." (II Cor. 1:4) Our friends, our neighbors, our city, and our world need comforting right now. I pray that we'd answer God's invitation to direct our attention to him in our fear and anxiety and worry and stress today, and that he'd use us to offer that same comfort to others!



Susie Fikse is the director of Hope for San Diego, Redeemer's mercy partner. She attends Redeemer's new church plant, Trinity. During social distancing, she's working as a short-order cook, feeding six humans and three dogs in her house. If you'd like to learn more about how we can respond to the needs of our community right now through Hope for San Diego, visit [www.hopeforsd.org](http://www.hopeforsd.org) and click on our coronavirus page.