

Fighting Fear

Insistent pounding at the door in the middle of the night caused me to bolt upright, heart racing as fear flooded my body. Glancing at the clock, I barely made out its declaration of 2:00 a.m. Completely terrified, my roommate and I clung to each other's hands in our little fourth-floor apartment in Krakow, Poland, as we watched the lock on our door shake and wiggle. How long would it hold?

We had only lived in the city for a few months. Gwen and I had volunteered to serve with a ministry during communist rule there, living as students at the local university as our cover. We had to be careful to keep our identities hidden, memorizing all forms of identification so we didn't have to carry any physical forms that would reveal our activity teaching Bible studies at a time this was illegal. However, we were not the only ones with clandestine lives in Krakow—it was a time of scarce food, rampant fear and much to learn as missionaries serving in defiance of a government that forbade Christianity.

As we sat in fear that night, I had no idea what the outcome of the situation would be. I couldn't help but recall stories from others who had been hauled off by the secret police. For hours we listened to threats, demands and yelling from the strangers at our door—knees uncontrollably knocking, all we could do was to ask God for protection. Together, we quietly prayed and sang hymns. Finally, they left and thankfully, never returned.

Body-shaking fear was real to me that night for the first time.

However, it would not be the last. Fear never ceases to work its way into my life, though usually not so loudly and obviously, and I have experienced it over and over again.

Before leaving Poland, I heard rumors of war as I saw tanks driving down streets. A severe snowstorm led to a frightening car accident. Eventually, I was even questioned by the secret police. Later in life, I walked through many miscarriages, severe illnesses suffered by my children, a house fire and many other circumstances that sparked anxiety and dread.

Life offers everyone many opportunities to become fearful. Yet I've come to realize I'd rather be a risk-taker and live by faith than allow fear to control me. The "present danger" that surrounded me during those days in Poland pushed me to fully trust God for protection and guidance like I never had before. Now, many decades later, having walked through multiple storms and difficulties, I believe that God is near present with us in all circumstances, always listening as we cry out for His protection and help.

Perhaps God has placed you and me at this moment just where we are to endure challenges, be faithful to Him and learn His perspective. We will grow in maturity and grow closer to Him as we fight fear and refuse to allow it to determine our obedience to His call on our lives. May we purpose to live stories of faith that serve as an act of worship to God, who will carry us through every storm.

Sally Clarkson is the beloved author of 24 books, podcast host, speaker, mother and friend. Her most recent book, *Help, I'm Drowning: Weathering the Storms of Life with Grace and Hope*, will be available Sept. 14. {eo}

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