

How You Can Eliminate the Spirit of Fear From Your Life

One of the Scriptures many Christians know well is 2 Timothy 1:7. In the New King James Version, it reads: “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” What is a “sound mind”? How can you know if your mind is “sound”? What can you do to get it?

I’ve written a lot about this in the past. But a friend asked me that question recently, and it prompted me to look at this Scripture deeply once again. In our 21st-century culture, it would sure be nice to replace fear with “power, love and a sound mind.”

Two Greek words in this verse demand special attention. The first is the word translated “fear.” The usual word translated “fear” is *phobos*, used in such verses as Luke 8:50b (MEV): “Do not fear. Only believe.” It refers to that feeling of dread that something bad is going to happen.

But in 2 Timothy 1:7, a different word is used; *deilia*. This word means “timidity or cowardice.” Rather than a feeling, this word describes a state of passivity, of holding back, of failing to step up and do what is required.

The other Greek word of note in this verse is *sóphronismos*, here translated “sound mind.” A more specific or accurate meaning of this word is self-control, self-discipline or prudence. Such a person would own full responsibility for his/her thoughts, feelings, responses and behaviors, refusing to passively give control over to any person or circumstance.

While the translation of this verse you and I memorized is certainly uplifting, understanding these more specific meanings lends a whole new dimension to what we are to do with our minds.

What Does That Look Like?

Not passive and timid. Self-controlled and self-disciplined. In short, this looks like telling your mind what to do and where to go instead of chasing after every thought and feeling that comes. Tweet that.

It means not allowing feelings to be your guide. Feelings make life colorful. They provide immensely valuable information about your internal and external environment. But feelings make a very poor guide!

It means owning your thoughts and feelings as your own, and refusing to allow anyone else to be in charge of your mind. God gave you executive authority over your own mind. You are responsible for how you use it.

It means intentionally choosing the input you allow into your mind, and choosing how you think about that input. That's what Paul talks about in Philippians 4:8. And it's what he means by "taking every thought captive" in 2 Corinthians 10:5.

Your thoughts are not all-powerful, but they are much more powerful than you realize. Circumstances affect you, but you get to choose how you respond. You probably don't place enough importance on your own ability to choose what your mind does.

As I read this verse with this understanding, I get the sense of an almost militant stance in being in charge of one's own mind. The "sound mind" God has given through His Spirit into our spirit is not passive or weak, but strong, focused, resilient, proactive, intentional and responsible.

We will be faced with trouble, sometimes serious trouble, in this world. Circumstances and other people affect us. We are not invincible! But we are responsible. We get to choose what to do next.

That includes inviting Jesus right into the middle of our

circumstances. And it includes choosing what to do with our mind in the process.

How to Do That

When you struggle with negative feelings or thoughts, what do you do next? When you face a troubling circumstance or become aware of some old wounds, how do you respond?

You and I cannot heal ourselves. But we can choose to own our own wounds, to place ourselves where healing is possible, and to take healing into our being.

You cannot change your spouse. But you can do the challenging work of changing yourself as the Holy Spirit directs, and choose different ways of interacting with your spouse.

You cannot change the things others do to you. But you can choose how to respond. Even prisoners of war who learned to choose their responses came through more intact. You can learn healthy forgiveness.

You cannot eliminate darkness by railing against it. But you can choose to light a candle. You can choose to “overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21b).

You cannot undo your passivity from the past. But you can refuse to be passive one more day. You can look for the problem God has placed in front of you, and take action to do something about it. You can find one person or group of people who need help, and help them.

That’s exercising the sound mind that God has given you.

Your Turn: In what areas have you been passive or timid? Where are you going to step up and take responsibility in taking positive action? Leave a comment below. {eo}

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This article originally appeared at .

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