

How You Can Have #NoFear During the Pandemic and Beyond

Are you getting high on fear? According to sociologist Margie Kerr, in a CBS Sunday Morning television news story, people do. They actually crave and thrive on being afraid. It's one of the top reasons why Halloween is so popular and why we like scary movies, amusement park rides and carnival fun houses. And let's face it, our world is getting scarier by the day. Our recent pandemic is bringing new levels of fear, and many are in a fear coma.

The classic story of *Frankenstein* written by Mary Shelley is a prime example of our addiction to being fear-driven. We like to rush in with our initial instincts as the people in the village did before understanding the facts. I remember thinking the first time I saw the *Frankenstein* movie as a child that I wasn't scared but actually felt sorry for the monster. When the townspeople turned into a panicked mob determined to kill the monster, I wanted to yell at the movie screen, "Don't hurt him; he can't help it!" Shelley said it best when she wrote, "If I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear."

The Cambridge Dictionary describes "panic" as "a *sudden*, strong feeling of anxiety or fear that *prevents reasonable thought and action* and may *spread* to influence many people." As Easter approaches and we review the story, events and death of Jesus, I found myself pondering how Jesus went from being adored as a king to being a victim of people's panic and fear. It all comes down to word of mouth.

Have you ever played the gossip game where a phrase is whispered in a circle of people and passed on, and then the

last person reveals how that phrase was finally communicated? It always comes out a jumbled mess. On today's TV, radio and internet, sensational news thrives off saying, "Don't panic," but leads news stories with "breaking news" or "urgent reports." We can't help but panic when we are consumed with watching it. Along with our desire never to be left out or always to be in control, we get trampled by the onslaught of fear.

Writer Walter Kern says, "Horror and panic themselves are forms of violence, and diminishing them, restricting their dimensions, is itself a civilizing act." God wants us to diminish fear, not cause more. How the COVID-19 outbreak will affect our world going forward is still unraveling. It's already teaching us lessons of who we are as believers in God. Those who know the Bible intimately aren't panicking, but praying. They aren't hoarding, but helping.

And then there's laughter displayed on social media. Laughter is actually a release of fear. It can actually be good for us. Someone sent me a picture of a set of commemorative coronavirus earrings of toilet paper rolls, and a picture of packed shelves and frozen food aisles in stores as a "flashback Thursday" social media posting. The pandemic is not a laughing matter, and we should never put forth an uncaring or cynical attitude toward it, especially when people are sick and dying. The virus is real, and many will die because of it. But as a member of the human race who's watching the panic mobs getting high on fear, one can't help finding some humor in it and letting off steam.

The bottom line is that God brings peace, and calls us to bring peace and do whatever we can to see that it flourishes. God brings joy in the midst of fear when we allow our trust to supersede our fears. Joy is the remedy of fear. It's what the enemy wants to destroy in us because the love and joy of the Lord bring security, power and strength in the shadow of death.

Paul said it best in Romans 8:38-39 (TPT): “So now I live with the *confidence* that there is nothing in the universe with the power to separate us from God’s love. I’m convinced that his love will triumph over death, life’s troubles, fallen angels, or dark rulers in the heavens. There is nothing in our present or future circumstances that can weaken his love. There is no power above us or beneath us—no power that could ever be found in the universe that can distance us from God’s passionate love, which is lavished upon us through our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One!”

#NoFear! {eoa}

Kathleen Cooke’s *devotional Hope 4 Today: Stay Connected to God in a Distracted Culture encourages readers to engage with God. As co-founder of Cooke Media Group and The Influence Lab, she publishes a bimonthly journal. Find out more at or on Twitter @KathleenCookeLA.*