

Chapter 6

Dealing with Personal Fears

Those of us who have had the privilege of being in ministry for a while know that one of the most effective weapons used against new staff is some form of fear. We also know that working long-term in Rescue Ministry is a process of developing a trust in God, His provisions and His guidance. We all know that "Perfect Love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). Learning to rely on that perfect love is a process enhanced by the very nature of this ministry. Remember how the evil one tried to present Jesus with the temptation of fear in the wilderness: fear of no provision, fear of loss of position, fear of lack of protection. This is the Jesus who set the example for us, the same Jesus who told His disciples, "Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid" (Matthew 14:27). Many times, He shared with His disciples that He was the answer to any fear they could imagine (John 14:1; Matthew 17:7; 28:10; Revelation 2:10).

What Do Rescue Mission Workers Fear?

Taking a personal ministry inventory from time to time is healthy. One of the questions to ask is, "What is my greatest fear going forward in ministry?" The following are some of the fears shared from both staff and sLi students, with responding considerations for each. Remember that God gave us the ability to fear, so we know there are some things He wants to do through our acknowledging these fears.

1. I fear not being a good example. This is a very useful fear that can drive you to continual study of the One who came and walked on this earth to provide us with a perfect example. The more I study the life of Jesus, the more I am ready to maintain a good example before others. Another positive result of this fear is the humility that follows when I am convinced I cannot do this on my own. Sometimes more is accomplished in asking forgiveness for an inappropriate action than in living a life that seems unattainable to others.

2. I fear being misunderstood. Join the fellowship! Jesus was misunderstood over and over again. The importance of this fear, however, is to drive us to better and better communication. Never expect a client to understand something the first time. Important things need to be written down so the client can read them again when they are out of your presence, while at the same time providing proof that you said what you said. A good practice is to ask a client to confirm what you have said. You do this, not by asking them to "repeat what I just said," but rather, "I want to always make sure I am speaking in a way that makes sense. Would you mind saying what I just said in a better way?"

3. I am concerned what to do when I do not have the resources to help a person in need. Truth is, you will never have all the resources you would like to have...this is not Heaven. But if we are going to be helpful to clients who have to learn to live with limited resources, perhaps the way we deal with inadequate resources in front of clients may be a great training tool. Remember that we are promised that we will have what we need. So logically, we can conclude that there will be some things we wish for that God must not consider needs. Are you able to teach clients to look for options when the easy answer is not readily available? This fear can give us energy to look for more answers. The phrase "look outside the box" is a good management phrase, but for this situation, perhaps, we need to look outside

the mission and our own capabilities. We need not be providing a resource that is available through an agency in town if, when providing that resource, we make clients dependent on the mission rather than learning to seek help from a wider range of options. One past sLi graduate took it on his own to research and develop a helpful list of where to turn in the city to find help for needs that the mission did not meet. Be creative and thank God for the motivation to find information that you can provide to staff and clients.

4. I fear not being able to earn participant trust. Recent research shows that only 33% of people currently trust other people. This is even more prevalent in Rescue Missions where people have been relationally abused for years. Much of a person's ability to gain trust from others is more about how much you yourself trust. If you are suspicious of other people, why should you expect their trust of you? The bottom line is, we need to stop trying to get people to trust us, and instead point them to the One whom they can always trust. I often say to a client, "I don't want you to trust me. I want you to trust the One who I serve. If I am not doing right by you, He will deal with you and me." Psalm 146:3 and 118:8-9 are good verses to share with clients. On the other hand, we as Christian workers need to do everything possible to be trustworthy as we represent Him.

5. I am concerned that I will not have answers to client questions. We do not have answers in this life for some questions. We have only a foundation of truth on which to lay those unanswered questions. Many of our clients have experienced severe loss, and wrestle with finding answers for their pain. Other



questions do have valid doctrinal answers. If you do not have the answers to this latter group, you will find motivation to "study to show yourself approved" (2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)). Remember that clients will use doctrinal questions to sidestep conversations that are moving too close to considering a relationship with Christ. The more uncomfortable a client gets with conversations about Jesus, the more diversion tactics appear. Often it is good to say something like, "That is a very interesting question, and we will get time to discuss that in depth in the future, but right now let's stay with..."

6. Perhaps the most difficult fear for those beginning a commitment to ministry is never stated...almost as if there is a fear of stating the fear. Many begin with the fear of not being able to succeed. For good reason, people are often discouraged from going into this ministry with admonitions of how difficult the work can be. This is usually an effort to help the person count the cost, a very biblical position according to Luke 14:28. Once again, this is a valuable fear, since it leads to the basic necessary understanding that unless the Lord does the work, it does not happen (Psalm 127:1). No one going into the ministry of Rescue on his or her own strength and ability will be able to go the distance (see chapter 35 on burnout for more on this).

For your encouragement, I recommend you read Isaiah 43 to relish a message God sent to His people.

Remember...do not be afraid of admitting fears. Fear keep us humble and can be great motivators. God allows us to be fearful to keep us aware of Who will be doing the work.

"Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10.