

What People Are Saying about Chris Dupré and *Unstuck*...

"*Unstuck*! What a great title and what a great book! As a pastor and leader I've seen countless people who for one reason or another have become "stuck." Chris DuPré's book, *Unstuck*, not only goes to the heart of why so many people can't move forward, it gives voice to the struggle as well as hope for the heart. Chris has been a dear friend for over twenty-five years. I've seen him wrestle with things that others might use as an excuse to remain stuck, and yet he found in God what was needed to triumph and to move on to what God had next for him and for his family. Chris' pastoral heart and insight come out so clearly in his latest book. I recommend *Unstuck* to anyone needing wisdom, vision, and hope on this journey called life."

—Mike Bickle

Director, International House of Prayer
Kansas City, MO

"Chris DuPré has written a deeply powerful work inspired by the Holy Spirit that sets people free. It is one of those books that we need to read over and over and let the words sink in deeply to our hearts to bring change and healing in our lives. I love it!"

—Dr. Cindy Jacobs

Generals International

“It is remarkable that as a generation with unprecedented opportunities, so many of us have believed the lie that we simply “can’t.” However, the Word of God never returns void. (See Isaiah 55:11.) *Unstuck* is a wonderful reminder of the promises of Jeremiah 29:11—that the Lord has plans and purposes for our future, which will be fulfilled if we persevere. Our Father says that we *can*! We just need to hold on to hope, by faith and patience, and press through the hurdles that try to hinder us. Knowing our identity as overcomers in Christ, we inherit the promises. Through his personal stories and anecdotes, Chris DuPré exhorts us that it is possible to break through the facades of fear, rejection, delay, intimidation by the unknown, and more. *Unstuck* is a gift to believers in all seasons of life, inspiring them to *believe* again that though we may face challenges and feel knocked down, as the righteous, we get back up, seven times over! (See Proverbs 24:16.)”

—Dr. Ché Ahn

President, Harvest International Ministry
Founding Pastor, HROCK Church, Pasadena, CA
International Chancellor, Wagner University

“Perhaps you have wondered why you are not more highly motivated or why you don’t go for greater fulfillment in life. Can this be changed? Yes! *Unstuck* by Chris DuPré will help you! Chris explains how beliefs held in the heart such as fear, rejection, and pride, act like quicksand, keeping us from rising to our potential. Discouragement sets in, and we back off. But if you honestly face your issues, you can get unstuck and go for your dreams. Well done, Chris; the nation and the world need this message desperately.”

—John Arnott

Catch the Fire/Partners in Harvest
Toronto, Canada

“When Jesus was asked questions concerning the issues of life, He would often tell stories. Some of those stories are called parables—real or fictional illustrations with applications for understanding life and how things really work. Similarly, Chris DuPré, a collector of wisdom and a master storyteller, has packed the pages of *Unstuck* with real-life experience and insight. He writes with delightful transparency that makes wisdom easy to find. This is a book to read and share. If you don’t need ‘unsticking,’ then surely your friends and family do!”

—Charles Stock

Senior pastor, Life Center, Harrisburg, PA
Founder, Clear River Network

“Is there something holding you back? Is there an impossibility in front of you today? Here’s the way out—the way to be *unstuck*. Chris DuPré has given you an amazing toolbox of revelation to set you free from any and every disappointment life could throw at you. With an amazing flair for communicating, Chris presents truths that will keep you thinking for days after you have finished reading it. I loved hearing him share so candidly about his life journey—a journey that hasn’t always been a piece of cake. You should know that once you pick up this book, it will be next to impossible not to finish it. You are going to enjoy getting *Unstuck*! Thank you, Chris, for being so real and honest that each one of us can identify with our need to be unstuck.”

—Brian Simmons

Stairway Ministries
Lead translator, The Passion Translation Project

UN
HOPE FOR
CHRISTIANS
IN A **STUCK**

DEAD-END JOB,
DEAD-END FAITH,
OR SOME SIMILAR
SOUL-SHRIVELING RUT.

CHRIS DUPRÉ



WHITAKER
HOUSE

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UNSTUCK:

Hope for Christians in a Dead-End Job, Dead-End Faith, or Some Similar Soul-Shriveling Rut

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DEDICATION

Sometimes it's obvious who should receive a book dedication and other times it's more of a prayerful search. This one is like low-hanging fruit.

But it starts with a story.

In January of 2013, my wife and I took a trip to Kansas City. It seemed like a good time to visit a number of people whom we've known and loved for many years. We stayed with our lifelong friends, Russ and Kris Merwin. One evening while we were there, Russ and Kris took their youngest daughter, Laura, a freshman in high school at the time, to the doctor to see why she was feeling so poorly. Just a few hours later, Russ called me during dinner to tell me the life-changing news: Laura had just

been diagnosed with leukemia. We wept and prayed, hoping and believing for the best.

The day after her diagnosis, Laura had surgery to install a porta-cath, a device used to give blood and also administer treatments. Laura's first twenty-eight-day round of chemo started the next day. This was a fast and difficult turnaround for an enthusiastic fourteen-year-old athlete who was full of life and energy. She was tested at the end of the round to confirm what her doctors were sure would arrest her type of leukemia. Unfortunately, due to the uniqueness of her disease, the chemo did not have the intended effect. In other words, it didn't work.

Over the next five months, Laura received three more rounds of chemo, each stronger than the previous one. There were countless side effects that Laura endured, including losing all her hair, total fatigue, nausea, sleepless nights, and sleepless days. She persevered and pressed through, choosing almost daily not to give in and give up. During one of Laura's chemo treatments, she had an anaphylactic shock reaction to a chemo drug. She would have died that day had it not been for the quick and lifesaving response of her nurses.

At the end of the fourth round of chemo, Laura's cancer was finally declared to be in remission. Due to the high probability that the leukemia could return, however, she needed the life-threatening and hopefully life-saving procedure of a bone marrow transplant. Life-threatening, because the pre-treatment for a bone marrow transplant requires the patient's entire immune system (bone marrow) to be killed through even stronger chemo drugs and multiple rounds of total body radiation. Laura was very weak and very sick for months afterwards.

Then, just before her transplant day, more hard news. Laura was diagnosed with a bad case of shingles, delaying her procedure for three more weeks. Finally, with a sister who was

a perfect blood match, Laura went through the bone marrow transplant. After a period of time (which seemed to take forever) the results were in. The transplant was a success!

There was a five-month recovery from the bone marrow transplant procedure. In all, Laura spent seventy nights in the hospital; one stay lasted twenty-two days and another, thirty-two days. Not to mention the many daily trips she and her parents made back and forth from their house to the hospital.

Through all of 2013 and part of 2014 Laura was unable to attend high school because of weakness, fatigue, and a compromised immune system. Yet, Laura applied herself to her school work at home, studying with the help of visiting teachers and working diligently to stay on track. After over a year of being out of school Laura finally started attending her high school classes again. While beginning to slowly get her strength back, Laura injured her knee during a strengthening workout and had to have knee surgery. Laura eventually did finish up the last few months of her sophomore year with her classmates... on crutches.

In May 2016, Laura not only graduated from high school, but graduated with her class and with scholastic honors. With the help of scholarships from John Brown University, Laura is now a very successful sophomore at JBU where she is studying nursing. Her goal is to one day go back to the floor where she was treated as a patient, but this time as a pediatric oncology nurse.

I was there when the diagnosis came in and I watched her fight the cancer over the years. She changed her diet, declined a wig, received shots daily, got sick often, and endured many, many “bad news” events. In spite of all this, Laura was never a victim. *She never allowed herself to get “stuck” in depression or despair.* From the beginning, she was running for the prize of

this all being over, so she could be who she felt called to be and do what she felt called to do.

Laura Merwin, thank you for displaying courage under fire. You are such an amazing example of what it means to be an overcomer, and I am humbled and honored to know you and call you a friend.

And so to you, Laura Merwin, one of my all-time heroes, I humbly dedicate this book.

FOREWORD

I just finished reading *Unstuck* by Chris DuPré. I was so caught up in the storytelling of this wonderful book that even before I finished it, I started to think of several people in my life who need to read it right now. No, really, I have a list of people I am buying it for and you will totally understand when you read it for yourself.

I have to commend this book and the writer to you for a minute. I have known Chris since the early nineties and to know Chris and his family is to know virtue. He has the gift of the wisdom you need even when you don't know what questions to ask.

Chris is a natural coach (as you can tell by all the sports references in this book), he has a church leadership background in

both pastoring and worship leading (in other words, he knows how to herd cats), but really what makes this book special is that he is a father. Not just a dad to his girls, but a fatherly perspective toward each one of us who is stuck and needs a conversation to pull us out. Who would have that difficult conversation except a father who loves us?

As he walks you through various themes, such the hurdles of life, what hiddenness is for, and even how to navigate identity, it feels like you are getting poured into by someone who really knows and cares. Chris masterfully shares his wisdom but through deep empathy and concern for the reader. I love how Chris takes his own experiences and vulnerably shares them so we find ourselves inside of his process but also know the victory on the other side. Sometimes we are so focused on the solution, we forget that the painful process is usually part of the solution. From childhood stories all the way into his leadership experiences, Chris relates the realistic challenges we all face but gives us a chance to maybe see the process differently. His clear principles will recondition your thinking.

One of the greatest frustrations of the spiritual life is how easy it is to get stuck. And when you do get stuck, how do you get unstuck? How can Christians, who have the living God inside of them, overcome dry seasons of life where nothing they put effort toward seems to work out?

I know there have been times in my own life that I have felt stuck. What is hard is that many good-willed Christians tried to define the season *for me* and left me feeling like I had to work my way out of it instead of getting unstuck the way Chris defines it. It's amazing when you don't have mercy toward yourself how you can even become one of those good-willed, well-meaning Christians who give terrible advice. This book is different.

As you read this book, come out of performance. Don't use muscle and willpower to get out of the rut. Rather, rest in the principles that Chris gives and walk into the strong identity that he imparts. Let this beautiful book help you get *Unstuck*.

—Shawn Bolz

Author of *Translating God, God Secrets, Growing Up With God*

www.bolzministries.com

INTRODUCTION

It was school assembly day for my varsity soccer team. Our team was lined up in the middle of the gym floor, facing the rest of the school seated on the far side of the gym. I was dead center of the row of players. The coach went through the line, going from one end to the other and back again, talking about each player's strengths and thanking them for their play. Being in the center, I was the last one to be talked about—and the coach overlooked me. Enthusiastically, he turned to the school and said, "Let's give a big hand to this year's varsity team!" The team, as well as all the students shouted, "You forgot DuPré!" He turned around again and apologized. He then said a few kind and complimentary things, but the one thing that has stayed with me through the years is this: "Chris has the most potential of any athlete I've seen in a long line. The question is,

will he fulfill that potential or will he always be known as Mr. Potential?" Everyone laughed and a few kids actually called me "Mr. Potential" for a while, but I was struck by his words. I told myself that I did not want to go through life being known as the guy who had so much potential but never quite fulfilled it.

I don't know anyone who would want that title! What keeps us from fulfilling our potential? As I look back on my life and observe the lives of those around me I am constantly amazed at how some people seem to grow wings and soar while others appear to stay in one spot, almost paralyzed, never venturing past their place of safety. Curious, I've asked many people why they never went after their dreams, and it resulted in some incredible conversations. The answer usually has something to do with fear, hurt, sin, laziness, rejection, pride, and wounding—they have attacked so many and put them in a holding pattern for years, if not their entire life. They're stuck! Completely stuck!

I grew up in a small town about thirty miles east of Rochester, NY. Winters there could be brutal. One year, I received some new boots for Christmas. I wore them proudly whenever and wherever I could, and when spring came, I found a new favorite pastime of finding puddles and stomping up and down in them. My super boots would protect me and keep me warm and dry. One day, I got off the bus and eyed a nice, new puddle. I took off and did my big jump, landing right in the middle. Unfortunately, this was not just any run-of-the-mill puddle. This one was made to capture people, and I was captured. I remember standing there feeling the cold water beginning to fill my boots...my new boots. I pulled one leg out, but no matter how much I pulled the other, it wouldn't move. My boot was stuck. I was stuck! A little frantic, I pulled and pulled until suddenly my leg came free. Unfortunately, my foot also came free of my boot. I pulled out my soaking wet sock and realized that one of my new boots was buried deep down in the slush.

My little mind was faced with a choice. Did I care enough about what's stuck to do something about it, or should I just leave my boot there and move on? I prized my boot so I had to think of a way for it to become unstuck. I found a stick and began to fish. After what seemed like an eternity, I finally pulled out my boot. That's the first time I ever went fishing and was actually glad that I got a boot instead of a fish.

My desire with this book is to address some of those "stuck" areas and hopefully provide a key that will open a door or two. I say a door or two, or even three, because it's almost always more than one thing. One muddy puddle seems to create another. Comparison creates pride, and pride creates jealousy, and so on. Ah, but God—He is the change factor in all of this and in Him we can find new life...life abundant!

A parable is told of a farmer who owned an old mule. The mule fell into the farmer's well. The farmer heard the mule "braying"—or whatever mules do when they fall into wells. After carefully assessing the situation, the farmer sympathized with the mule but decided that neither the mule nor the well was worth the trouble of saving. Instead, he called his neighbors together, told them what had happened, and then enlisted them to help haul dirt to bury the old mule in the well and put him out of his misery.

Initially, the old mule was hysterical! But as the farmer and his neighbors started shoveling and the first clump of dirt hit his back, a thought struck him. If every time a shovel-load of dirt landed on his back, he could shake it off and step up! This he did, blow after blow. "Shake it off and step up...shake it off and step up...shake it off and step up!" He repeated that line over and over again. No matter how painful the blows, or how distressing the situation seemed, the old mule fought panic and just kept right on shaking it off and stepping up!

It wasn't long before the old mule, battered and exhausted, stepped triumphantly over the wall of that well! What seemed like what had the potential to *bury* him, actually *blessed* him... all because of the manner in which he handled his adversity.

You and I were not made for mediocrity. We weren't made to sit on the ground and stare at the hurdle that just knocked us back. We weren't made to let life bury us alive. We were made to get up and we were made to overcome. First John 5:5 says, "*Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*"

If you believe in Him, there is always a pathway to overcoming. As Paul says in Romans 8:31, 37, "*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?... Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*"

"*Through Him who loved us....*" That's the pathway to overcoming. My prayer is that as you go through the pages of this book, you will find Him, and in doing so, you will find your pathway to overcoming the hurdles that try to hinder you on this most incredible of journeys: life. May your journey be a blessed one!



SILENCING THE WHISPERS OF FEAR

Today, this comedian is a legend. But the first time he walked onstage, things didn't go as planned.

Maybe you know how it feels. You have a plan, you see yourself standing up there, your mind is perfectly clear, and you begin to do what you've been practicing at home for ages. Only this isn't home, and instead of telling your jokes to a supportive mirror, you're looking out over an audience that is looking back at you and waiting for you to either soar...or crash.

On this, his first night doing stand-up comedy, the young man got on stage and instantly did the one thing a comedian should never do...he froze. The crowd waited a few moments for him to get his rhythm but he never did. He stayed frozen.

The country club crowd soon began to jeer him and moments later he was booed off of the stage.

What would you do if this happened to you? Well, this young man refused to let that moment define him. He was not a hack and he knew it. He knew he was made to raise people's spirits but first he had to raise his own. He didn't let it fester, not even for a few days. Instead, he returned to the same club the next night, fought through his fears, stood up, and completed his set. The crowd roared with laughter and gave him a rowdy and heartfelt applause.

He did it! His name was Jerry Seinfeld, and the rest is history.

STAGE FRIGHT

I used to wonder what it would be like to be a stand-up comedian. Going from place to place, telling jokes, and making people laugh. That must be the world's greatest job...or so I thought. What could be better?

I remember watching a comedian on TV when I was a kid and laughing at his final joke. To this day I don't remember what it was but it made me laugh so loud that my mother and my brother, who were in the kitchen at the time, asked me what was so funny. I ran into the kitchen with visions of what I said making them howl and forever after remembering this moment in the kitchen as my first stand-up gig. I truly believed I was funny and that now was the time to show my family just how funny I could be.

I proudly stood in front of them. "There was this guy named...uh...there was this guy, his name was...."

I couldn't remember the guy's name. That was the basis of the whole joke and I couldn't remember his name. I completely froze!

My mother was so sweet. She just said, “Oh, that’s alright Chris. You’ll remember it at some point and when you do, come back in here and tell us.” Unfortunately, she had to raise her voice over the sound of the laughter that was coming from the corner where my brother was sitting. I bombed and I knew it... and my brother knew it, too.

I immediately dropped my head, turned around, and with all the strength I could muster, I took that long walk of shame back to my place on the couch. Never again would I make that mistake!

Now, I don’t blame my brother. If the roles were reversed I would have done the same thing. We were only fifteen months apart and we were on each other’s case constantly. My mother used to call us the lion and the tiger. We were two alpha males from different “tribes” living in the same house.

What really plagued me was that I froze. I wondered if it would ever happen again. Wonder turned into overthinking, overthinking turned into a quiet anxiety, and my ongoing quiet anxiety turned into suppressed fear. This continued throughout high school. Whenever I was called upon to read out loud in class, if I messed up a word or read something incorrectly, the anxiety would descend, these feelings would begin to boil up inside my gut, and then, *WHAM*, the words in front of me would begin to become blurry and finally a black cloud would overtake my vision. I couldn’t even see the words. I was more than just frozen at that point—I was paralyzed!

This internal battle against fear set in motion an obsessive desire to manipulate my circumstances so that what I feared would never cross my path.

All through high school, if I knew that the upcoming class would involve reading aloud, I would either tell the teacher that I was suffering with a bad headache or that I needed reading glasses and it was difficult for me to read for very long. With

those excuses, I almost always got out of reading. I also made a point of avoiding any kind of oral report. If reading would make me shudder, what would speaking in front of people make me do? I didn't even want to imagine it.

College, unfortunately, was more of the same. At age nineteen I became a believer and began to write songs. People would hear about them or hear me sing from another room and ask me to play for them. I wanted so much to sing for people, but fear would raise its ugly head and I'd be paralyzed all over again. The only way that I would let anyone hear my songs was if they stayed in one room while I played from another. I needed to not see them and I needed them to not see me. Often I would go into the bathroom and have them stay in the living room. (The perk was that our bathroom had tiled walls and it always sounded amazing when I sang and played in there.)

These stories may either sound horribly familiar or like I'm making a big deal out of nothing. To those who have never had to deal with a crippling fear, people with one may appear weak—mentally, physically, and spiritually. "Come on, Chris," they might say, "God hasn't given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind." But fear is powerful and can be an ongoing struggle, even for the most fervent believers. What fear did to me was shut down my eyes, my voice, and my mind, turning my thoughts and my gifts into nothing more than prisoners. That's the purpose of fear. Its desire is to keep you from effectively moving in your unique gifts and callings.

NOT GIVEN A SPIRIT OF FEAR

Let's look at that Scripture about fear that I referenced above. It's from 2 Timothy 1:7 and reads, "*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*"

This is a wonderful truth from the Word of God and it has encouraged and empowered multitudes throughout every

generation. Its purpose, though, is more than just a “heartly word of needed power” for the moment. We need to sometimes take a closer look at Scripture and see its initial intent.

As an example, take one of the most well-known and beloved Scriptures: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). If we look at it closer, we will see something amazing. The simple word “so” lends us great insight. Today, the word *so* is often used to refer to quantity, causing us to read the verse like this: “He loves us ‘so’ much that He gave His only begotten Son.” The meaning of *so* at the time of the writing of the King James Version actually had a different meaning. It meant “in this way.” If we use it that way the passage becomes more beautiful and unique. “For God loved the world in this way, that He gave....” It’s beautiful both ways but this version directs our heart to see God’s intent.

So it is with Paul’s second letter to Timothy. He states that God didn’t give us a spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind. If we take this by itself, it is encouraging and helpful information, giving us added empowerment to take on life. But if we see it in its larger context, we can then see God’s desire for us to flourish in our lives and in our ministry. Turn the page back to the fourth chapter of 1 Timothy where Paul is encouraging Timothy to press into his calling to be a leader in spite of his youth and experience. Paul saw who Timothy really was and wanted to encourage him in spite of his young age or his lack of experience. That’s what good leaders do.

Paul then told him that others believed in him and supported that belief by standing with him. He tells Timothy, *“Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you”* (1 Timothy 4:14 NIV). Paul is telling Timothy that not only is he a gifted young man,

other more mature believers believed in him so much that they laid hands on him and prayed for him to boldly do what God had gifted him to do.

This is where the rubber meets the road. We are all gifted in one way or another. It's what we do with those gifts that determines everything. Timothy obviously needed a little push from Paul, who knew him and knew what was in him.

**WE ARE ALL GIFTED IN ONE WAY
OR ANOTHER. IT'S WHAT WE DO WITH THOSE
GIFTS THAT DETERMINES EVERYTHING.**

It doesn't stop here, though. Now, I may be reading into this, but it seems that in spite of what Paul wrote to Timothy, Timothy didn't completely walk out Paul's admonition in 1 Timothy. Somehow Paul must have gotten reports that though Timothy was an excellent young man, he was still holding back from exercising his gifts. Why else would Paul repeat himself, almost word for word, in 2 Timothy 1:6? He says, "*Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*" The difference here is that Paul doesn't just say that he remembers the moment when the elders prayed for Timothy. He remembered something more personal. Paul now says that it was "*through the laying on of my hands.*" Paul was more than a witness, he was a participant. He laid hands on Timothy because he saw greatness in the young man.

In the same way, there is greatness in you. You were not created to be a spectator throughout your life. Your gifts were given to you for a purpose. They were never intended to be hidden and occasionally enjoyed for yourself. You have gifts so that you can be a gift.

And fear steals those gifts.

FEAR: THE WORLD'S SNEAKIEST THIEF

In the very next verse I believe that we see the cause of Timothy's hesitation: "*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind*" (2 Timothy 1:7). We all know this Scripture, but for most people it's our go-to verse for moments when we become frightened about something external, such as fearing bad news or being afraid of the dark. Those are great times to remember that we were not given a spirit of fear, but what Paul is trying to address is something specific that he sees in Timothy—Timothy neglecting to use his gifts. This verse is about fear in the context of releasing our gifts. That's why it's located here and not elsewhere.

Timothy was afraid of something. Of what we do not know, but Paul realized that it was affecting him in the areas of power, love, and soundness of mind.

Fear does that. Whatever fear was gripping Timothy, it was stealing from him his very life and calling. Paul wasn't addressing the peripheral fears that we may all carry, though each fear we carry is an added weight that God wants to release from us. Paul was attempting to zero in on specific fears that hinder, and often halt, the unique ministry that we each carry.

My specific fear growing up was speaking or singing in front of people. That fear totally shut me down. Like I said, I would always try to remove myself from any situation in which I would have to read, talk, or sing in front of people. I even left the room more than once to get physically sick. It's true. One time I was playing in a band and they gave me a one-sentence solo line in the middle of the song, known as the bridge. Up until this time I would play guitar and sing backup but I never would sing anything by myself. During practice, I got through the bridge

because there was only a handful of us, but when we went live with a full house, everything changed. The band's leader looked at me and thought I was okay, but as the song progressed I became gripped with fear. He could see I was melting down, and in spite of the horror on his face, I set my guitar down, walked offstage, ran outside, and vomited. I then went around to the front of the building, walked in, and watched the band finish the song. I waved at them but they didn't seem too happy.

I knew that my heart's desire was to sing and speak before others but when I tried, I was shut down. Unfortunately, fear knows no bounds. It attacks us at every turn, whispering its demonic voice into our soul, trying to steer us down a path of frustration, inaction, and eventually total detachment. At least, it looks like detachment, but to us, inside, it feels like a prison.

When I did some research on the different types of fears, I found one list that came to sixty-eight, and believe it or not, that's just for the ones that started with the letter "A"! I'm absolutely serious! I'm not sure of the final tally. But, just for those who are interested, here are a few of the fears that I had no idea actually existed:

Politicophobia: Fear or abnormal dislike of politicians

Omphalophobia: Fear of belly buttons

Aulophobia: Fear of flutes

Chorophobia: Fear of dancing

Kathisophobia: Fear of sitting down

Novercaphobia: Fear of your stepmother

(I had a great stepmother but there's a chance that I had to deal with the fear of dancing when I was in junior high school.)

As I perused the whole list I was struck with one thing: fear is waiting for us around every corner. I realize that some of these

fears may sound ridiculous, but to those who suffer, it's anything but funny.

Where does fear raise its ugly head in your life? Is it the fear of failure, or an unknown of the future that keeps you up at night? Do you fear not having a fulfilling life? For many, this is a result of comparison. We compare our lives with those around us and for some reason we always come up short. Bring in social media and suddenly we are seeing over and over again images of the perfect couple, the perfect family, and the perfect life. After a while, all we can see is what we don't have instead of seeing all the blessings that we actually do have.

REGAINING POWER

So, how do we walk out of all these fears? How can we regain power, love, and a sound mind in order to live in our giftings?

When fear attacks, power is trapped within us. We have two options when we're confronted by something fearful: fight or flight. If we overcome fear, we become fighters, standing against the foe before us. But when fear begins to have its way, flight takes over. It can make us run, or it can make us freeze. It can turn our arms and legs to rubber. Or cause a dark cloud to come down and envelop your sight. Or make your insides feel like they want to become your outsides. Or all of the above. It's not pretty.

I love this quote from Richie Norton: "To escape fear, you have to go through it, not around." There is no other way. We have to go *through* fear. I'm not saying going through fear is easy. Fear is tormenting—that's what the apostle John says in 1 John 4. Look at verse 18. It reads: "*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.*" John is not condemning anyone because they are battling fears. He is inviting them into

a deeper understanding of the love of God in order to overcome them. The revelation of God's affection is where the power flows into and from our being. Love is not just a white fluffy cloud of pleasant thoughts. It's best exemplified by one Man being beaten, whipped, and nailed to a cross. That's definitely not a cute, pretty, uplifting picture. But it's a power that saves, heals, and delivers.

If we try to fight on our own, the fight will always eventually turn to flight. If we just see ourselves and our own power confronting fear we will allow our thoughts of past failures to determine of future endeavors. We can't let that happen. Fear is real, but when confronted with the power of God's love it has to bow. Fear wants to present itself larger and more powerful than God's capacity to overcome it, but in reality, it's not a fair fight. It's never two equals battling each other. God is God, and when we hide ourselves in Him, He can and will overcome anything.

REGAINING LOVE

As I said before, when I was first saved I was playing guitar and writing songs but I wasn't letting anyone hear them. Oh, I'd let people hear my songs but it was always in a small group. And by *small* I mean *very small*...as in, one or two people. Then I wrote a song that everyone (or at least those I let listen to it) actually felt was great. My brother Mark asked me to sing it at our Sunday night service. Of course I said no. He then said that he would sing it if I played behind him. I agreed to that.

When it came time to play I got on stage and, much to my horror, found that there was a vocal mic for me. Mark said it was there in case I wanted to sing backup but that he was still planning on singing the song. He did ask me to sing along if I felt comfortable. My brother started out by standing in front of me, a little to my left. I felt very comfortable with him blocking my view, or, should I say, *others'* view of *me*.

As the song began, I may have sung along a bit but I was barely audible. As the song progressed, I began to get lost in its melody and words. I heard my brother singing and I tried some harmonies, but after a short while, I really didn't notice who was singing what. As the song began to wind down to its final verse, I realized that my brother was hardly singing. But I could hear him—or could I? No, it was *my* voice that was singing. I was there, singing in front of a group of people, and I wasn't getting sick. As a matter of fact, I was feeling empowered. I was feeling great. I was doing what burned in my heart to do.

By the end of the song I realized that another shift had taken place. My brother was no longer in front of me. He was now behind me to my left. My brother had placed love between me and my fear, knocking it out of my life. He believed in me and found a creative way for me to not “go around” my fear but to “go through it.” He became a hero to me that day, and as I look back on over forty years of ministering to people in song, leading worship, speaking, teaching, or just sharing my heart, I have never forgotten what he did for me that Sunday night in 1974. Until that night, I was void of power, but *my brother's love attacked my fear and brought me liberty*. As John says in 1 John 4:18, “...*fear involves torment, but he who fears has not been made perfect in love.*”

Steven Pressfield writes in his best seller, *The War of Art*,

Like self-doubt, fear is an indicator. Fear tells us what we have to do. The more scared we are of a work or calling, the more sure we can be that we have to do it. Resistance is experienced as fear; the degree of fear equates to the strength of Resistance.¹

1. Steven Pressfield, *The War of Art* (New York: Black Irish Books, 2002), 40.

Paul saw the gifting in Timothy and he also saw the resistance. When fear and love meet, something bizarre happens. Though someone may truly care about another, even love them, fear distorts that love and produces a horrible obsession called jealousy. Many may love those around them, but if they fear that they will be overshadowed or even left behind because of the gifting of others, a spirit of jealousy begins to creep in and distort what once was a pure love.

Look at married couples where love exists but where fear has found a foothold. If there's a suspicion of unfaithfulness, even if there is no history or not even a hint of that kind of activity, either in action or in word, it can still be agony. If someone carries the burden of having a jealous spouse, they are greatly hindered from becoming the man or woman they're meant to be because so much time and energy is wasted on overcompensating for their spouse's fears. The same is true for those who work with or minister with others who cast a dark shadow of fear or jealousy. Creative juices and spontaneity are stymied when you work with a fearful or jealous person.

In contrast, let me tell you about the time I was watching *Beauty and the Beast* with my wife, Laura, and our granddaughter. At the end, right after the Beast's transformation, my granddaughter asked, "How did the Beast change back into a prince?" I hesitated for a moment trying to come up with something pithy when my wife calmly replied, "She just loved his ugly parts away." I was stunned. Not that my wife would or could say something like that—she's brilliant—but by the truth of those words. They penetrated my heart. To this day, that is how I know we can remove our "ugly parts."

REGAINING A SOUND MIND

And let's not forget soundness of mind. Paul also addresses this area of attack from fear. How many of us have been

in situation where we feel comfortable, where we're "in our groove," only to have a fear abruptly drop in and ruin our peace of mind? One minute we are thinking perfectly clearly and the next minute we find ourselves in a fearful and intimidating situation and our brain is no longer working the way it should. Lucid thoughts turn into chaotic thoughts, or worse, into no thoughts at all.

What did that? A spirit of fear. It attacks your soundness of mind. That's why I couldn't stand in front of others and talk. Not only did I feel as if I was about to blackout, I felt as if brain cells were actually jumping out of my ears, leaving me with no ability to remember or process what was happening.

**WE FEAR EXPOSING OUR FEAR, AND YET, THE
GREATEST CHANCE OF VICTORY IS FOUND WHEN
IT'S FINALLY BROUGHT INTO THE LIGHT.**

But then you go home. You lay down for the night and begin to play back the day. Suddenly everything becomes clear. You know exactly what you should have done and exactly what you should have said. You can't wait until you have another chance to redeem yourself. But when the chance comes again, and you're looking inside your mind for the right words, the spirit of intimidation once again washes them right out. It's as if someone took a power sprayer and focused it on the thoughts you had just whitewashed on the side of your brain. Or like a house that is caught in a rainstorm right in the middle of a paint job.

Fear wants to control you. It wants to own you. If the enemy of your soul can't keep you from the new life found within the kingdom of God, he will send fear to keep the kingdom of God

locked within you. Fear will place an invisible fence around you. You may hate your fear or even obsess about it, but you will do everything in your power so that no one else will see your fear. We fear exposing our fear, and yet, the greatest chance of victory is found when it's finally brought into the light.

I was a very good athlete and a leader in my school. The last thing I wanted to do was to come across as weak or fearful, so I told no one of my fears and went on about my business, manipulating things here and there in order to not allow myself to be put into a scenario that would expose any of my fears. This continued until the desire to fulfill my call became more important than the desire to hide my fear. It was then that I found love, love that brought deliverance and brought me a completely new life.

At some point, something needs to become more important than the fear we're carrying. Until then, fear is king. We need to see another goal as being more important to our lives than always giving in to fear.

I love the prophetic word given to Zacharias in Luke chapter 1. He is describing God's eternal desire, which has been from the beginning, to save and to deliver His people. He points to the promise given to Abraham and says,

*That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the
hand of all who hate us,
To perform the mercy promised to our fathers
And to remember His holy covenant,
The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:
To grant us that we,
Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
Might **serve Him without fear...**" (Luke 1:71–74)*

That we might “*serve Him without fear.*” That’s a beautiful thing. A life without fear. Our goal, His desire.

WINNING THE BATTLE

Let me share with you one last story. I was helping to oversee the worship community as a wonderful group of comrades began what is now known as the International House of Prayer in Kansas City. I had been the worship pastor with Mike Bickle at a nearby church and I moved over, not as the worship pastor, but as the senior worship leader. It was more of a fatherly role as opposed to any other type of organizational leadership role. I led the main sessions and was the main worship leader for all of our conferences. I was also “Dad.”

By this time we were running 24/7, and every time slot was filled in with worship teams and prayer leaders. I began to hear about a young woman who was singing in the “Night Watch,” the time between midnight and 6:00 a.m. Apparently, she was a bit fearful about singing in front of large groups but I was encouraged to come and listen. One evening, late at night, I snuck into the back of IHOP and listened to her sing. It was wonderful. She had a simplicity and beauty that was undeniable.

I loved the ministry of those whose labor of love sustained the flow of worship and prayer during the night season, but I asked myself, was she here for that reason or was she here for another reason? Was she possibly singing at night out of nervousness or fear of the larger crowds that went with the day sessions? It was time for me to find out.

I initially asked her how she felt about coming onto my team and being a part of the day meetings and conferences. She thanked me but instantly rejected the offer. I tried a couple of more times but between her love of the Night Watch and her

hesitation of being a part of my larger sessions, she continued to say no.

One day I asked her if she would have coffee with me as I had some thoughts I wanted to bounce off of her. She agreed and we met at a local coffee shop connected to our ministry. What she didn't know was that I had already met with Mike and told him that although I felt she would be wonderful on my team, she would not leave the Night Watch. I asked him if he would help me out with this. He said he would and asked me what I had in mind.

Now kids, what I'm about to share could be considered dangerous, so please, don't do this at home! I asked Mike to come into the coffee shop where we were meeting and to personally ask her about coming on my team. My "plan" was to have him walk by our table, start up a conversation, tell her that she would be a real asset to my team, and then, as if it was a momentary God thought, ask her to seriously consider coming on my team. He did, but instantly she said she had already told me no. Without skipping a beat, he asked her again if she would prayerfully consider doing it. I don't know if it was the look on his face or the tone of his voice, but ten seconds later she did an about-turn, and before I knew it, she was on my team.

The only thing was, she still seemed tentative. She held back from singing and didn't sing out prophetically at all. She was a different person from the one I had heard in the Night Watch. After a couple of weeks I decided to take matters into my own hands. (Again, don't do this at home.) During a set, I turned to the crowd and said, "Now, we're going to have a prophetic song sung over those gathered here." I then turned away from her and waited. For thirty long seconds the music continued without any singing. Finally she began...and it was beautiful.

After the worship set she came up to me, pointed her finger at me and said, "Please don't ever do that to me again!" I looked her in the eye and said, "How did it feel when you were done?" She didn't change the serious expression on her face but quietly said, "Great." I did the same thing again a week or so later when she continued to hold back, and when we finished she looked at me and said, "I get it. I've been battling anxiety concerning singing in front of larger groups but I get it. I'll sing out." That was the last time she held back. From that moment on she was stellar!

Oh, yeah, her name was Misty Edwards, and to this day she continues to be stellar!

If we're honest and look at the areas in our lives where fear has an inroad we can begin the journey out of fear and into liberty. Truth brings freedom and a free believer is a very dangerous thing. *Good* dangerous!