

FOCUSED LIVING PRAYER December 2013



FEAR... If you can't relate with fear, then you won't relate to Christmas. Fact is, *the whole Christmas story is set against the back-drop of fear.* Fear is the most common emotion to describe the hearts and minds of that first Christmas.

Mary: The angel said to her, "Do not be **afraid**, for you have found favor with God." **Zacharias:** He was troubled when he saw the angel and **fear** gripped him. *But the angel said to him, "Do not be **afraid**..."* **Joseph:** But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be **afraid** to take Mary as your wife."

Herod and the community: When Herod the king heard it, "he was *troubled with fear*, and all Jerusalem with him." **Shepherds:** "An angel of the Lord

*suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were **terribly frightened**. The angel said to them, "Do not be **afraid**; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people."*

Fear continues to dominate both the Christmas story and the lives of men 2000 years later. Men harbor many fears and most of them come out during this time of year. Fear of failure, uncertain future, intimacy, guilt, and broken relationships. Financial fears, business pressures, deadlines, job security, and debt. Fears related to health issues, life changes, aging, and transitions. Even fear of disappointing God! All of these weigh down and trouble our hearts. Somehow all the vacations, parties, gatherings, activities, busyness, money, gifts, shopping and football games only numb our fears and delay the impact....for a while. It is no wonder our counseling load peaks during this season as men finally face a year's worth of accumulated fear.

But note how God deals with our fears. "***Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy... for today... there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.***" (Luke 2:10-11) God didn't send a present, program, party or philosophy. He sent a Person! God overcomes our fear by coming Himself! Love in the flesh. "***There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out all fear.***" (1 John 4:18) His wise and powerful control destroys our panic. His consistent gentleness stills our concerns. His unchanging faithfulness evaporates our fright. His determined presence with us (Emanuel) destroys our distress. "***I have set the Lord continually before me; Because He is at my right hand I will not be shaken!***" (Psalm 16:8)

In our Savior, we wish you a *fearless* Christmas and a courageous New Year!

Perry and David

Please enjoy the attached guessing game by matching the Christmas tune.

