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## Don't Be Afraid

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## Don't Be Afraid

We have been told, many times, by friends and advisors, not to be afraid of someone or of something. Though such words are intended to be supportive and encouraging, they seem to suggest that all we need to do is to put an end to such feelings in order to bring order and peace to the situation. But we are not in charge of feelings which arise spontaneously; we sometimes experience fear or anxiety as we face a challenge, such as a change in living conditions. Rather than directly altering our feelings, we need to deliberately modify our thoughts and intentions so that the feelings of fear might dissipate as a consequence.

Since we cannot avoid experiences of fear and anxiety, we can choose not to "be" afraid, by committing ourselves to facing the causes of fear, and to moving through or past such feelings. By this means, we do not remain afraid. We do not allow fear to be a major factor in the decisions we make. We look beyond feelings of fear to our deepest desires, and turn our attention towards the things that we want to do and to achieve.

God, in creating us, gives us a gift in our ability to experience fear, but does not directly elicit fear in us; God does not play with any of our feelings, least of all one that is negative. But fear serves to catch our attention, so that we might make appropriate decisions. Without some experiences of fear, we might not acknowledge the realities of our vulnerability, and think and act as though we were the ones around whom the world revolves. Unpleasant as are feelings of fear, they can provide occasions for reaching out to God, with the end result that besides not being overcome by fear, our relationship with God deepens.

One of the best ways to deal with fear is to talk to God, not only about our burden of fear but especially about the thoughts in our minds that are intimately connected with, and likely the primary source of, our feelings. In a context of "desperation," caused by fear, we can open ourselves to inspiration and become enabled to distinguish fact from fiction, reality from imagination, truth from falsehood. When we decide to look for help, healing, and a way forward, we diminish the power of fear to push us in a direction that we would later regret having taken.

In an age when many politicians and members of the media deliberately rouse fear as a means for seeking some measure of control or influence over us, our freedom to live according to our

values and in keeping with our dignity as children of God depends greatly upon whether we merely react or deliberately choose to respond. We already suffer one injustice through the attempted manipulation of our feelings; we do not have to suffer additional injury by letting ourselves be pushed into beliefs or actions that no God of Love would ever urge upon us.

“Don’t be afraid” - for any longer than it takes to notice the feeling and to decide to deal with it.