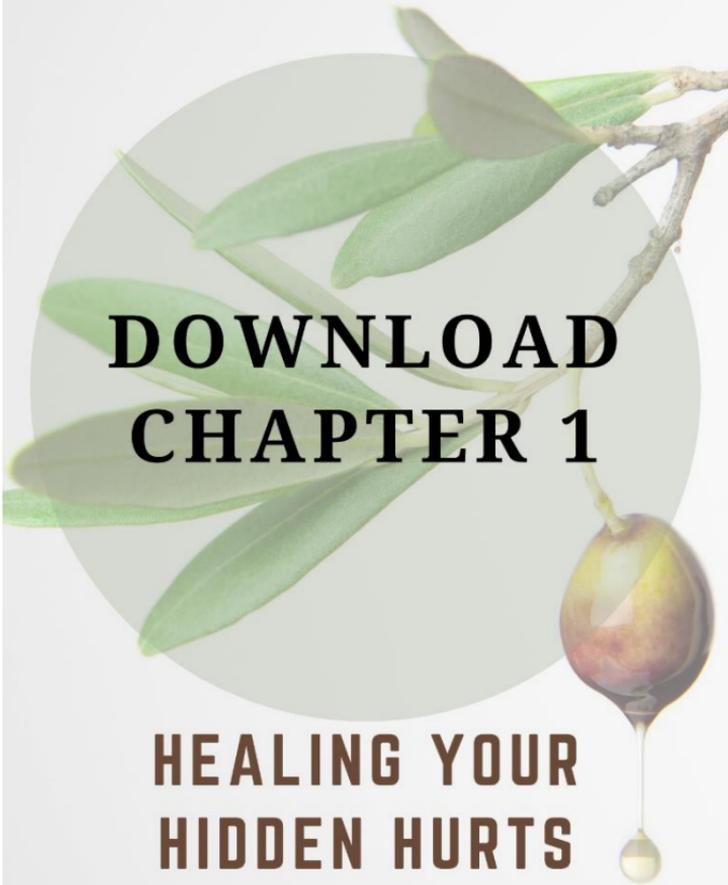


DR. STEPHEN RUMMAGE



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CHAPTER 1**

**HEALING YOUR
HIDDEN HURTS**

Chapter 1

Facing Your Fears

Psalm 56

¹ *Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up;
Fighting all day he oppresses me.
² My enemies would hound me all day,
For there are many who fight against me, O Most High.*

³ *Whenever I am afraid,
I will trust in You.
⁴ In God (I will praise His word),
In God I have put my trust;
I will not fear.
What can flesh do to me?*

⁵ *All day they twist my words;
All their thoughts are against me for evil.
⁶ They gather together,
They hide, they mark my steps,
When they lie in wait for my life.
⁷ Shall they escape by iniquity?
In anger cast down the peoples, O God!*

⁸ *You number my wanderings;
Put my tears into Your bottle;
Are they not in Your book?
⁹ When I cry out to You,
Then my enemies will turn back;
This I know, because God is for me.
¹⁰ In God (I will praise His word),*

In the Lord (I will praise His word),

¹¹ In God I have put my trust;

I will not be afraid.

What can man do to me?

¹² Vows made to You are binding upon me, O God;

I will render praises to You,

¹³ For You have delivered my soul from death.

Have You not kept my feet from falling,

That I may walk before God

In the light of the living?

I travel quite a bit, so this would not be an unusual day for me:

I wake up around 4:00 a.m. and walk into the bathroom. I'm surprised and a little bothered to see a spider in the corner, looking for his breakfast. So I use a wad of tissue to grab the spider, and thank the Lord out loud that I didn't miss.

After I've showered and dressed, I kiss Michele goodbye and head through the traffic for the airport, where I wait among hundreds of strangers for my flight. When it's time, I board the plane and settle in with two hundred other passengers seated shoulder to shoulder. Then, in just a few minutes I'm miles above the earth, trying not to think about the bad weather that's making the plane bump like the atmosphere is full of potholes.

When we finally land, I grab a rental car. Two bridges and a tunnel later, I arrive at my hotel and check in. Door key in hand, I push the button for the elevator. When the elevator door opens, there are five expressionless people already on board, headed to their rooms. I step in apologetically and am slowly shuttled to the twelfth floor, where I disembark and head down the hallway to my room to freshen up

before my meeting. Then I run over my notes one last time before departing for a conference where I'm one of the scheduled speakers. All the way there, I'm praying that the hundreds of people I'll be speaking to will be gracious if I make a mess out of my words.

Now, a day like that almost always ends up just fine. But the interesting thing is that from the time I wake up that day until that day is done, I will have faced these nine most common phobias listed by Americans:

- Bugs, mice, snakes and bats (that's just one category)
- Heights
- Water
- Public transportation and flying
- Storms
- Tight spaces
- Tunnels or bridges
- Crowds
- Public speaking

You may be afraid of all of those things; you may not fear any of them. But everyone fears something.

In fact, fear is a protective response that God has designed to assist us when we are endangered. Our bodies release adrenaline when we face danger to help us move more quickly and with greater strength in perilous situations. Fear can be your friend.

But fear can also be one of your greatest enemies. Fear can kill you.

Dr. Robert Kloner at the Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles studied the rates of heart attacks on the day of the 1994 earthquakes in that city. He found that there were five times the number of heart attacks reported on that day than there were on that day in other years. Dr. Kloner said that about a hundred Californians died that day because of fear. Chemicals released into their bodies triggered severe contractions of the heart that never relaxed.¹

Most people don't literally die from fear, but many are crippled by it. God wants to strengthen you to walk in victory over your fears, whatever they are. These three principals from God's Word will help you be

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/02/15/us/jump-in-fatal-heart-attacks-is-tied-to-quake.html>, Warren E Leary, February 15, 1996.

able to step out in faith to do what God has called you to do and to be.

The Reality of Fear

*¹Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up;
Fighting all day he oppresses me.
²My enemies would bound me all day,
For there are many who fight against me, O Most High.*

(Psalm 56:1-2)

Every person is at one time or another confronted by things that make us afraid. David was. In the Bible we see that on more than one occasion David was afraid. And he cried out for God's grace and mercy. He asked for God to listen to him and to see him. And he asked God to reach down to him and do something in his life.

David asks this question: *What can flesh do to me? What can man do to me?*

Well, man can do a lot of things to us! Some of our biggest fears are not airplanes, earthquakes, spiders or bugs, but the hurts caused by other people.

David found himself in the fearful position of being pursued by enemies who were trying to hurt him. The Scripture says they wanted to *swallow him up*. That means they wouldn't give up until they got him. His enemies were relentless. They intended to *oppress him* – to literally press him down until he was crushed. The Hebrew word here is a picture of a pack of merciless hyenas after a gazelle. They wouldn't give up the hunt, and their intent was nothing short of destruction.

The Word of God tells us that David wrote this psalm when he had been captured by the Philistines in Gath, the hometown of Goliath. Of course, Goliath was no longer a problem, but the King of Israel, Saul, was. Saul and his men were in hot pursuit of David, but not because David had done anything wrong. To the contrary, he had done everything right. King Saul was a mad man, driven to hatred of David out of jealousy.

David ran to a priest named Ahimelech and begged for food and protection. Ahimelech was of little help to David, but he gave him all that he had: the sword of Goliath, whom David had slain, and the bread devoted to the Lord's service in the tabernacle.

David probably didn't look like much of a threat as he dragged Goliath's huge sword through the streets of Gath. But he was under constant threat from his enemies. So he devised a plan: he would feign madness. David thought, "If I act insane, they'll leave me alone."

But David's crazy plan actually brought him more trouble. The king of Gath said something like this: "Look, I've got enough crazy people to deal with already. Somebody get rid of this guy!" Now David was running from multiple pursuers: the men of Gath, as well as Saul and his men.

There was nothing easy about David's situation.

*⁵All day they twist my words;
All their thoughts are against me for evil.*

*⁶They gather together,
They hide, they mark my steps,
When they lie in wait for my life. (Psalm 56:5-6)*

David was alone, under attack, vulnerable, panicked, and afraid. His situation was dire, and the threats against him were very real.

David was probably a wreck: heart pounding; dry mouth; tense muscles; nerves on edge; a queasy

stomach; profuse sweat. Fear produces a real, physical response. Fear can make you physically sick and exhaust you.

It's important to note that, as far as we can tell, David was right in the center of God's will. Yes, David was under attack. He was alone and he was scared – and right where he was supposed to be.

Fear is a fact of life, and it pops up when you least expect it. We try many ways to deal with it: We may try to ignore it, or feign an I-don't-care attitude. Sometimes we try to paint a brave face on our fear, or maintain a false show of confidence.

But God always knows – and you know – when you are afraid.



A mother tucked her little boy into bed one windy, stormy night. Lightning flashed and thunder boomed just outside the window. He was very scared.

He said to his mother, “Mommy, can you please stay in my room and sleep with me tonight?” She said, “No honey, I have to go and sleep in Daddy’s room tonight.” There was a long pause. The boy lowered

his eyes, crossed his arms, and said, “That big chicken.”

Sometime, you’re going to be afraid, even when you’re in exactly the right place, at the right time. So the question is not, *Will I be afraid?* The question is, *What will I do when I am afraid?*

The Reaction of Faith

³Whenever I am afraid,

I will trust in You.

⁴In God (I will praise His word),

In God I have put my trust;

I will not fear. (Psalm 56:3-4)

David’s response to fear was a choice to trust God. He was going to hold tightly to God and not let go. Why could he do that? Verse four tells us: David trusted God’s character and God’s Word.

David said, *“I know God’s Word is true. He has spoken to me in His Word and told me not to be afraid, so that’s what I’m going to do: I’m going to not be afraid.”*

Another reason David refused to fear is found in verse 7. Concerning his enemies David says, “Shall

they escape by iniquity? In anger cast down the peoples, O God!”

David had total confidence that God would take care of the people who were trying to hurt him. He knew that God would have righteous anger to deal with those who were trying to harm His servant, and that He had the ability to remove David’s enemies from before him.

David also knew that God was watching his every step.

*You number my wanderings;
put my tears into Your bottle.
Are they not in Your book? (Psalm 56:8)*

God even saved every tear that David shed, like entries in a memory book.

If you have wept because of your fears, God has saved your tears in a bottle with your name on it. Your tears are precious to Him. He cares that tenderly for you.

David knew that because of God’s tender love for Him, that God was in His corner!

*When I cry out to You,
then my enemies will turn back.
This I know, because God is for me. (Psalm 56:9)*

David was certain that God heard His prayers. He knew that God was for him.

Never forget that God is for you! You may feel that everyone is against you, even those closest to you. But God is for you. Therefore, you can say with David, *In God (I will praise His word,) in the Lord (I will praise His word), in God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid.*

You have probably heard people say that F-E-A-R is an acronym for “False Evidence Appearing Real.” But here’s a dose of reality: sometimes the evidence isn’t false. Sometimes our reasons for fear are all too real!

Here’s what I think F-E-A-R stands for: “Forgetting Everything’s All Right!” Fear takes over when we forget who God is, where God is, and what God has promised.



Several years ago Michele, Joshua and I went to a large amusement park in North Carolina. Michele’s

parents and sister joined us, and we had a great day together. By late afternoon, I think I had ridden every ride in that park, including all the roller coasters, except one: a Star Trek themed ride called *The Borg Assimilator*.

That ride stood between me and having all my ride circles punched for the day. Problem was, I just didn't think God was calling me at that moment to get assimilated.

I had watched hundreds of people get on that ride. Every rider was loaded onto the roller coaster lying on their back, with their head pointed toward the front of the ride. When the ride started it took you slowly up the first hill backward, with a foreboding *katunk, katunk, katunk* sound as you made your way up.

Then at the top of that hill, they flip you over like a pancake, and for the rest of the ride you're suspended by a harness, flying through every twist and turn of that roller coaster, face down. There's a net under the Assimilator to catch things that fall when you flip over: glasses, hats, wallets. And I thought to myself, "I don't want to end up in that net." I was determined not to ride the Borg Assimilator.

Yep, that was my decision, until my wife said,
“Stephen, ride that with my daddy.”

Michele’s dad, Aubrey Henderson, was about seventy-two years old at the time – twice my age. I dearly love my father-in-law, but I love my wife even more. So, I got in line with him, right behind a little girl about nine years old. Aubrey was excited. That little girl was excited. In fact, everyone in the line was excited but me. I spent forty-five anxiety-laced minutes in that line trying to remember that everything would be alright.

When our turn to ride finally came, Aubrey and I were buckled into our harnesses side by side. As we were ascending the first hill, he hollered at me:
“Stephen, you’re not looking! Look around! You can see all kinds of things!” I said, “Aren’t you scared?” He said, “Man, I’m not scared of one ride in this park!”

I was thinking about my harness breaking, and falling things, and being out of control. I had forgotten that everything’s all right. And, praise the Lord, I was assimilated that day and came out no worse for the wear.

At the cross of Calvary, Jesus faced our biggest fears and defeated them all. He defeated his earthly enemies, so everything's all right! He defeated Satan, so everything's all right! He defeated death, so everything's all right! He defeated sin, so everything's all right! He defeated hell, so everything's all right!

When you wonder how things are going to turn out in your situation, you can cry out to God in faith: *Lord, in the middle of this fear, I'm going to cling to You! I trust You! I'm not letting go of You, and I know You won't let go of me! So everything is all right!*

The Requirement of Following

*Vows made to You are binding upon me, O God;
I will render praises to You,
For You have delivered my soul from death.
Have You not kept my feet from falling,
That I may walk before God
In the light of the living? (Psalm 56:12-13)*

David made promises to God when he was fearful. Sometimes we call these kind of promises “foxhole prayers.” These prayers go something like this: *God, if*

*you'll do _____ for me, then I'll
_____ for you.* You can fill in the blanks.

But for David, these were not empty, under-pressure promises. David was determined to keep his vows to God. He declared that they were binding upon him. No matter what happened in the future, David promised to live his life praising God, and keeping the promises he made when he was afraid.

Have you made vows to God when you were afraid? When you were in the hospital and didn't think you were going to come out? Or when you wept over the bed of a loved one you feared losing? What have you promised God when you had more money than money? Or when you were threatened on your job?

Too often after rescue has come and danger has passed, we leave our promises by the wayside. An old proverb says, *Danger passed; God forgotten.*

David didn't forget God after the danger had passed. He kept his vows made during danger. He spent his life praising God and following Him. Was he perfect? No, not by a long stretch! But he was faithful to his promise to follow God, to praise Him, and to walk with the Lord for the rest of his life.

Can the same be said of you?



A man spent several days and nights on the Texas prairie with a shepherd who was managing a flock of about two thousand sheep. He watched the shepherd work hard to care for the sheep under the hot sun. As darkness descended, the entire flock gathered around the shepherd and lay down to rest. The shepherd had built a fire for warmth and a little light in the center of where his flock lay. Everyone was at rest after a long day.

Then the sheep dogs became restless. They walked among the sheep and began to growl as the unmistakable wails of coyotes pierced the peace of the prairie. The unseen enemy posed a real threat to the flock.

The shepherd sprang into action. He tossed more wood onto the fire, which blazed brighter and higher. And as the light from the fire grew, the businessman looked into the night, where he saw thousands of tiny lights encircling their camp. He realized that what he was seeing was the light of the fire being reflected in the eyes of the two thousand sheep, who were

looking, not into the darkness, but toward their shepherd.

The secret to successfully facing your fears is realizing that Jesus Christ has already faced them all for you. Your good shepherd will protect you. So look to Jesus and to His cross. He has promised to deliver you from whatever makes you afraid.