A Study for Children on Persevering in Faith

by

Sally Michael
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A third-grade boy came up to me at church and said, “Mrs. Michael, I have something to tell you.” He then proceeded to tell me about an experience he had of lying in bed and being overcome with fear. He was becoming more and more fearful. “Then I remembered how you taught us about fighting the fight of faith. And I started saying Bible verses. I said all the verses I could think of. I just kept saying verses. And then I wasn’t afraid . . . .You know what? Fighting the fight of faith really works!”

Fighting the fight of faith really works because God has promised His children victory. We are not alone in the fight of faith. God Himself fights with us to keep us persevering in faith until the end. And God is always victorious. This is the message of FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT.

Everyone is in a battle. You are either fighting against God as an unbeliever or you are a believer and God is helping you fight the fight of faith. Joining the fight of faith is a work of grace. Completing the fight of faith is also a work of grace, for it is God Himself who works in us to persevere in faith.

. . . he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus - Philippians 1:6b

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT is about persevering to the end. To persevere, one must fight. In a battle, there is no room for passivity. There is no room for compromise. There is no vacation from the battle. You must fight . . . and you must keep on fighting. And you must never give up because in Jesus there is the wonderful promise of victory and an eternal home.

If you are content with habitual sin in your life (that is do not struggle against it and you are not troubled by it), you may not be a child of God. May God in His mercy save your soul. If you are fighting the battle, God has given you ample weapons to fight the good fight and He is working in you. Do not be afraid of the enemy; do not grow weary in the battle; do not despair of the fight; for

. . . the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 1 John 4:4b.
LESSON 11
Battlegrounds: Spirit of Fear

SCRIPTURE:
2 Timothy 1:7; Numbers 13:17-31; Romans 8:9-15; Matthew 14:25-33; Acts 5:17-42

KEY VERSE:
2 Timothy 1:7—For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

KEY THEMES:
➢ Good fear (fear of the right things) comes from God but a spirit of fear comes from Satan
➢ Christians do not have to accept a spirit of fear; we can fight against a spirit of fear
➢ A spirit of fear is defeated by focusing on God rather than on our fear
➢ A spirit of fear is defeated by having a greater fear of God than our fear of men or other things

WORSHIP SONGS: See list in the Appendix: A3.

VISUALS/MATERIALS:
Bible; Spirit of Fear and Trust signs (Resource Packet: 11A,B); two gifts nicely wrapped—one should be a nice gift (choose something to give to a child or simply wrap something nice for illustration only) and one should be a bottle marked “poison” (Resource Packet: 11C. The poison label is included with lesson 12 visuals.); the bottle should actually be empty); picture of a roaring lion (Resource Packet: 11D) and overhead projector sheet (any clear plastic sheet will work); signs—FOCUS ON GOD and FEAR GOD, NOT MEN (Resource Packet: 11E,F); materials for chosen activities
PREPARATION: Study the scripture passages carefully and prayerfully. Ask God to make them real in your own heart. Be open to what God may be teaching you in this lesson. Study the lesson well. Pray for the children in your class.

NOTE: Be sure to encourage the children to be memorizing the Fighter Verses or other verses you have chosen for Scripture memory.
Call a child to the front and show him the two gifts. Explain that one of the gifts is from you and that you love the child very much. Ask the child to suppose that the other gift is from someone who does not like him—in fact this person hates him and wants to hurt him. Then ask the child which gift he would choose to have. Why?

Tell the child that he may open the gift from you. (If he is allowed to keep the gift, tell him he may do so.) Why would I give you that nice gift? Would I give you something that would hurt you? Why not? I want to give good gifts to you because I love you.

This is what you would have gotten if you had chosen the other gift. Open up the other package and show the child the poison bottle. Why would someone give you something like this? Someone who hates you wants bad things for you. He does not offer you good things. He wants to hurt you.

Explain to the children that God offers good gifts because He is good. Satan offers bad gifts because he is bad. Satan cannot offer good gifts; everything he offers us is bad. But we are so foolish that we often accept Satan’s bad gifts. One of the bad gifts of Satan that we take is the spirit of fear. (Place SPIRIT OF FEAR piece on the heart.)

Explain that the spirit of fear is different than fear. God gives us good fear in order to protect us. When we are afraid to stand in the middle of the street because we might get run over by a car, that is the gift of good fear that God gives us to protect us. What other fear is good fear given to us by God? Solicit answers to the children such as:

- The fear of hell.
- The fear of God (you may or may not need to explain this to the children)
- The fear of disobeying God.
- The fear of sinning.
- The fear of deserved punishment (the fear of punishment often keeps us from doing something wrong)

Explain that all of these fears are good for us. They are for our protection. They are given to us by God for our good. Good fear is fear of the right things. There are
things we should be afraid of—like disobeying God—and it is good for us to be afraid of those things.

But the spirit of fear is given by Satan for our destruction. The spirit of fear is when we see something else as bigger and more to be feared than God. For example, a spirit of fear is when we are more afraid of offending a friend than we are of offending God—so if our friend tells us to do something wrong, we do it because we don't want to offend our friend. We are more concerned about what our friend will think than what God will think.

When we see a difficult situation—something that is hard for us—and we get overwhelmed by fear rather than trusting God to help us in the situation—that is a spirit of fear. When fear paralyzes us so that we can't do something that looks difficult because we think that we might not do it well, that is a spirit of fear. A spirit of fear keeps us from attempting to learn new things, or from attempting things for the kingdom of God—it holds us back.

A spirit of fear is when we live in fear instead of relying on God and trusting Him. Our fear is bigger than our trust.

Explain to the children that a spirit of fear does not come from God but from Satan. Have a sword drill with the following verse and discuss it:

2 Timothy 1:7—For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Remind the children of the story of the twelve men who spied out Canaan for the Israelites (Numbers 13:17-31). Ask the children questions to bring out the following points:

- The land was a good land just as the Lord had promised. God is trustworthy.
- Ten of the men said that the people of the land were big—like giants—and they felt like grasshoppers in comparison.
- Joshua and Caleb were not afraid to take the land because they knew the Lord was with them and they trusted in His power and protection.

Explain to the children that ten of the men had a spirit of fear—they saw the Canaanites and they were afraid of the size of the Canaanite men. The Canaanites were stronger than they were. Their fear of the Canaanites was stronger than their trust in God. They were more afraid of what the Canaanites might do than they were afraid of disobeying God.

Joshua and Caleb saw the size of the Canaanites but their trust in God was greater.
than their fear of the Canaanites. They did not have a spirit of fear but a spirit of trust. Moses and Aaron trusted God. They were not afraid of the Canaanites but were afraid of rebelling against God. Being afraid of rebelling against God is a good fear. It is given to us by God to keep us from disobeying Him. It is for our protection.

The spirit of fear kept the Israelites from going in and possessing the land of the Canaanites. It kept them from experiencing God's promised land. The spirit of fear made them rebel against God and as a consequence they received a punishment of forty years of wilderness wandering.

Tell the children that one of Satan's evil plans against the children of God—one of the bad gifts he offers—is to place on us a spirit of fear. But we do not have to accept this bad gift.

Have a sword drill with the following verses and discuss them:

Romans 8:9-- You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

Romans 8:12-- Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation-- but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.

Romans 8:13-- For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,

Romans 8:14 -- because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Romans 8:15-- For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

Explain to the children that when we are Christians we are not obligated to “live by the flesh.” We do not have to receive a spirit of fear—we can fight against it. So to destroy a spirit of fear in your life you need to fight against it with the truth; to remember that a spirit of fear does not come from God and to refuse to accept the spirit of fear from Satan—to turn down Satan’s bad gift. We need to remember that God has given us a spirit of power, love and self-discipline. God wants us to trust Him. (Place the TRUST piece and the explosion pieces on the heart with the SPIRIT OF FEAR piece.)

Show the children the picture of the roaring lion (have the overhead projector sheet over the picture) and give them the following illustration:

Suppose you were facing a real roaring lion... who was very hungry... and you looked very good to eat. Do you think that would be a really scary situation?

Call a child to the front of the room and tell him to look closely at the picture.
What do you see in front of the picture? Would that scary lion look different if it were in the zoo and there was a glass window between you and the lion? If all we saw were the scary lion, we would be afraid; but if we focused on the glass window, we would realize that there was no reason for fear. What we focus on determines how we act in a situation.

Explain to the children that when we focus on the wrong thing we can receive a spirit of fear. So one of the ways we fight the spirit of fear is to keep our focus correct.

Briefly remind the children of the story of Peter walking on water (Matthew 14:25-33), making the following points:

- When Peter was focused on Jesus—when he was trusting in Jesus—he walked in victory. He was able to walk on the water; he was without fear.
- When Peter took his eyes off Jesus and focused on the water, he was overcome with a spirit of fear. He was afraid of the water and afraid of drowning. He realized that he was in danger, and all he could see was the danger around him. He did not remember the Lord’s love for him and protection over him.
- His spirit of fear was greater than his trust in Jesus. This caused him to lose this battle in the fight for faith.
- Jesus is faithful even when we are not. He was faithful to Peter and would not let Peter sink in the water or sink in his faith. Jesus showed Peter and the other disciples that He is truly the Son of God. (If you have time, you may want to remind the children of God’s commitment to keep His children persevering in faith. He did not abandon Peter when Peter failed to trust Him but He used the situation to show Peter His greatness.)

One way to fight a spirit of fear is to focus on God and not on the things that would frighten us. (Put up the FOCUS ON GOD sign.) We need to remember that God is greater than all those things. When Satan tempts us to look at the circumstances around us, we need to fight and say, “But God is greater than all these things.”

Tell the children that another way to fight the spirit of fear is to have a greater fear of God and a greater love for God than for man. Briefly remind the children of the following story from Acts 5:17-42 making the following points:

- The Sanhedrin charged the apostles not to preach about Jesus.
- The Sanhedrin had the power to harm the apostles, but the apostles did not focus on what the Sanhedrin could do to them. Instead, the apostles continued to preach about Jesus.
- When the apostles were questioned about why they did not obey the Sanhedrin, they replied that they “must obey God rather than men.” The apostles were more afraid of disobeying God than disobeying the Sanhedrin. They feared God, loved God, and trusted God. This freed them from the spirit of fear.
Put up the FEAR GOD, NOT MEN sign. Explain to the children that if we fear God more than we fear man, we can be free from many of the ways in which Satan will try to give us a spirit of fear. If we love God more than we love men, we will be free from the spirit of fear of offending men. If we trust God more than we fear men, we will be free from the spirit of fear of what men can do to us. We should fear and respect God more than we fear anything else.

**APPLICATION**

KEY THEMES:
- Good fear (fear of the right things) comes from God but a spirit of fear comes from Satan.
- Christians do not have to accept a spirit of fear; we can fight against a spirit of fear.
- A spirit of fear is defeated by focusing on God rather than on our fear.
- A spirit of fear is defeated by having a greater fear of God than our fear of men or other things.

Application can most effectively be done in a small group setting. The questions are just suggestions of possible directions to take the discussion. Pray for wisdom and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. Be sensitive to the answers and the needs of the children.

You may want to have the children work on their workbook pages while you discuss the questions. This will hold their attention longer and will encourage them to open up without having to look you directly in the eye. Also, if you uncover a particular need of one child, you can focus on that one child, and the other children will be occupied, or you may find that your children listen and participate better if you discuss the application questions with them and then pass out the workbooks. Then you can use the workbook time for individual conversations.

Be sure to pray for the children and encourage them to pray for each other.

In what ways does Satan try to give you a spirit of fear?

Do you fight a spirit of fear? How do you fight? In what ways does Satan defeat you with a spirit of fear? Why?

How can you fight a spirit of fear in your life?

In what ways do you fear men?

How can you fear God more?

You may want to divide the children into pairs and ask them to pray for each other.
ACTIVITIES

1. If the children did not work on the workbook page during the discussion, they can work on it now.
2. The children can write out the words of Psalm 46:1-3 or Psalm 27:1-5 on a poster. They can then illustrate or decorate these verses.
3. You may want to share a personal testimony with the children of how you fought a spirit of fear in your life.
4. Have the children retell the story from Acts 5 as if the apostles had a greater fear of men than of God. Ask them to imagine what the consequences of a spirit of fear in the apostles would have been.
5. Some of the children can be news reporters gathering information on the story from Acts 5. Others can be apostles, members of the Sanhedrin, or eyewitnesses (captain of the guard, crowd hearing the apostles preach, etc.). The reporters can interview these people, perhaps using tape recorders. If there is time, the class can compose and present a news story of the Acts 5 events.
6. Play a KEY VERSE game using either the Key Verse or the Fighter Verses. (See Appendix: A1)
7. Work with children on their badges or give opportunity in class to work on them.

SEND HOME

- GROWING IN FAITH sheet
LESSON 11
Battlegrounds: Spirit of Fear

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Here’s what to do on the next page:
Fill in the blank spaces with two ways that we can fight the spirit of fear.
Then decorate the frame.
BATTLEGROUNDS: FEAR

God did not give us a spirit of timidity

Two ways we can fight a spirit of fear:

SAMPLE WORKBOOK PAGE
Fight the Good Fight

GROWING IN FAITH

Lesson 11
Battlegrounds: Spirit of Fear

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  2 Timothy; 1:7; Numbers 13:17-31; Romans 8:9-15; Matthew 14:25-33; Acts 5:17-42

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LOOK AND SEE

Look up the context of 2 Timothy 1:7. From the context, what do think Paul may have seen in Timothy that led to this admonition?
Also look up and read Psalm 56, especially verses 3-4 and 9-11.
Write out the key verse in your journal. Copy 2 Timothy 1:7 into your journal. In the application (small group) time following the lesson, you started thinking about situations in which you experience a spirit of fear and/or a fear of man. Briefly summarize the situations in which you most often feel this way.

You learned that there are two ways to dispel the spirit of fear: first, refuse to accept it. Second, correct your focus—focus on God. For each of the situations you listed, spend some time in writing focusing on God. What do you know about who God is and what He is like that make Him greater than your fear? Also write down any Bible verses that you have memorized that come to mind. Then write about what you will do the next time you encounter that fear to not accept it and to focus on God.

What is the difference between a “spirit of fear” and the other “fear” the Bible commands us to have? (If you need some clues, look up references to “fear” in the Bible in a concordance or using Bible software.)

In Psalm 56:4 and 10, what does it mean to “praise” the word of God? How does this relate to “I will not be afraid”?

Spend some time in prayer praising God for the things He brought to mind about His character and purposes when you were writing in your journal.

**REMINDER:** Take time to work on your badges and memory verses.

Lesson 11