

# FOCUS ON FAITH

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## FEARING THE WORST?

Like most people I have a number of phobias. I don't particularly like heights, especially if the ladder I'm standing on is unstable and has the possibility of moving – however slight that possibility may be.

Whilst I don't mind driving fast (always legally of course) I get uncomfortable when someone else is in control. For my birthday this year my children have given me one of those "experience" presents and the one they've chosen for me involves a rally car driving lesson where I get take it for a spin, which is great and I'm really looking forward to it. The downside however will be sitting in the passenger seat whilst an experienced rally driver shows me how far the car can really be pushed. I'm not sure he'd appreciate it if I take a sick bag with me though!

And there is no way you'd get me to take part in bungee-jumping. Why anyone in their right mind would want to hurl themselves off a bridge attached to just a long piece of elastic (as many of the England rugby team members did in New Zealand recently) is beyond me. But I guess for them the key must be the thrill and exhilaration of pushing yourself to the limit and overcoming your fears. Personally I'm keeping my feet planted as solidly as I can on terra firma!

And no-one is immune from fear:

- Julius Caesar may have conquered the known world of his time but his closest confidantes knew he was absolutely terrified of thunder
- Peter the Great of Russia couldn't stand crossing bridges for some reason – he'd cry like a baby when faced with the prospect
- Dr. Samuel Johnson may have been a celebrated author but he would always walk into a room with his right leg leading – if he made a mistake and inadvertently came in left foot first, he'd back out and re-enter the room. I guess it was a question in his mind of putting your best foot forward
- Napoleon Bonaparte may have been Emperor of France and a great military and political leader, but he would be thrown into a blind panic if a cat came anywhere near him.

An unknown author once said, "*Fear is the darkroom where negatives are developed*" but for many the real catastrophe is that fear often paralyses people and prevents them from achieving their destiny. It could be fear of change; of potential failure, even fear of success as well as a whole host of other debilitating factors.

And of course fear doesn't have to have a rational basis – I've climbed plenty of ladders in my time and I've never fallen off but every time I have to go up one my legs begin to go like jelly. Yes I know people who have fallen off ladders and who have injured themselves but it hasn't happened to me so if I take the necessary precautions why should I be afraid?

Psychologists reckon that 40% of what we worry about never happens; 30% has already happened; 12% focuses on opinions or situations we can't change and 10% has to do with our health (which often makes the situation worse). That means we can influence just 8% of what actually concerns us.

***"Fear is the darkroom where negatives are developed"***

– Anonymous

Now it would be totally crass and unhelpful to say, "*Just get over it*" but what's the answer? This is where faith comes in as far as I'm concerned.

The Bible says, speaking of God, "***You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!***" (Isaiah 26:3). The phrases "***fear not***" and "***don't be afraid***" appear in the Bible around 180 times and were often used by Jesus to encourage people to put their trust in the Him rather than focus on our anxieties and worries.

Whether we're in our formative years or our final years or somewhere in between, there is no escaping that we will be challenged by life. But I believe that the key to overcoming those challenges that have the potential to incapacitate us is to put our faith in the One who really cares for us.

We don't have to fear the worst when we have someone who has the best in mind for us.

To find out more about the Christian faith and resources available plus information on services at local Churches together with contact details, please log on to [www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk](http://www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk).