

Belief Blocker #4, Fear

Luke 1:26-38

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“Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God.”

—Luke 1:29-30

The Angel Gabriel came to Mary, and his announcement began a scary, challenging, and ridiculous journey.

Anytime a message begins with “Don’t be afraid,” something scary usually follows.

1. The first Christmas was a fearful time.

Luke 1:12, When Zechariah saw him [the angel], he was startled and afraid.”

Luke 2:29, “Mary was greatly troubled at his words.”

Matthew 1:20, in a dream God told Joseph, “Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife.”

Luke 2:9-10, Shepherds were terrified when the angel appeared to them, but he said, “Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of a great joy.”

Think about the difference between startled and afraid. How do you deal with each?

2. Christmas 2011 is a fearful time.

According to IJM, International Justice Mission, currently

- 25,000 children die daily for lack of nutrition
- 27 million people are enslaved today.
- 2 million children are in forced prostitution.

3. God calls us to lived **faith-filled** lives in fearful times

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her. —Luke 1:38

- Mary said, Yes and surrendered.
- Joseph took Mary and obeyed.
- The disciples left all and followed.

How do you lead when things seem hopeless, scary, and/or hard?

According to Gary Haugen, president of IJM, International Justice Mission, author of *Just Courage: Charging the Darkness*, and speaker at 2009 Global Leadership Summit:

A. Hopeless—**refocus** on the center of our hope, Jesus.

Jesus didn’t ask what was needed, Jesus asked what we have.
When hopeless, give all we have; the miracles are up to God!

B. Scary—remember Jesus came to make us **brave**.

“We teach our people that Jesus came to make us brave—not safe!”
—Gary Haugen

- If it doesn’t feel dangerous following Jesus, you may need to check if it is, in fact, Jesus you are following.
- If I claim to play American football and no one is hitting me, I may need to check if I am actually on the field.
- The church, Christians, want to be set free from the trivialities of a safe bet, from fear, for justice and ministry.

C. Hard—make **four** choices.

- Choose not to be safe—
- Choose deep spiritual health—
- Choose excellence—
- Choose to seize the joy—

If we say yes, the Christian journey begins: Hopeless from human standpoint, yes. Scary, yes. And too hard for our strength alone, but Emmanuel, God is with us.