

Saying “NO” (Learning How To)

Part 3: Fight and Flight

(preached 9/8/24)

LAST WEEK:

- When fear rules over us, it can lead to sin and deception.
- When we rule over fear, it can serve as a good warning system that keeps us from potential harm.
- When fear rules over us the result is anxiety, worry, stress, and panic attacks.
- When we rule over fear we operate with discretion and good judgment.
- When fear rules over us it prophesies negative outcomes constantly, making us pessimistic and paralyzing us from taking action.
- When we rule over fear, we can look at possible harmful outcomes and take steps to avoid them.
- ***We’re supposed to fear God...but in what way?***
- If we’re truly born-again and Saved, John tells us we have no fear of Judgment Day because Jesus was and is the substitute for our sins and punishment.
- Yet God will discipline us as a Father does His son for the sake of our holy character and to prepare us for our inheritance: the Kingdom.
- Fear of God will inspire us to think twice before doing something we know He doesn’t like.
- No fear whatsoever removes this restraint and may inspire us to take advantage of His grace.
- The same applies to marriage, relationships, and being in public: fear may motivate us to restrain from something that will hurt another or get us in trouble with the law.
- ***How do we remove fear from being in command over our lives?***
- Next time we’re triggered, take a deep breath and break our habitual cycle.
- Ask the internal voice of fear “*what’s wrong? What are you afraid of?*” and allow it to answer.
- SYMPATHIZE (not necessarily agree!) with the answer and respond accordingly. Don’t argue with it.
- Ex: your fear says if we can’t make the insurance payment, we’ll lose medical coverage which would be catastrophic.
- Respond like “*that’s a valid concern. It is important that we have coverage and need to make sure we can make the payment.*”
- Now respond with reassuring truth—still not “arguing.” Gently remind it of the time when God came through last time something like this happened or what have you. Tell it that the Lord has come through in the majority of situations like this in the past and has got your back. **Speak like to yourself until your initial trigger passes.**
- Then pray and thank God for all the times He’s come through for you. Ask Him to speak reassuring truths to you, reminding you of the times when He’s been there for you.

TODAY we're going to talk about ***FIGHT and FLIGHT and how both of these are avenues in which we say "NO!" to things and people who might harm us, or that we might harm.***

The automatic reaction when we feel fear is fight or flight.

- We see a bear in the woods: RUN!
- Someone is making an aggressive movement toward our kid: FIGHT!
- A out of control car is careening right toward us: FLEE!
- Someone is making a false accusation toward us that could get us in trouble: DEFEND!

There is a time to fight and a time not to. Not all fight is good, not all is bad.

There's a time to flee and a time not to: not all flight is good, not all is bad.

Chances are one of these two is our "default."

- **Those who default to FLIGHT are often ruled over by fear.**
- They avoid situations & people they need to confront.
- They hide from addressing internal issues/insecurities and indulge in escapism (video games, booze, busy-ness, etc.)
- **Those who default to FIGHT are ruled over by pride.**
- Beat their chest and make statements like *"I don't take stuff from nobody!"*
- Earns them reputation of being a bully and stubborn.

Our default mode is part of our static "autopilot" pattern that we're trying to break.

Let's see if we can discern when is the right time to do either.

Let's start with Joseph whose jealous brothers threw him into a pit to kill him. When he didn't die, they sold him as a slave and he ended up serving an Egyptian man named Potiphar. Then this happened:

[Gen 39:6-12 ESV] 6 So he [Potiphar] left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate. **Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.** 7 And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." 8 **But he refused** and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put

everything that he has in my charge. 9 He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" 10 And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her. 11 ***But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, 12 she caught him by his garment,*** saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand and **fled and got out of the house.**

Joe's verbal "no" wasn't enough for Pot's wife. His short explanation of why he was saying "no"—even calling upon the name of God—didn't stop her either. **When she kicked things up a notch, Joseph needed to flee.**

Haven't you ever been in a situation where you realized removing yourself from it was your best option at the moment?

- Not just to keep someone else from sinning against you, but to keep you from sinning against them?
- To create much needed "space"—both physical and emotional—to actually make a good decision and take the right action (or lack thereof)?

So here is our discernment learned from Joseph: we flee when...

- Sin or harm WILL happen despite our previous "no."
- A circumstance or person won't be stopped and is out of our control...and will result in sin, harm, destruction, saying/doing something we can't take back.
- We must REMOVE ourselves ASAP.

You're in an argument with someone and things are getting heated.

- You realize that if this goes on any further tempers will flare and bad things will happen.
- Despite you saying "*I'm done talking about this*" or what have you, the other person won't stop.
- Leave the room. If they follow you, go outside. If they follow you outdoors, drive or run away.
- FLEE like Joseph.

You're battling an addiction to alcohol and have a good streak of sobriety going.

- You have a bad day though, and a buddy offers you a drink.
- Tell your buddy "no!" then rebuke him for tempting you.
- Or maybe you walk past the store where you know you can just pop in and buy it.
- You REALLY want it. An internal voice is trying to entice you back into escaping your issues with a buzz.
- Just walk away. Get away from the store like Joseph ran from Pot's wife.

Things between you and your spouse have felt dead for awhile and you've been feeling lonely, neglected, and disconnected. There's "chemistry" between you and an attractive co-worker and your heart seems to come alive when around them.

- Set the "no" boundary within yourself first.
- Then keep that boundary with the co-worker.
- Avoid being alone with them, the tender smiles, confiding in them, saying bad things about your spouse, etc.
- Speak truth to yourself and call upon the name of God like Joseph did.

FLEEING sin and temptation is a dynamic "no" that affects our body, mind, and heart. It sends a message to all involved that we'll have no part of anything that's against God's commands, harmful to us or others, or would destroy our marriage and family.

Running from these things isn't a solution but provides much needed SPACE for us to make a rational decision, get some help, or just breathe. When we're triggered by circumstances or temptation, it makes us feel enclosed, pressured, and takes away our spiritual oxygen. **Removing ourselves from them takes that pressure off and gives us the opportunity to choose better.**

Even Jesus ran a few times! In Luke 4 He was invited to read some Scripture at Synagogue about the "coming" Messiah and when He does then drops a bombshell by saying HE was the fulfillment of those verses! The people get agitated to the point of MURDER...then this happens:

[Luk 4:28-30 ESV] 28 When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. 29 And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. 30 **But passing through their midst, he went away.**

Jesus wasn't afraid, but **He got out of there before they could toss Him over a cliff.** He was destined to die on the Cross and not this way.

The military has what they call a tactical retreat: it's organized and meant to maximize both lives and supplies. They train ahead of time for this so if they find themselves being overcome and overwhelmed, they can run.

Let our flight be the same way: tactical and meant to preserve our lives, dignity, and Godliness. Joseph and Jesus are prime examples!

Fleeing in this manner is not cowardly nor is it an admission the other side is "right"—it's good judgment that will prevent more harm and sin.

There's a time to flee, and a time to fight. Let's look to David for our example. The Lord God promised the land of Israel to His people, the Hebrews. He said that as long as they worshipped Him alone and obeyed His commands, He would grant them victory over their enemies.

Their enemies didn't just take this lying down. They would gather their armies and attack the Israeli people in the attempt to wipe them out and seize their land. In *1 Samuel 17* the Philistines have gathered their forces in another attempt to do exactly that. Being led by King Saul, the Israeli armies are also gathered to defend their land.

Problem: the Philistines have a big gun named Goliath and we shouldn't roll our eyes at their fear of him. Depending on who you ask, Goliath was anywhere from 9-13ft tall and none of us have any experience with this. I once knew a fellow in our TKD club who was a CO at a prison in Buffalo. Bryan was about 6' 6" and weighed close to 300 lbs...no fat. When he walked into a room all the men felt smaller including me. Because of his larger frame and lung capacity, Bryan had a loud and authoritative voice that was intimidating. That same voice was trained by dealing with inmates at a prison, full time, so when Bryan spoke everyone heard the confident authority in him. I held a punch bag that Bryan hit once and, even though he was restraining himself, his blows knocked the air out of me and rattled my entire body even through the bag!

At 9-13 ft tall Goliath would have weighed over 1000 lbs and been VERY intimidating. Speaking for myself, I would have been inspired to FLEE. According to 1 Sam 17 Goliath would stand at the front of the Philistine army and shout challenges to the Israeli army every day.

[1Sa 17:8-11 ESV] 8 He [Goliath] stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. 9 If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us." 10 And the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together." 11 **When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.**

David is a teenager, around 14 years old, delivering lunch to his older brothers in the Israeli army. When he arrives one day to do so, this happens:

[1Sa 17:23-27 ESV] 23 As he [David] talked with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him. 24 All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid. 25 And the men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. And the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel." 26 And David said to the men who stood by him, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? **For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?**" 27 And the people answered him in the same way, "So shall it be done to the man who kills him."

I underlined part of verse 26 because David sees what no one else in the entire Israeli army including King Saul sees: **the promise of God.**

What everyone else sees is Goliath's size and strength.

No one wants to meet his challenge of single combat because they're comparing themselves to a giant and saying "no way!" So thus far they've chosen to flee.

David is seeing Goliath from a different perspective. God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, has chosen them—the Israelites—to be His people. God didn't choose the Philistines and not Goliath.

God, the most powerful Being in existence, *has promised to protect and preserve the Israeli* people and their land from enemies. If they worship Him and obey His commands, **God won't allow them to be defeated and taken over.**

Thus the reason David is willing to fight is this: **the promise of God is his weapon and armor.**

The Lord always keeps His promises despite the "odds" or the circumstances in the physical world. Whether Goliath was 9 or 13 feet tall is irrelevant to David because *his faith is that God will live up to His end of the covenant He made with Israel.*

David's faith in God inspires him to fight despite the odds.

[1Sa 17:28-32 NKJV] 28 Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger was aroused against David, and he said, "Why did you come down here? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride and the insolence of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle." 29 And David said, "What have I done now? **Is there not a cause?**" 30 Then he turned from him toward another and said the same thing; and these people answered him as the first ones [did]. 31 Now when the words which David spoke were heard, they reported [them] to Saul; and he sent for him. 32 Then David said to Saul, **"Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine."**

When David says "is there not a cause?" what he means is ***"didn't God say He would give us victory? Defend us? Do we believe Him? Do we have faith that what He said is true despite the odds?"***

We all know what happens next: **David kills Goliath** and fulfills the promise God made that they would be victorious. David is our example of when to fight.

We fight when we have a promise, command, and commission from God to do something and/or prevail over something.

The Devil is a giant in our lives bigger and more powerful than Goliath. He tempts us, lies to us, deceives us, taunts us, and has an army of demons behind him to make our lives difficult. He and his are called Satan, the enemy.

Yet look what the Lord has declared about this fight:

[Rev 12:11 NKJV] 11 **And they overcame him** [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

[1Jo 2:13 NKJV] 13 I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him [Jesus] from the beginning. I write to you, young men, **Because you have overcome the wicked one** [the devil].

[Jas 4:7 NKJV] 7 Therefore submit to God. **Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**

I taught you this before, but one of the OT Hebrew names for devil doesn't just mean serpent, it specifically ***translates to FLEEING serpent***. One that's running away.

I hear people telling me the devil is interfering in their lives,

marriages, finances, health, and more. If you really believe that it's time to go medieval, draw your sword, and fight! In Jesus' Name, command any unclean spirit to be quiet and flee! Declare that you'll no longer believe their lies, will resist their temptations, and will only believe God's truth!

- It's time to tell the Devil "no!" with a swing of the Sword of the Spirit!
- It's time to fight to retake the throne of our lives from any part of us that shouldn't be sitting on it.
- If a human adversary or organization has come into "territory" that God says is ours, then its time to take a stand.
- If a human adversary or organization is trying to corrupt my children, it's time for us parents and grandparents to say "not on my watch!"