Diane was visiting in the home of some friends. Time passed quickly as each shared their various experiences of the past year. She ended up staying longer than she had planned and had to walk home alone. But she wasn't afraid because it was a small town and she lived only a few blocks away. As she walked along under the tall elm trees, Diane whispered a prayer asking God to keep her safe from harm and danger.

When she reached the alley, which was a shortcut to her house, she decided to take it. However, halfway down the alley, she noticed a man standing at the end, as though he were waiting for her. She became uneasy and began to pray again, asking for God's protection. Instantly a comforting sense of quietness and security wrapped around her; she felt as though someone was walking with her. When Diane reached the end of the alley, she walked right past the man and arrived home safely.

The following day, Diane read in the paper that a young girl had been raped in that same alley, just twenty minutes after she had been there. Overwhelmed by this tragedy and the fact that it could have been her, she began to weep.

Thanking the Lord for her safety and wanting to help the young woman who had been attacked, she decided to go to the police station. She told them her story and offered to help identify the assailant. The police asked if she would be willing to view a lineup, she agreed and immediately pointed out the man she had seen in the alley the night before.

When the man was told he had been identified, he immediately broke down and confessed. The officer thanked Diane for her bravery and asked if there was anything they could do for her. Diane was curious as to why the assailant had not attacked her. When the policeman asked him, his answer stunned them all, "Because she wasn't alone. She had two tall men walking on either side of her."

Do you believe in angels? I do. I believe that angels are real and are at work in our ordinary, everyday lives. I have personally sensed the presence of angels in my own life and have talked with many believers who share the same experience and belief. However, the most powerful evidence that angels exist is found in Scripture.

- Thirty-four of the Bible’s sixty-six books talk about angels in detail.
• Every New Testament writer confirms the existence of angels.
• The word “angel” or “angels” occurs more than 300 times in Scripture.

From beginning to end, the Bible validates the existence of angels:

Genesis 3:24 “After God forced the man out of the garden, he placed angels and a sword of fire that flashed around in every direction on its eastern border. This kept people from getting to the tree of life.”

Revelation 7:11 “All the angels were standing around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures. They all bowed down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God.”

When we come to Jesus Christ in a personal relationship, He takes full responsibility for us. That means He takes care of us. And one of the ways that God cares for us is through the ministry of His angels.

Hebrews 1:14 “All the angels are spirits who serve God and are sent to help those who will receive salvation.”

What an amazing and comfort-filled promise – that God sends His angels to encourage, protect and guide us on our life journey! As God’s messengers and our helpers, angels serve and honor Him through their praise and obedience as they carry out His will here on earth. As believers, we can count on the presence and power of angels – every step of the journey.

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Getting a Grip on Fear

We live in uncertain times. Many people have lost their job and are wondering where the next paycheck is coming from. Companies are closing stores and downsizing, sending unemployment rates to an all time high. The financial stress has driven some to violence and others to the pit of clinical depression. The political world seems more unstable than ever before and rumors of war surface regularly.

Fear is rampant. As followers of Christ, we must choose against fear and learn how to control it in our lives. We are in a time of testing, when some who have seemed so faithful fall and stumble. It is time to get a grip on fear.

I am so glad you have chosen to join me in this four-week-study, Getting a Grip on Fear. No matter where you live, if you are married or single, rich or poor - you will battle fear and that fear will produce stress in your life. Over the next four weeks, we will see what God has to say about fear and worry from His perspective.

Now is the perfect time to invite others to join you in a bible study. Form a weekly group. Find a study partner. Create a phone study group. You are so creative! Go for it! And let me remind you that we have an awesome team of women who are prayer warriors and love to pray! If you need prayer, e-mail Ginger Meador, our Prayer Team Director, and she will call the prayer team into action! gjmeador@comcast.net

Mind-Set for the Journey: Pray, thanking God for His written Word. Ask Him to reveal the very unique message He has for you in this study. Read the passage listed 2-3 times. Then make the deliberate choice to fix your thoughts on each word and each phrase as you read it. Don't let your mind wander to the pile of dirty laundry or the mystery of tonight's dinner menu. Focus only on God's truth and let everything else fall away. Your mind is set and you are ready to begin Day 1.

Facts for the Journey: the main Bible Study facts and principles
Prayer for the Journey: a week-by-week plan for learning to pray simply, effectively, powerfully
Truth for the Journey: pinpoint the one truth that stood out and impacted you most this week
Steps for the Journey: make a specific plan to put feet to or apply the truths you have learned
Reflections on the Journey: examine, evaluate and record thoughts, truths, and life changes
Power for the Journey: make a plan to memorize Scripture

Mindset for the Journey

2 Timothy 1:7 - 12 (NCV) God did not give us a spirit that makes us afraid but a spirit of power and love and self-control. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. And of this gospel, I was appointed a herald, an apostle, and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.
The "Fear Factor" is not just a television show. Fear is a common factor of life in our world, a broken world filled with broken people who seem to live at the mercy of their fears. We worry about things both big and small, important things as well as silly things. We are often afraid of what might happen and then worry that other things will never happen. Worry makes everything seem bigger than it really is. Worry is not only wasted energy, but consuming and unhealthy in every area of life. The story is told of a man hospitalized because of anxiety. Day in and day out, the man continually pressed his ear up against the wall, listening intently. When a nurse came by, stuck her head in the room and asked what he was doing, the patient responded with "Shh!" motioning her over. The very patient nurse pressed her ear up against the wall and listened for a long time. Finally, the nurse said, "I can't hear a thing!" Alarmed, the man whispered, "I know. It's been like that all day!" Worry fits this world, but worry does not fit the picture of a victorious life in God. And nothing will rob you of joy quicker than worry. God came so that we would not have to worry and yet we continue to do so. The question is, how do we win this battle with fear and worry?

Philippians 4:4-7 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

In this passage of Scripture, Paul gives us the promise of peace and the absence of fear. However, there are conditions to be met and actions we must take in order to experience peace and break fear's hold.

Step one: Choose joy! Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

"Rejoice" literally means to practice joy, to take delight in and to be glad. Life often makes it impossible to be happy. Happiness is not what Paul is calling us to pursue because happiness is merely a cheap imitation of true joy. Joy is a deeply-rooted confidence that God is in control. Paul's situation, when writing this letter, makes me wonder. After all, Paul was a prisoner, awaiting trial and almost certain execution, but still tells us to rejoice. In other words, we can't always find joy in circumstances but we can always find joy in the Lord of those circumstances. The tense of the verb "rejoice" translates to "keep on rejoicing" and is an ongoing command and calling to obedience. Obedience always begins with a choice and always ends in joy.

John 15: 10-11 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

We cannot avoid pain but we can avoid joy because joy is the harvest of a life that consistently pursues God, seeking His truth, and longing to obey that truth. The pursuit of joy is a matter of choice and perspective.

A little boy asked his friend, "Wouldn't you hate to wear glasses all the time?" "No," the other boy responded, "not if I had the kind of glasses that grandma wears. She sees how to fix a lot of things. Grandma sees lots of nice things on a rainy day. She sees good that other people call bad and she always sees what you meant to do, even if you mess it up". Noticing the puzzled look on his friend's face, the little boy continued, "I asked her one day how she could see that way all of the time and she said it was the way she learned to look at things. So it must be her glasses." Choosing joy is choosing for God and against fear.