



FEAR FACTORS:

Three Hidden Forces That Threaten Our Trust in God

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Introduction: Beneath Every Temptation

In *The Consumer Christian Spiral*, https://www.castmemberchurch.com/_files/ugd/927834_c4485bd13cb44e079bee2611fc7ed30b.pdf I explored three core temptations that Jesus faced in the wilderness and that every believer, leader, and church must continually confront: comfort, credibility, and control. These were not random temptations. They were deeply strategic, striking at something fundamental to the human condition: our desire to avoid suffering, our longing to matter, and our instinct to secure power.

At their core, these temptations were not merely about appetite, attention, or authority. They were about fear. Turn stones into bread. Protect Your comfort. Throw Yourself down. Prove Your credibility. Take the kingdoms. Secure Your control.

In every case, the deeper invitation was the same: abandon trust in the Father and secure life on Your own terms.

This is what makes the wilderness so revealing. What Jesus confronted there was not only Satan's voice, but the ancient human impulse toward self-protection. And that same battle continues.

Fear of suffering drives us toward comfort. Fear of insignificance drives us toward credibility. Fear of powerlessness drives us toward control.

This is why comfort, credibility, and control are not merely temptations. They are often the false refuges we build when fear becomes our functional authority.

This also helps explain why one of Scripture's most consistent refrains is some variation of "Do not be afraid." From Genesis to Revelation, God continually confronts fear because fear so often becomes the foundation of misplaced trust.

When God says, "Fear not," He is not pretending danger does not exist. He is reminding His people that fear does not have to govern them. The issue is rarely the absence of threat. The issue is whether fear or trust will rule.

This is the deeper spiritual battle beneath consumerism, discipleship, leadership, and mission. When fear governs us, we drift toward self-preservation. When trust governs us, we move toward surrender. And wherever self-preservation becomes central, consumerism is never far behind.

Fear Not: Scripture's Repeated Invitation Beyond Self-Protection

Fear appears early in the biblical story. After Adam and Eve rebelled, one of Adam's first recorded responses was this: "I was afraid..."

Fear entered the human story not merely as emotion, but as rupture. Fear distorted intimacy. Fear hid. Fear covered. Fear self-protected.

From that moment forward, fear became one of humanity's deepest reflexes.

And throughout Scripture, God repeatedly speaks directly into it: Fear not. Do not be afraid. Take courage. Be strong.

This pattern matters because God's call to reject fear is not superficial encouragement. It is a direct challenge to the instinct to secure ourselves apart from Him.

To Abraham, called into uncertainty, God said, "Fear not." To Moses, standing before Pharaoh, God said, "Fear not." To Joshua, entering unfamiliar territory, God said, "Be strong and courageous." To Mary, carrying impossible calling, God said, "Fear not." To frightened disciples in storm-tossed waters, Jesus said, "It is I. Do not be afraid."

Again and again, the pattern is unmistakable: God's purposes often require movement beyond fear.

This means Scripture's repeated confrontation of fear is deeply connected to comfort, credibility, and control. Fear of suffering clings to comfort. Fear of insignificance clings to credibility. Fear of powerlessness clings to control.

But God continually invites His people beyond all three.

Beyond comfort into courage. Beyond credibility into identity. Beyond control into surrender.

"Fear not" is not simply about emotional peace. It is an invitation to trust.

Fear of Suffering (The loss of comfort)

"Tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus had been fasting for forty days. His hunger was real. This temptation was subtle precisely because bread itself was not sinful. The temptation was to satisfy legitimate hunger in a way that bypassed trust, to choose immediate relief over surrendered dependence.

Comfort is not evil. Rest is not evil. Peace is not evil. But comfort becomes dangerous when avoiding suffering becomes our highest priority.

The deeper question beneath comfort is this: What am I unwilling to suffer?

That question shapes more of human behavior than we often realize. We naturally seek to avoid pain, uncertainty, sacrifice, inconvenience, and discomfort. Yet when comfort becomes ultimate, discipleship can quietly be reshaped into consumption.

Faith becomes less about following Jesus and more about preserving ease.

Instead of asking, "What is God inviting me into?" we may begin asking, "How can I remain safe?"

This is where comfort becomes complacency. And complacency, left unchecked, often becomes callousness.

A church centered on comfort may gather people, but it will struggle to release pioneers. A believer centered on comfort may profess faith, but often resists costly obedience.

Jesus' response in the wilderness reminds us that life is not ultimately sustained by bread alone, but by trust in God.

Fear of Insignificance (The loss of credibility)

"Throw yourself down..."

This was the temptation of spectacle. Prove Yourself. Force recognition. Demonstrate significance.

At its core, this temptation targeted identity. Will You trust who the Father says You are, or will You demand validation through visible proof?

This remains one of humanity's deepest struggles. We long to matter. We fear insignificance. We crave recognition.

Credibility itself is not wrong. Trustworthiness matters. Reputation can be valuable. But credibility becomes dangerous when image matters more than integrity.

This is where performance replaces authenticity. We begin curating instead of confessing, projecting instead of becoming, impressing instead of obeying.

For leaders, this can mean prioritizing optics over honesty. For churches, it can mean measuring fruitfulness through visibility rather than transformation. For innovators, it can mean softening conviction for broader acceptance.

This is where credibility spirals into comparison, competition, and compromise.

Jesus refused to perform for validation because identity rooted in the Father does not require spectacle.

When identity is secure, credibility can serve mission. When identity is insecure, credibility can become an idol.

Fear of Powerlessness (The loss of control)

“All this I will give You...”

This was the temptation to grasp power without surrender, authority without sacrifice, influence without obedience, kingship without a cross.

Control is often the deepest illusion because it convinces us that safety can be secured through mastery.

What if I can hold it together? What if I can guarantee outcomes? What if I can preserve what matters?

But beneath control is often fear of powerlessness.

Control often disguises itself as wisdom, preparation, or leadership, but fear frequently fuels it.

In individuals, this may look like anxiety-driven micromanagement. In leaders, it may look like domination. In churches, it may look like institutional preservation at the expense of Spirit-led movement.

This is where movement becomes machinery.

The tighter we grip, the less room there is for surrender.

Jesus rejected control apart from the Father because the Kingdom was never meant to be advanced through grasping. It grows through trust, obedience, and surrender.

The Consumer Christian Spiral Reconsidered

When fear governs us, comfort, credibility, and control do not remain isolated struggles. They become a spiral.

Comfort becomes complacency, and ultimately callousness.
Credibility becomes comparison, and ultimately competition.
Control becomes corruption, and ultimately collapse.

This spiral can shape individuals, churches, and movements alike. Rather than asking how to surrender more deeply, we begin asking how to preserve ourselves more effectively.

This is the essence of consumer Christianity.

Self-protection replaces self-denial. Security replaces surrender. Maintenance replaces mission.

What begins as fear often becomes culture.

The Way of Jesus: Beyond Fear

Jesus did not merely resist temptation. He revealed another way to be human.

A way rooted not in fear, but in trust.

This is why His life consistently moved beyond the three great fears.

Beyond comfort is courage. Beyond credibility is identity. Beyond control is surrender.

This is the invitation Scripture has always held before God's people.

Fear not.

Not because there is no wilderness. Not because there is no suffering. Not because there is no uncertainty.

But because fear does not have to be lord.

Final Reflection

Every believer, every leader, and every church must continually wrestle with the same question: What fear is shaping us most?

Are we protecting comfort? Preserving credibility? Maintaining control?

Or are we trusting God enough to move beyond them?

Because wherever fear drives self-protection, consumerism grows.

But wherever trust displaces fear, the Kingdom becomes visible.