

**WHAT YOUR GROUP WILL NEED**

- A quiet spot
- Something to watch a video clip on from YouTube on
- A Bible
- A pen and some paper

**LEADER NOTES**

This session has been adapted from the *Isolated Church: Fear* reflection so you can use it with your group online. Feel free to pick and choose parts of it, if you are short on time.



**Make sure you send round the video link (click here) to your group before you meet or have it ready in your video chat to watch at the right time.**

**Tip:** There are a few prayers, passages and quotes included in these notes. As you'll most likely be using this session on a video chat service, text or message certain people in the group with the prayers or quotes at the start or throughout the session and ask them to read them out at the right time - it'll help break up your meeting and involve others too!

**i INTRO**

**Explain:** Today we are going to be looking at fear. If we are honest, fear is something that we have all felt at some point. Some of you will be particularly fearful with all that is going on with COVID-19 right now. You could be fearful about your own health, fearful for your family and friends, or even fearful for your future. We are going to learn today from other young people who have been in scary situations and who have found that God has been really present with them.

**🚶 ACTIVITY: GUESS THE FEAR**

As the leader, read out the official name for the fears below. See if people can guess the real fear (the right answers are in **bold**).

**GELIOPHOBIA:** Fear of: **laughter**, crying, farting

**TUROPHOBIA:** Fear of: baked beans, **cheese**, peas

**GLOBOPHOBIA:** Fear of: hula hoops, glitter, **balloons**

**ERGOPHOBIA:** Fear of: sleep, **work**, exercise

**POGONOPHOBIA:** Fear of: **beards**, nose hair, toe nails

**NOMOPHOBIA:** Fear of: exams, social media, **losing mobile phone service**

**Explain:** These fears might seem a bit silly to us, but fear is real and it's something a lot of people are struggling with. Over the next 20 minutes we're going to hear stories of people who have courageously and bravely faced up to real and intense fears by leaning into God and depending fully on Him!

**🙏 PRAY**

Encourage the group to be still and pause. Ask them to slow down their breathing and focus on God. Ask Him to speak to you all whilst you go through this session!

**You might want to ask one of your group to read out this prayer:**

*Father God. You are good. You are everything we need. Please speak to us as we read these stories. Help us put aside distractions and focus on You. Teach us something new. Let us know You are with us. Amen.*

**VIDEO: 'WE BECAME UNAFRAID'**

**If you haven't already - send round the link to the video for people to watch (click here).** This week Naomi shares about some teenage girls from Ethiopia whose passion to share God's love had harsh consequences. But, through their trial, God was with them: "...in prison we had an amazing time... We became unafraid."

**Ask**

- What's one thing that stood out to you from that story?
- Eden, Mihret and Gifti\* decided to tell one person every day about Jesus. How would you feel telling just one person about Jesus?

Deborah said, "This [suffering in prison] was an honour for us. During those three months in prison we had an amazing time of prayer, fasting, Bible study and song. We became unafraid."

**Ask:**

- When faced with a scary situation, what is your immediate reaction?
- How do you feel about what the girls did? Turning to prayer, fasting, Bible study and song? Would you?
- Why do you think it led Deborah to a place where she could say they "became unafraid"?

Continued...

## STORY: CHRISTIANS RESPONDING TO CORONAVIRUS

**Read out this story:** Rasha\* is 15. She, her mum and sister all live in Syria, a country which has been at war for over 9 years. After her dad died, her mum became a Christian, secretly leaving Islam. Both Rasha and her sister followed their mum's example and became Christians too. That was a dangerous choice - in Syria, leaving Islam for Christianity can make you a target. For a while they lived in Raqqa, a stronghold of the so-called Islamic State, but had to move around - Rasha's mum was worried her husband's family would try and take her daughters if they found out she was a Christian.

When they left Raqqa, that's when things changed. The family were supported by a Centre of Hope - one of 16 across Syria, run by Open Doors partners. Rasha says:

*"We felt that Someone was protecting us, that God provided for us every moment. There is a big difference between living as a Muslim and living as a Christian. As a Muslim you live according to certain laws. As a Christian it's living love, really! Jesus is always with me. Christianity is more than a belief; It's love, it's peace, it's about someone with me."*

**These are some big questions. Ask each one, and leave 30 seconds for people to silently reflect on the answers.**

- When Rasha left Raqqa she was no longer alone. Who can you go to when you are feeling afraid?
- Is Christianity more than a belief for you? Do you know that Jesus is always with you?

**Quickly pray for the group:**

*Father God, help us know you are always with us. Help our faith, not just be a clinical belief system, but a real living relationship. Help us know your peace, love and that you are always with us. Amen*

**Whilst Rasha's life isn't easy, she has learnt a few things -**

*"Give your lives, reflect your beliefs in your actions. In a moment, our life can be over... As a teenager you can feel alone, sometimes you have to face things on your own, but God will be with us, He will strengthen us. We lived in very difficult circumstances, we had very scary moments, we felt loneliness, but we were assured that Jesus was always with us."*

**Ask people to share (or share your own examples):**

- Have you got any stories of you knowing Jesus' presence in scary moments or hard times?

## BIBLE: JESUS DRIVES OUT FEAR WITH LOVE

**Note:** This study uses a number of different Bible passages; depending on how confident your group feel using the Bible, ask different members to find the passages and be prepared to read them. The focus is to help young people understand that Jesus drives out fear with love.

**Explain:** In the Bible the devil is referred to as a 'thief' who wants to rob us of many things and control us with fear. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10: 10). The good news is that the life Jesus calls us to is centred around love.

**Ask:**

- What passages do you know that tell us that Jesus is all about love? (John 3:16)

Jesus was once asked which of God's laws was most important. He responded: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these" (Mark 12: 30-31).

**Ask:**

- Why is love so important right now?

**Explain:** But why does love matter so much right now? Why does it matter to Rasha? Because '...perfect love drives out fear...' (1 John 4: 18) The original ancient Greek word used here for 'drive' is the same one used when describing Jesus as he 'drove' the traders out of the temple (Matt 21: 12). This is not a meek and mild driving out of fear, this is something so overwhelming and forceful that it cannot be ignored. There was something so radical about the girls praising God in the Ethiopian jail that it could not be ignored, it led 14 people to hear the Gospel. Amazing.

- If we're feeling fearful, how can we drive it away and bring light like the girls in prison? (*Worship, prayer and reading God's Word are all great answers*)

**RESPONSE: LEARN GOD'S WORDS OF LOVE**

**Explain:** When we know God's words and truth deep in our hearts then whenever fear comes, we can recall God's promises to us and be sure of his love and presence. So, let's spend some time learning a bit of the Bible like the girls did in prison.

**Notes:** Have a verse prepared that you would like the group to learn, and spend some time learning it together. Be creative! Use actions, have a visual aid, or write it out so the group can read it together. Give them 5 minutes to write it out as many times as possible and see who can recite it (with their eyes closed - no cheating), before the end of the session. Use your social media channels to reinforce the verse during the week.

Encourage the group members to try and learn one other verse before your next meeting. Turn this into a competition and announce a little prize for those who can recite a verse at the start of your next session (prizes could be a shout out on your youth Instagram or pack of chocolate left on winner's doorsteps - make sure you wash your hands before and after dropping off). Here's two examples you might find helpful (as well as those already covered): **Romans 8: 38 / Psalm 27: 1**

**If your group like the idea of memorising Scripture but don't know where to start, consider ordering a Hidden Word pack (click here).**

## PRAY

**As you close the session ask the group for any prayer requests. If they don't want to share, that's fine, just encourage them to bring their worries and unknowns before God. Have a few minutes silence, then finish by reading out this prayer.**

*Father God, we thank You for the example of Christians like Deborah, Eden, Mihret, Gifti, Rasha and our other brothers and sisters around the world who are persecuted for their faith in You. Christians who choose love in the face of fear. Help us when we are afraid, to dig into the Bible, prayer, fasting and worship so that we too can get closer to You. Place people on our hearts and minds that we can love at this time, pointing people to You. Amen.*