

# FACE YOUR FEARS AND FIGHT BACK

ser3982 When Life Sucks, Pt 4

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Good morning church family. I want to start out with three words today, "I love you!" And I want to thank you for the outpouring of your love for our family. Thank you for all the cards, the fruit baskets, the dinners, and most of all, the prayers! We have truly felt the love of our father through all of you over the past few weeks. John and I thank you with all of our hearts.

This is the last message in the sermon series "When Life Sucks", and all I want to say is PRAISE THE LORD!

The title of our message today from the series is "Face Your Fears and Fight Back!"

Would you pray with me for the message? (Pray)

It's not easy facing our fears. One time my daughter Lizzie had a sleep-over with her friend Courtney. They woke me up around 3 am and said, "Mommy we keep getting these prank phone calls on our phones and now we hear noises down stairs. Can you go look?" I said I would but for them to come with me. Lizzie said she was staying right there, but Courtney came with me. We looked around and we heard no noise. Courtney was going toward the laundry room and just as she was about to open the door, we heard a loud crash in the laundry room.

I was behind her and I yelled, "Jesus save Courtney!" I ran back upstairs, leaving poor Courtney behind. There was no one in there but they still tease me about that to this day, and I say, "Well at least I called on Jesus to protect Courtney!"

*When Life Sucks* the first thing we must do is face our fears and fight back!

There is only one way that I know how to fight back and that is with the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God! We are going to talk about how to do that today.

For those of you who don't know, maybe you missed John's sermon last week, I recently had to face a fear that many of you may have - the fear of catching Covid-19 (testing positive for the dreaded Covid-19).

When my daughter Ashley said to me, "Mommy I'm scared, I don't think I can taste or smell anything", my heart sank.

The next morning, we both got tested for Covid-19 and we were positive.

My daughter Ashley began to cry, and I assured her we would be okay, that the Lord's got us, and that she knows that. While I truly believed that with all of my heart, fear had taken root inside me and it wasn't about to let go.

We can actually experience fear and faith at the same time. But the question will always be, which one is bigger?

We immediately called John and the rest of my family and they got tested as well.

Three of our four daughters, our grandbaby and I all tested positive. John tested negative. Lizzie, Jeff, Matt, and Matt were all negative. We were thankful for that, but what about the rest of us? My daughters and my grandbaby had Covid-19!

The fear was there but so was my faith. And I knew they were going to have a battle within me.

The next day we had even more disturbing news. John's Mom and Dad were both taken to the hospital in separate ambulances and both tested positive for Covid-19.

My worst fears had now come true. I prayed every day for God's protection over my family against this disease and now we had it. Where was God in the midst of all this fear?

I now had come face-to-face with my biggest fears.

Was I scared? Absolutely! But something arises inside of me when I am scared. It's the warrior inside of me. His name is Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not a thing, He is a person. He is The Power of God and He has never ever let me down!

My prayer today is that you would know this Warrior inside of you and when life sucks for you, which it will, you will fight back with the Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God!

We are going to talk about how to do this but first I want us to look at a story in the book of Daniel.

My daughter, Lizzie, reminded me of this story through a text message she sent to me one morning when I was feeling very sick. God spoke so clearly to me through it.

In Daniel Chapter 3, we find the story of a king named Nebuchadnezzar. He made an image of gold and set it up for everyone in the kingdom to worship. The whole kingdom was commanded to fall down and worship this image. King Nebuchadnezzar said that whoever does not would be thrown into a blazing furnace.

Pretty scary, right? Well of course, everyone in the Kingdom fell down and worshiped the image, except for three young Hebrew men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The King was furious! He asked if it were true that they not fallen down and worshipped the image when he had commanded them to.

Let's look at Daniel 3:15-18

“If you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”

16) Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17) If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from your Majesty’s hand. 18) But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

First, let’s look at these three young men. How on earth are they so brave? A blazing furnace! And the king said immediately you will be thrown into the furnace. No time to pray, no time to think about this. Immediately!

To us, they look amazingly brave. But thinking about these three young men, they were human just like us. I am sure they felt fear inside them. They had to talk about this together. These verses say they all answered the king, but one had to be the spokesperson.

Let’s say Shadrach was the spokesperson. Meshach and Abednego had a few moments to look at the fire and know that in moments they would be thrown into it. Talk about facing your fears! How could they be this fearless while looking into a blazing furnace?

Maybe the key here is that they weren’t looking at how hot or scary the fire was. Maybe they were all focusing on how big their God is. Let me say that again for the person in the back...Maybe they weren’t focusing on how hot the fire was. Maybe they were focusing on how big their God is.

Maybe 2020 really does suck. We surely know Covid-19 sucks, but we, you and I, need to focus on how big our God is. We need to focus on how

much He loves us. Sometimes it's not easy, but that's exactly what I had to do.

I can tell you, it really works, because the fire of Covid-19 was about to get hotter. But my God was about to show up even stronger!

Let's go back to verses 17 and 18

Daniel 3:17-18

17) "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from your Majesty's hand. 18) But even if He does not, we want you to know, your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Two things they knew about God, His power and His love for them.

God can do anything He wants to do. He is bigger than any virus. He can deliver us from Covid-19. But what if He doesn't?

Verse 18... "even if He doesn't."

What if God lets us go through the fire? Then what? Why were they so sure God would take care of them? Because they knew the character of God. They knew their God loved them. They trusted in that love.

Do you know that love? I know my family isn't the only family that is in pain today. Maybe some of you are still going through the fire. God will get you through the fire when you trust in Him.

Let's take a look at what he did for them.

Daniel 3:19-25

19) “Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach Meshach and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual 20) and commanded some of the strongest soldiers to tie them up and throw them in the blazing furnace. 23) These three men firmly tied fell into the blazing furnace. 24) Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers. ‘Weren’t there three men we tied up and threw into the fire?’ ”

They replied, “Certainly your Majesty” 25) He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like the son of the gods.”

This is the reminder my daughter Lizzie sent to me on a really bad day of my journey through this illness: “Just a reminder, you can be IN the fire, but UNBOUND and not hurt! Because we are not alone in the fire! Sometimes God doesn’t deliver us out of the fire, but He promises to be with us through it! “

Who was in the fire with them? Jesus! Who was in the fire with us the whole time? Jesus!

Was I scared during my battle with Covid-19? Yes, I was so scared! But, every day I read God’s word and I trusted in His Word. God tells us He will never leave us or forsake us. God keeps His promises!

I had to face my fears, but I knew how to fight back. Remember I told you about the warrior inside me, the Holy Spirit. He will rise up for you, too. He tells us in His word how to fight back.

There is a pandemic that is much bigger than Covid-19. That is the pandemic of fear.

I was really scared in the middle of the night, when my head hurt, and I felt like every ounce of strength was taken from me.

Ashley would tell me her chest hurt sometimes and I thought about her being seizure free for three years. Would this affect her in any way?

The baby? Mary? Daana? Every day we checked in, asking if they were okay. And John's parents? My fear for them was overwhelming. We surely needed God's peace.

There was something Ashley and I did as we quarantined together. It's something we can all do when we face our fears and fight back. We put on the full Armor of God every single day. You can't fight this battle of fear without the full Armor of God.

I'm going to focus today on three things that you will need to fight this pandemic of fear. These three things are found in Ephesians.

Ephesians 6:16-17

“In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.”

Three weapons to use in fighting our fears:

1. The shield of faith extinguishes the flaming arrows.
2. The helmet of salvation. The battle starts in our minds. Take every thought to Jesus Christ.
3. The sword of the spirit. The word of God. God's promises are to declare out loud over our lives.

Everyday Ashley and I would spend time in God's word claiming God's promises of healing.

At night we would sit in the hallway and John would be in our bedroom and we would all put on worship music and pray together for God's healing, for God's peace, and for God's wisdom.

We used our shield of faith, we used our sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, claiming aloud God's promises of healing over us and over John's mom and dad.

We saw victory, but it wasn't the victory we imagined.

As I wrote this message, I struggled because I really wanted to see the victory of John's dad being healed on this earth.

We all recovered, including John's Mom. But his dad passed away due to complications from Covid-19. I wanted John's dad to live!

I said, "God where is the victory? You always give us victory."

As I struggled, I heard the voice of the Holy Spirit say to me, "Gina, you know how this works. You need to think about this." So, I did think about it. I thought about the three young Hebrew boys who were thrown into the blazing furnace. I thought about how Jesus was walking with them in the furnace.

Jesus was walking with them in the fire!

Jesus was walking through the fire with John, with my girls, with my grandbaby, and with me every day as we fought hard with worship songs with healing verses.

Jesus was also walking through the fire with my precious mother-in-law, Trudy. You see, most people who die from Covid-19, die alone.

Because my mother-in-law had the disease and had recovered, it wasn't a risk for her. She could sit next to Art, her husband, and hold his hand

while the family could say goodbye to him. The love of his life could be there next to him.

God gave her that blessing. She was so strong and courageous, and God was with her.

You may be thinking, where is the victory? It's not fair. We live in a fallen, sinful world filled with pain, and it's not fair.

But I can assure you that Covid-19 did not win! Jesus Christ won this battle for us over 2000 years ago. We all have to leave this earth at some time, but those who know Jesus can never lose. We are healed on earth or we are healed in heaven...but we are always healed! And the Church said, "Amen! & Hallelujah!"

Do you hear me? We will always win because we have everlasting life, forever in paradise with Jesus! Jesus conquered death forever on the cross for you and me. We pass from this life to the next.

At the funeral, all of Art's and Trudy's kids each got to share one of their favorite memories with their dad. It was beautiful.

I thought about the many memories I had with my father-in-law. He had a larger-than-life, funny personality, and I will miss him so much this side of heaven.

But the memory I will cherish and hold in my heart is the night we all, as a family, got to Facetime him and say goodbye. We could see his face so clearly. It was just before he got the medication to make him comfortable as he passed away.

My kids were telling him they loved him, my son-in-law Matt told him how much he loved and admired him, and John told his dad that he really loved him.

As they were talking, I was praying for words. Words from the Holy Spirit. Words of comfort.

As it got quiet the Holy Spirit showed up like he always does.

I said, “Dad, I KNOW that Jesus lives inside your heart.” I will never forget his face and the strength in him as he lifted his head and shook it so firmly with a smile in his eyes.

I said, “Dad this is not goodbye from us. This is we will see you later, Dad, because this world is not our home, we are only passing through. You are going home.” He shook his head so big and bold again. He knew, he knew. I told him we will be there soon because time goes by so fast. I told him to call on Jesus as he goes through this, ok? He shook his head so big and his eyes were smiling. I could see!

In that hospital room were my father-in-law, my mother-in-law and one of John’s brothers, Richie, who was also holding his hand. The three of them experienced God’s love in an amazing way. I know the three of them weren’t alone.

There was another person there in the middle of their pain. Just like He was with those three Hebrew boys, He was with them.

There was a fourth man in the fire. One that looked like the son of the gods. That man was Jesus Christ.

That’s where the victory is. There will always be another in the fire with us, Jesus Christ our Lord!

Do you know him?

If you were dying and about to leave this earth, could someone look at you and say they know Jesus Christ lives in your heart?

Has there ever been a time you've asked Jesus to come and live inside your heart? He wants to. He died on a cross to pay for your sin. Sin can't enter heaven. God is Holy. Flesh and blood are sinful. That's why we need Jesus. He is the Savior for our sins. When He comes to live inside of us, we become born again. We now can enter Heaven when we die because Jesus lives inside us.

If you don't remember ever asking Jesus to live inside you, why don't you ask him today? It's as easy as **ABC**.

- A. **A**dmit you are a sinner. Ask God to forgive your sins.
- B. **B**elieve God sent Jesus to take your place on the cross to pay for those sins.
- C. **C**ommit your life to Jesus and ask him to be your Lord and Savior.
- D. **D**o it today. We don't know if we have tomorrow.

Please pray this prayer with me today...

Dear God, thank you for loving me. I admit I am a sinner. Please forgive my sins, past, present and future.

Dear Jesus, please come live in my heart and be my Lord and personal Savior. Holy Spirit, please fill me and help me live for Jesus Christ. In Jesus name I pray. Amen!