

Do Not Be Alarmed

By Cynthia Hyle Bezek

I shouldn't look at email and social media first thing in the morning. I know this. But I still do it sometimes. Actually, I still do it a lot.

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Like a couple of weeks ago. In less than ten minutes, I had a disturbing briefing of conspiracy-theory politics, tainted food warnings, heresy allegations, and gloomy presidential forecasts. One email even promised, "This will alarm you!"—and sure enough, it did! My thoughts, my emotions, even my body felt agitated.

I left my computer, got my coffee, and went to spent time with God. As I poured out my fears and anxieties—and embarrassment for letting these things trouble me like they did—He gently reminded me that He is still working all things, including those I'd been assaulted with that morning, together for His good purposes.

How panic-ridden our culture is—even our Christian culture! How myriad are the ways the enemy tries to paralyze us with fear. Even Christian media too often succumbs to rumor-spreading, sensationalism, and fearmongering.

But fear does not strengthen my faith—it kills it. It makes me feel weak, powerless, even hopeless at times. The solution can't be denial, though. So I asked the Lord to give me a strategy to combat the enemy's attempts to undo me with fear.

A few days later, I did some personal Bible study. As I meandered through Old and New Testaments, I was surprised by all the "do not" commands I found:

- Do not fear the people of the land (Num. 14:9).
- Do not fear or panic, or dread your enemies (Deut. 20:3).
- Do not be discouraged (Josh. 1:9).
- Do not fear or dread the conspiracies everyone else is talking about (Isa. 8:12).
- Do not be dismayed (Isa. 41:10).
- Do not fear the reproach of mere mortals (Isa. 51:7).
- Do not fear disgrace (Isa. 54:4).
- Do not fear a wicked king (Jer. 42:11).
- Do not be afraid when rumors are heard in the land (Jer. 51:46).
- Do not be afraid of rebellious, obstinate, or stubborn people—or their words (Ezek. 2:3–6).
- Do not lose heart (2 Cor. 4:16).
- Do not fear unjust threats (1 Peter 3:14).

And why not fear? Because of who God is and what He does. Just look at a tiny sampling of this truth:

- He strengthens those whose hearts are fully committed to Him (2 Chron. 16:9).
- He makes us bold and stouthearted (Ps. 138:3, niv 1984).
- He is our strength and salvation (Isa. 12:2).
- He strengthens and helps us (Isa. 41:10).
- He goes before, with, and after us (Isa. 52:12).
- He renews us day by day (2 Cor. 4:16).
- He gives us a spirit of power, love, and a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7, kjv).

Reading God's reassuring words encouraged me. But I knew that I would need that encouragement on a regular basis. So I wrote down some of the "do not" reminders on a note card. And then underneath them, I wrote God's promises.

This card sits on my desk, by my laptop where I get most of my news.

I can't stick my head in the sand and ignore what is happening around me. But I can defend myself against alarm, panic, discouragement, and dismay. And what can do that better than the never-changing Word of God?

–CYNTHIA HYLE BEZEK is editorial director for [Community Bible Study](#) and former editor of *Pray!* magazine.

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