

## **Fear and Faith: Same Definition?**

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When faced with a demanding or trying situation, do you respond with fear or with an outlook of faith? Whichever is your answer, do you respond that way by conscious preference or by habit?

Maybe you've never realized that your response is a choice. For some of you, I'm offering that possibility. One of the purposes of my articles is to raise your awareness. Despite the distressing nature of the dilemma you face, you do have the freedom to choose how you respond.

I often share my ideas for potential articles with my wife. I love the interesting conversations we generate. She reminded me that fear is an emotion and often comes upon us unexpectedly. We agree that emotions are like the "check engine" light on the control panel of our car. Our emotions are an indicator of something happening physically, mentally, or spiritually within us--and we should check out what's going on!

We also agree that once we feel that emotion, we do not have to be controlled by the fear, the anger, the guilt, the sadness, or whatever other emotion we feel. Like driving down the highway, we can continue to travel with the indicator light illuminated, or we can check out the light and address the real problem.

Perhaps it will help to realize that the response of both fear and faith is a projection of what we imagine might happen. It was a huge insight for me when I realized that the definition of faith and fear is essentially the same: the belief that what we don't see—or fully know-- will happen.

My habitual outlook, unknowingly learned from my mother, was often fear. It wasn't until my forties that I learned that everything in our world is colored by whatever perspective we've intentionally or inadvertently adopted. If we have a scarcity outlook, we tend to be risk-averse, protective, and often fearful. With an abundance outlook, we tend to be more generous, willing to take risks, and expect a favorable outcome.

Although "faith" is a term typically associated with religion, even non-religious people manifest faith. When you sit in a chair, you have faith it will hold you up; otherwise, you would carefully check the condition of the structure and how firmly the parts are connected. When you pass through a green traffic light, you have faith that those approaching the red light from the cross-street will stop.

Our behaviors and our outlooks are based on the values and beliefs we inherited from our original families, adapted from our peers as we grew, or have chosen consciously as an adult. If our behaviors are not generating the outcomes we desire, we could investigate and consider alternatives, just as we would explore the underlying cause of a "check engine" indicator light in our car.

Our values, including our orientation toward fear or faith, drive our choices. The time to examine our values and beliefs is when we are not under stress. We can examine our history and determine if we want to continue our past habits or make a change. Changing our outlook may not be easy. With the help of a friend or mentor, however, we can identify new preferences and work to respond differently.

These are stressful times. As a leader, be aware that many of those under your authority may welcome the opportunity to talk about their fears or their faith. I suggest that you distribute copies of this article to your team members and allocate some time for them to think and then offer comments and raise questions.

Not knowing the demands facing your organization, I can't predict what interests might be identified. I can promise, however, that if you offer the opportunity, you'll be able to address some potentially distracting energy that you didn't know existed. Listen closely to what each person volunteers. Consider making personal contact later with each individual, offering your support in whatever way he or she might prefer.

Yes, you (and those you influence) have the privilege and ability to respond in faith or fear--make a choice!

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