

# PETE WILSON



BIBLE STUDY



## WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT



# NIGHT?

HOW TO FIND  
PEACE WHILE CHASING  
YOUR DREAMS



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# CONTENTS

4	The Author
5	About This Study
5	How to Get the Most from This Study
6	Tips for Leading a Small Group
8	Week 1: Redefining Fear
28	Week 2: Courage to Trust
48	Week 3: Embracing the Unknown
68	Week 4: Waiting Rooms
88	Week 5: Holy Rhythms
108	Week 6: Living Your Adventure



## THE AUTHOR

Pete Wilson is the founding and senior pastor of Cross Point Church in Nashville, Tennessee, a committed church community that he and his wife, Brandi, planted in 2002. Cross Point has grown to reach more than five thousand people each weekend through its five campuses located around the Nashville area and online.

Cross Point is an outreach ministry focused on helping people become devoted to Christ, irrevocably committed to one another, and relentlessly dedicated to reaching those outside God's family with the gospel. As one of the fastest-growing churches in America, the ministry has made Pete a frequent speaker at national and international church conferences. He gained national attention in 2010 with his best-selling book, *Plan B*.

Pete is an avid blogger ([www.PeteWilson.tv](http://www.PeteWilson.tv)). He also enjoys the outdoors, farming, and Titans football. When he's looking for rest, you can often find Pete working in his garden, hanging out with Brandi, or playing outside with their three sons.



## ABOUT THIS STUDY

Everyone deals with fear. For some of us, fear can become paralyzing. But what if the real problem isn't an overwhelming fear but an underwhelming faith?

My prayer is that over the course of this study, you'll take steps of trust on the path toward God's best for your life; that you'll be granted faith to face the fear that will try to blockade you; that you'll step out of the boat and start walking toward Jesus; and that He will bring into your life the people, resources, and circumstances that will enable you to withstand doubt, opposition, and worry.

## HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS STUDY

### ATTEND EACH GROUP EXPERIENCE.

- Watch the video teaching.
- Participate in the group discussions.

### COMPLETE THE MATERIAL IN THIS BIBLE STUDY BOOK.

Take one step at a time. Each session provides material for group discussion based on the video teaching (organized as Start, Watch, and Respond) and for personal study between sessions (organized as Personal Reflection, Deeper Look, and Now What?) You may want to spread out the personal study by doing one section every other day. Related Scriptures are provided if you'd like something to read each day of the week.

Be honest with yourself and others about your fears, your questions, and your experiences as you study and apply the material.

Ask God to show you His truth about each topic so that you can overcome your fears and embrace the great adventure He's planned for your life.

### OBTAIN AND READ PETE WILSON'S BOOK *WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT?*

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# TIPS FOR LEADING A SMALL GROUP

## PRAYERFULLY PREPARE

Prepare for each meeting by reviewing the weekly material and group questions ahead of time and praying for each person in the group. Ask the Holy Spirit to work through you and the group discussion as you point to Jesus each week through God's Word.

## MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS

Create a comfortable environment. If group members are uncomfortable, they'll be distracted and therefore not engaged in the group experience. Plan ahead by taking into consideration seating, temperature, lighting, food or drink, surrounding noise, and general cleanliness (put away pets if meeting in a home).

At best, thoughtfulness and hospitality show guests and group members they're welcome and valued in whatever environment you choose to gather. At worst, people may never notice your effort, but they're also not distracted. Do everything in your ability to help people focus on what's most important: connecting with God, with the Bible, and with others.

## INCLUDE OTHERS

Your goal is to foster a community in which people are welcome just as they are but encouraged to grow spiritually. Always be aware of opportunities to—

- **INVITE** new people to join your group;
- **INCLUDE** any people who visit the group.

An inexpensive way to make first-time guests feel welcome or to invite someone to get involved is to give them their own copies of this Bible study book.

## ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION

A good small group experience has the following characteristics.

**EVERYONE PARTICIPATES.** Encourage everyone to ask questions, share responses, or read aloud.

**NO ONE DOMINATES—NOT EVEN THE LEADER.** Be sure your time speaking as a leader takes up less than half of your time together as a group. Politely guide discussion if anyone dominates.

**NOBODY IS RUSHED THROUGH QUESTIONS.** Don't feel that a moment of silence is a bad thing. People often need time to think about their responses to questions they've just heard or to gain courage to share what God is stirring in their hearts.

**INPUT IS AFFIRMED AND FOLLOWED UP.** Make sure you point out something true or helpful in a response. Don't just move on. Build community with follow-up questions, asking how other people have experienced similar things or how a truth has shaped their understanding of God and the Scripture you're studying. People are less likely to speak up if they fear that you don't actually want to hear their answers or that you're looking for only a certain answer.

**GOD AND HIS WORD ARE CENTRAL.** Opinions and experiences can be helpful, but God has given us the truth. Trust Scripture to be the authority and God's Spirit to work in people's lives. You can't change anyone, but God can. Continually point people to the Word and to active steps of faith.

## **KEEP CONNECTING**

Think of ways to connect with group members during the week. Participation during the group session is always improved when members spend time connecting with one another outside the group sessions. The more people are comfortable with and involved in one another's lives, the more they'll look forward to being together. When people move beyond being friendly to truly being friends who form a community, they come to each session eager to engage instead of merely attending.

Encourage group members with thoughts, commitments, or questions from the session by connecting through emails, texts, and social media.

When possible, build deeper friendships by planning or spontaneously inviting group members to join you outside your regularly scheduled group time for meals; fun activities; and projects around your home, church, or community.



# WEEK ONE

# REDEFINING FEAR



## START

Welcome to our first session of *What Keeps You Up at Night?*

- What do you do when you're having trouble sleeping at night? Count sheep? Walk around? Eat? Read? Watch TV? Something else?
- What do you hope to get from a study called *What Keeps You Up at Night?*

As we'll see, every one of us has fears in our lives, fears that can keep us up at night, paralyze us, and keep us from becoming all God wants us to be. In this Bible study we'll look at these fears; the effects they have on us; ways people in the Bible faced their fears; and why we can ruthlessly trust God's plan, even in the face of difficulties and uncertainty. Each week we'll identify ways to come to grips with our fears and ways we can trust God in the midst of them.

Let's see what Pete has to say in the first video session about our fears.



## WATCH

Use the space below to follow along and take notes as you watch video session 1.

**Fear is a thief.**

**Fear: a heightened sense of vulnerability and a diminished sense of power**

**You always combat fear with faith.**

**The goal is not to fear less but to trust God more.**

Scriptures: Matthew 9:2,22; 10:31; Mark 5:36; Luke 5:10; 8:50; 12:4,32; John 6:20;  
Genesis 37:24; 39:2,13-21; 40:14,23; 41:9-13; 50:19-20

Video sessions available for purchase  
at [www.lifeway.com/upatnight](http://www.lifeway.com/upatnight)

## RESPOND

Use the statements and questions below to discuss the video.

Pete identified some of the things he fears most in life, things like blowing an important decision or failing to be the husband and father God wants him to be. So let's begin by responding to his question:

What are a couple of things in life that you fear most?

Pete defined *fear* as *a heightened sense of vulnerability and a diminished sense of power*.

Have you ever thought of fear this way?

In what ways is this definition helpful?

Pete said, "Scripture tells us that if you have fear in your life—and we all do—it's not that you have a fear problem; it's that you have a faith problem. The goal is not to live a fear-free life. Our goal is to learn to trust God more."

How did you feel about that statement? Why?

How does it make you feel to know that Jesus cares about your fears, so much so that he often encouraged us, "Do not be afraid," "Have courage," or "Take heart"?

The recurring pattern of Joseph's life involved going from one dire situation to another. Yet Scripture repeatedly says the Lord was with Joseph, and he prospered.

In what ways can you personally relate to Joseph's experiences?

Where are you right now in your life? In the bottom of a figurative cistern or jail cell, in the palace, or somewhere in between?

Pete stressed that instead of focusing on his problems and fears, Joseph focused on God. One example is after Joseph was falsely accused and then thrown into an Egyptian prison. The Bible says:

The LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him. He granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. The warden did not bother with anything under Joseph's authority, because the LORD was with him, and the LORD made everything that he did successful.

**GENESIS 39:21,23**

What did you learn from Joseph about keeping your focus on God even in the midst of difficult situations?

Finally, Joseph was able to look back over all his circumstances and see what God was doing all along. He told his brothers:

You planned evil against me; God planned it for good.

**GENESIS 50:20**

Pete made the point that clarity often comes only in hindsight.

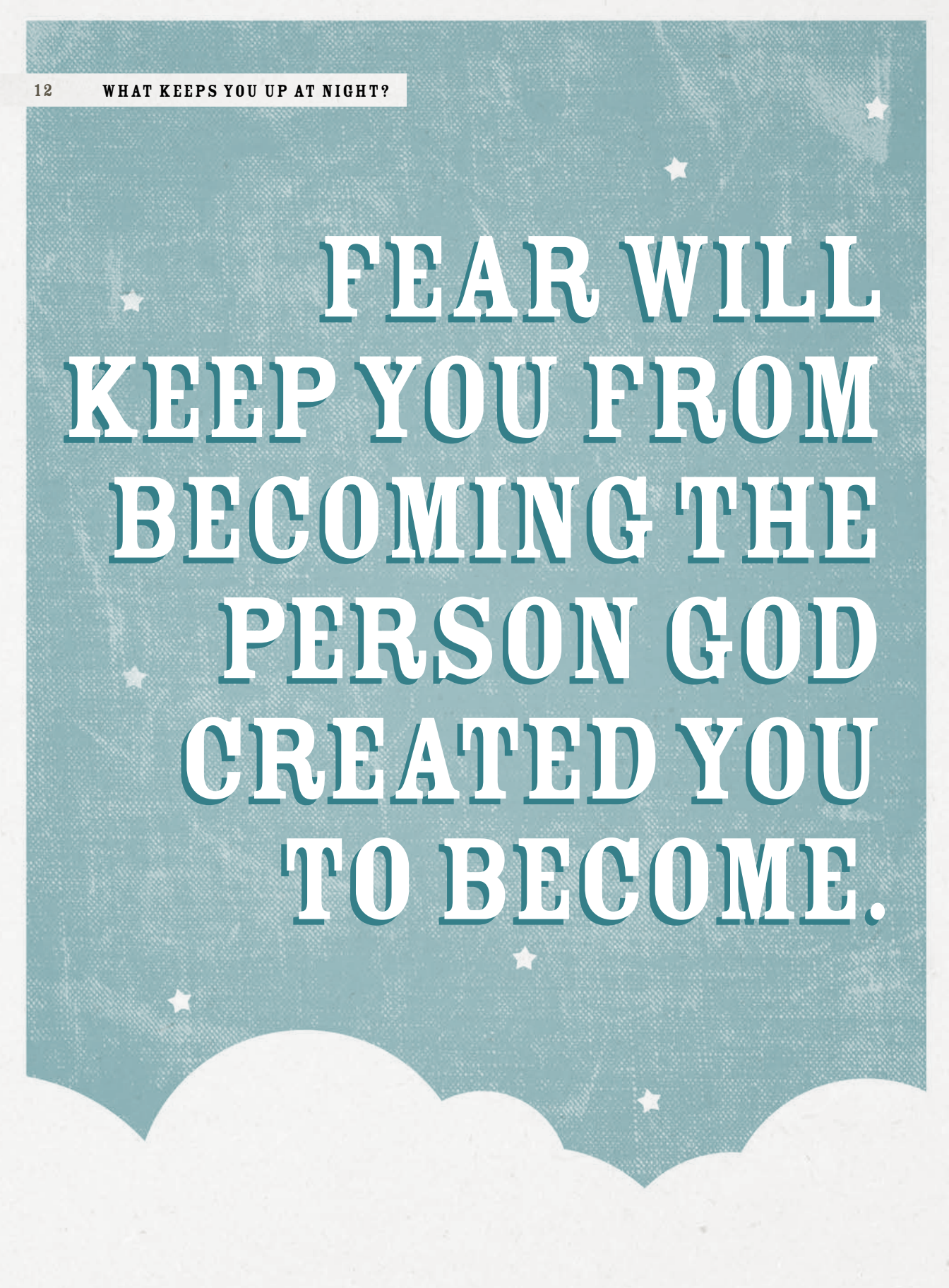
As you look back over situations in your past, how do you now see God's involvement that you didn't see at the time?

How does that insight help you trust God today?

This week watch for situations in which you might normally tend to focus your attention on your problems and fears. Notice when you begin to feel that way. What are you doing? Where are you at the time? Whom are you with, or are you alone? What prompts you to begin to feel fear—a heightened sense of vulnerability and a diminished sense of power? Intentionally notice of where that fear comes from. Then try to hold on to Jesus' words: "Have courage." "Take heart." "Do not be afraid."

Complete the personal study for week 1 before the next group experience.





FEAR WILL  
KEEP YOU FROM  
BECOMING THE  
PERSON GOD  
CREATED YOU  
TO BECOME.

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

We must start this time of personal reflection by simply acknowledging, “I fear.” We all fear. And we should also recognize right up front that this fear is a dirty enemy; it doesn’t fight fair. It finds our soft spots, our weak links, and mercilessly exploits them. It whispers lies in our ears at night and saps our strength in the morning.

Even for mighty King David—“a man after [God’s] own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14, NASB), the same guy who as a boy slew Goliath, the warrior-king who had unbridled trust and confidence in God—the natural reaction was to feel fear in the midst of overwhelming circumstances. On one such occasion he wrote:

My heart shudders within me;  
terrors of death sweep over me.  
Fear and trembling grip me;  
horror has overwhelmed me.  
I said, “If only I had wings like a dove!  
I would fly away and find rest.  
How far away I would flee;  
I would stay in the wilderness.”

**PSALM 55:4-7**

So what keeps you up at night? In the group session you were asked to share one of your fears. Perhaps that took courage for you to admit a particular fear publicly. Now think about any fears that are more difficult for you to talk about openly.

**List five or six of your worst fears—things that have the power to rob your life of joy, happiness, and hope.**

**What’s your biggest fear? Circle it or add it to your list.**

Select the consequences of fear that affect you most seriously.

- ☐ Fear steals my joy in the present and robs me of my hope for the future.
- ☐ Fear causes me to obsess on myself and my limitations instead of seeing all the possibilities that are available.
- ☐ Fear keeps me from connecting with other people.
- ☐ Fear prevents me from allowing myself to trust.
- ☐ Fear erodes my faith and confidence, preventing me from daring to do what God has called me to do.
- ☐ Fear paralyzes me; it keeps me from letting go of the things that feel secure in my life in order to reach out and take risks.
- ☐ Fear deceives me into seeking safety when I was actually created to embrace life as an adventure.
- ☐ Fear causes my vision to get skewed by my circumstances, and I start to see things inaccurately. Often I see things that don't even exist!
- ☐ Fear disorients me. It causes me to fight nonexistent enemies; it causes me to focus on the wrong things.

Identify a recent example of at least one of these consequences of fear.

When you consider your fears and their consequences in your life, where are you focusing your attention—on the fears or on God? Circle the number on the scale below that reflects your current focus.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Fear/problems/consequences									God

Why did you assign yourself that score?



Wherever you happen to be on this scale at the moment, give yourself some grace. The important thing at this point is to simply know where you are and to make an honest assessment of your current condition.

**When do you most often sense fear in your life? Identify specific situations. For instance, are you with people or alone? Do certain people or situations trigger this fear?**

Your fears are real; there's no doubt about that. But know that your worries and fears don't have to keep you from moving forward. The important thing isn't that you fear something; it's that you have a God bigger than anything you fear.

### **OPEN YOUR BIBLE AND HIGHLIGHT PSALM 23:4.**

*With your Bible still open to Psalm 23, take a few moments to pray as this verse prompts you. Tell God, your Shepherd, that even though you're walking through this dark valley, you'll turn these fears over to Him, acknowledging that He's with you and that He will comfort you in the midst of your difficult circumstances.*

## **DAILY SCRIPTURES**

### **DAY 1**

Psalm 23

### **DAY 2**

Psalm 13:1-6

### **DAY 3**

John 14:27

### **DAY 4**

Philippians 4:4-8

### **DAY 5**

1 John 4:18



**YOU PLANNED EVIL  
AGAINST ME;  
GOD PLANNED IT  
FOR GOOD TO BRING  
ABOUT THE PRESENT  
RESULT—THE  
SURVIVAL OF  
MANY PEOPLE.**

**GENESIS 50:20**

## DEEPER LOOK

Now that you've honestly confronted the brutal facts about the fears you face and the consequences they bring about in your life, it's time to look at what God's Word has to say about facing your fears. The Bible is full of people who struggled with some of the same fearful circumstances you face.

Joseph was a man of God, yet he endured his share of difficulties and dangers. At one point in his story, Joseph was in an Egyptian prison, having been unjustly accused by his boss's wife (see Gen. 39:7-20). As you'll see, Joseph was given an opportunity to be set free from his wrongful imprisonment.

## READ GENESIS 40.

**Imagine that you're Joseph at the end of the events in this chapter. What would you think and feel in verse 23?**

**After all Joseph had been through in his life so far, what do you think kept him from giving up? (See 39:21 for at least one idea.)**

Think of a situation you've been in that's comparable to Joseph's—when you were treated unfairly, for example, or when you were simply in a figurative dungeon because of your circumstances. Perhaps you prayed, asking God for just this one thing: that you'd feel better, that the relationship would be restored, that you'd get the job, that you'd find someone to love, or whatever that one thing was for you. But you didn't get an immediate answer. You were stuck where you were with no visible hope for a change in the situation.

**Briefly describe that situation and the way it felt to you at the time.**



### How did you respond to God during that time?

At the end of Genesis 40, Joseph was in prison, having interpreted the dreams of his two cellmates, who'd been released. Joseph was hoping their releases would give him the opportunity to get out of the dungeon himself, but the chief baker was put to death, and the chief cupbearer returned to his position as Pharaoh's servant and forgot all about Joseph and his ability to interpret dreams. One day the chief cupbearer overheard Pharaoh telling his magicians and wise men about a couple of odd, troubling dreams he'd had, but the Egyptian experts couldn't interpret them (see 41:8). Suddenly the cupbearer had a flashback: "There was this guy I was in prison with who was great at interpreting dreams. In fact, he's the reason I'm your cupbearer again today. Oops, sorry I forgot about him. My fault."

They gave Joseph a quick shave and bath, threw some new clothes on him, and brought him to the palace, where he accurately interpreted Pharaoh's dreams.

When you read the whole story of Joseph's life (see 37–50), it's not hard to see God at work. In this particular story God used all the circumstances, even the ones that seemed bad at the time, to bring Joseph to a place where God could use him in extraordinary ways. If the cupbearer had remembered Joseph two years earlier, Joseph may not have been readily available to be called in to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. If the cupbearer hadn't remembered Joseph at this particular time, none of this would have happened. God is in charge of all the circumstances in our lives.

**Turn back to Genesis 40:8; 41:16 and highlight Joseph's responses. What do these verses tell you about Joseph's character?**

**READ GENESIS 41:28-45.**

**Joseph went beyond what he was asked to do: interpret a dream. He actually advised Pharaoh, providing a 14-year plan for the kingdom. What gave Joseph such boldness to tell Pharaoh what he should do?**

Joseph's faith and trust in God were finally rewarded. But remember that his clarity came only in hindsight. During those two years of waiting, Joseph kept his eyes on God, not on the seeming hopelessness of his situation. He didn't run ahead of God but waited for God's blessings.

**How have you seen people, perhaps yourself, possibly miss out on God's blessings by not waiting for Him during difficult life circumstances? Think of a difficult marriage or job situation, for instance.**

**What have you learned from Joseph about keeping your focus on God rather than on your circumstances and your fears during a trying situation, even during a long time of waiting?**

*We've defined fear as a heightened sense of vulnerability and a diminished sense of power. Like Joseph, when you focus on God rather than your fears, you find confidence in trusting that He's in control.*

**When you trust God, do you feel more or less vulnerable? Why?**

I can focus my attention on my problems, I can focus my attention on my fear, or I can focus on God.

**When you stay focused on God, do you feel more or less in control over situations? How does your relationship with God change your need for control?**

It's one thing to wait a couple weeks or months for God to respond in our painful circumstances; it's another thing to wait years as Joseph did. King David was also familiar with waiting for God to work on his behalf during dire situations.

**READ PSALM 6:3; 13:1-4.**

**What was the one thing David asked God for in these passages?**

**What was David feeling as he called out to God? Record the emotional words you see in these verses.**

**What do you think about the brutally honest way David talked to God? Does praying to our holy, sovereign Lord in that manner seem disrespectful to you? Why or why not?**

When you read other psalms by David and the historical books about his life, it's clear that he had the utmost respect and rightful awe for Almighty God (see Ps. 96:1-10 for one example). At the same time, David had a personal relationship with God that allowed, even demanded, total honesty. David knew he could pour out his real thoughts and undisguised feelings to God because he knew Him and trusted Him. We can't hide our true thoughts and feelings from God anyway, so why try to camouflage them when we pray?



READ PSALM 13:5-6.

In your Bible underline or highlight the first word (*but*) in verse 5. Why is that word significant?

Circle the action words in these two verses. Despite David's strong feelings in the midst of his troubles, how did he decide to respond?

What gave David the ability to trust, rejoice, and sing in his pain?

What do you learn about a relationship with God as you see people like Joseph and David deal with long-term struggles in their lives?

*Close your Bible-study time with prayer. Use David's prayer in Psalm 13:1-6 as a template for your own prayer. Begin by simply telling God how you feel about the circumstance you're going through. Then use the word but to make a transition, turning your focus to God and His faithfulness, His faithful love, and His generosity to you.*

**COMPLETE CLARITY  
COMES ONLY IN  
RETROSPECT AND  
EVEN THEN ONLY  
AFTER TRUSTING  
GOD FOR ALL  
WE CAN'T SEE.**

## NOW WHAT?

So far you've evaluated your fears and the consequences of those fears in your life. You've studied the Bible to see examples of ways God's people responded to paralyzing fear. Now it's time to apply those biblical patterns to the way you live each day.

### READ PSALM 121.

Highlight the words used to describe God in this passage.

Now use those words to complete the following sentences.

God, You are my ...

And You are my ...

Thank You for being my ...

What specific promises in this passage can you take hold of?

What does it mean to lift your eyes (see v. 1)?

From what are you lifting your eyes? What fear or false source of security has held your attention?

What will you do to lift your eyes and keep them focused on God?

Psalm 121 is one of 15 psalms collected as songs of ascents, which Jewish pilgrims sang as they traveled, or ascended, to Jerusalem to celebrate seasonal feasts. The journey had its share of dangers and hardships along steep and winding roadways. These songs reminded the people to look beyond their current circumstances to God, who was their Protector. Unfaithful Jews worshiped false gods in shrines in the high places on the hills, so this song also reminded the faithful to look beyond those idols to the one true God, the Maker of heaven and earth.

To lift our eyes today means to shift our focus from our own fears and circumstances, as well from as the idols of this world that we sometimes look to for security. As the apostle Paul wrote:

We do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen.  
For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

**2 CORINTHIANS 4:18**

Psalm 121 reminds us to look up from our fears and circumstances to God, our eternal Creator and Protector.

How do we do that? It takes practice—spiritual practice. Those who are most successful at staying focused on God in the midst of troubles are those who spend time with God daily, reading His Word and talking with Him in prayer.

### How will you practice lifting your eyes to God?

Our ultimate source of help is the Lord. He works through other people in our lives. He works in the midst of our circumstances and the fears that threaten to paralyze us. He's always working, providing help even when we can't see it at the time.

Even Jesus' disciples had to learn to lift their eyes beyond their current circumstances. They faced many fears as they walked with Jesus for three years. At times they seemed to be learning the lesson as they watched Jesus display His awesome power over disease, nature, and even death. But then the next minute they'd face a storm and once again be gripped with fear. Their experience probably sounds familiar to many Christians walking with Jesus today.



Shortly after Jesus' resurrection the disciples were hiding out together when Jesus walked in to change their perspective for good.

### READ JOHN 20:19-22.

**What fears were the disciples experiencing?**

**Where did their help come from?**

**What did Jesus do to calm their fears?**

Of course, the source of the disciples' fears didn't disappear; the religious leaders who'd killed Jesus were still around. But after this encounter with their risen Lord, the disciples stepped out of those fears and courageously stepped into the risky adventure of spreading the gospel.

**What made the difference in their lives?**

Peace I leave with  
you. My peace I  
give to you. I do not  
give to you as the  
world gives. Your  
heart must not be  
troubled or fearful.

John 14:27

*As you end your study time, use John 20:19-22 to compose your own prayer. Think again about your greatest fear and its consequences in your life. Ask Jesus to step into the room where you are now and into the middle of that fear. Hear Him say to you, "Peace to you!" (vv. 19,21). In prayer respond to His offer of peace.*







## WEEK TWO

# COURAGE TO TRUST



### START

At the end of group session 1, we were encouraged to watch for situations during the week when we might focus attention on our fears rather than on God.

- Did you notice a particular area where you were most prone to be afraid?
- What happened when you remembered Jesus' words not to fear and to take heart?
- What insights did you learn about fear, about yourself, or about God as you completed your personal study of week 1?

In session 1 we saw that the presence of fear isn't the problem; a lack of faith is. Learning to trust God is the keystone on which everything else rests. But what is trust? And how can we trust a God we can't see?

In the video for this session, Pete focuses on a person in the Bible whose life exemplifies trust: Joshua. We'll look to him as an example of how we too can live in such a way that our faith is bigger than our fears.

## WATCH

Use the space below to follow along and take notes as you watch video session 2.

**What fuels fear is when I take my eyes off God's love for me.**

**Depending on God isn't the absence of strength but the presence of courage.**

**It's on the other side of fear that freedom lies.**

**You are inwardly fashioned for faith, not for fear.**

Scriptures: Psalm 121; Numbers 13:27,30-33; Exodus 33:8-11; Joshua 1:5; 3; 4:4-9;  
Deuteronomy 31:6,8

## RESPOND

Use the statements and questions below to discuss the video.

Like Pete, many of us have probably seen God's faithfulness in the past, but for some reason we forget about it and clutch something in life we feel is secure.

When have you allowed fear to paralyze you? What were the circumstances? How did you view God's faithfulness at that time?

What do you think are the biggest barriers to letting go of your perceived control and putting your trust in God?

Discuss the following ways Pete described trust. How would you explain each, or how have you experienced each to be true?

Depending on God isn't the absence of strength but the presence of courage.

Trust isn't primarily a state of mind or the ability to think positive.

Trust isn't a blind leap into the unknown but the opposite. It ultimately depends on the type of knowledge that comes only with long acquaintance and intimate understanding.

There are two prevalent worldviews of what it means to trust. In the first we're in control of our own destiny. In the second God is in control; He's the only one we can ultimately trust.

Let's work together to create a one-sentence definition of *trust* that we can use over the next five weeks. How would you define *trust*?

Read aloud Joshua 1:1-9. What themes are evident in these verses?



Joshua is a great biblical example of what it means to trust God. When others were afraid, Joshua's trust in God propelled him forward; he knew the people could certainly do what others thought was impossible.

**What do you think gave Joshua that kind of trust in God?**

Joshua was ready to finally lead the people across the river and into the promised land. But there was a problem: the Jordan River was at flood stage. At this point the crossing of the Jordan must have looked like a bad idea to the Israelites. Clearly, the people didn't have the resources they needed to overcome the obstacle to their quest.

**If you'd been in that crowd that day, what would you have said to the person next to you?**

**What fears would have risen up in you?**

In the video Pete used the illustration of rock climbing to describe living our lives and growing in our relationship with God; many people have given up on progress and have settled for not falling. He mentioned that some things in life we tend to hold on to, things that feel safe to us, are merely illusions of control. Consider how you've experienced that reality in your life.

**What motivates you to trust those things more than God?**

**What would you be giving up if you decided to let them go?**

**What fear would you need to step into?**

**What would you gain in the long run?**

Each day between now and the next group session, identify times when you sense that you're settling for just not falling or, like the Israelites, staying in the desert you know rather than going into an unknown promised land. Think about the things you tend to hold on to tightly as objects of your control.

Complete the personal study for week 2 before the next group experience.