

ME AND MY INSECURITIES, part 1

What About Me?

By Rev. Will Nelken

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Financial instability... famine and disease... casualties of war... terrorism... threat of nuclear war... is it any wonder that many people are worried, fearful, anxious, stressed out?

Sometimes it feels like everyone is looking at you suspiciously. At other times, it feels like no one even cares.

Do you ever feel like you're in a race? Our society moves at an extraordinary pace, especially here in the Bay Area. It may seem hectic to you even while sitting in your office chair!

Social expectations generate heavy demands for our time and achievement.

Rapid population growth due to immigration may leave you feeling like a stranger in a strange land.

At times, you may feel like life as we have known it is coming apart.

The scariest day in your life may be when you receive a visit from an agent of the ICC (Insecurity and Change Commission). "Change" is the watchword of our day—from social customs to computer technology—and it produces insecurity.

Insecurity is the result of harboring fear in our hearts.

The four most common categories of fear are:

- Fear of lack
- Fear of conflict
- Fear of loss
- Fear of punishment

Inevitably, everybody deals with these fears. We develop various ways of dealing with them—usually ineffectively. But God offers real answers to the fears you face. Let me illustrate his answer to your fear of lack.

Got Storage?

I could live in a shack or a tent (as long as it had high-speed Internet access), I have fasted for 40 days and nights twice, but at the dinner table I still wonder, Will there be enough of my favorite food for me?

Typically, we deal with this fear by accumulating things—lots of things. We fill our countertops and closets, then we fill our garages, then we rent extra storage—just to keep all of those things close-at-hand.

Jesus told the story of a man who had fertile fields that produced great crops. First, he built himself a barn to store his grain, but there his field produced more than his barn could hold, so he built another, larger barn. Once he stored all his grain away, he lay down to sleep and said to himself, "Now,

I can take it easy, because I have so much.” But God also had something to say. He said, “You fool! You have accumulated so much for yourself, but today is the last day of your life.” He died in his sleep that night.

Solomon, the wise king of the Old Testament, lamented that after working hard to accumulate much, ultimately we would have to yield it to another who had not worked for it.

You cannot take it with you!

Me First

A famine once spread across the Middle East. The food in the village of Zarephath had almost completely run out, just as the man of God (the prophet Elijah) arrived there. God had sent him there with this promise: *“There is a widow there who will feed you. I have given her my instructions.”*

¹ *Kings 17:10 As he arrived at the gates of the village, he saw a widow gathering sticks, and he asked her, “Would you please bring me a little water in a cup?”*

¹¹ *As she was going to get it, he called to her, “Bring me a bite of bread, too.”*

¹² *But she said, “I swear by the Lord your God that I don’t have a single piece of bread in the house. And I have only a handful of flour left in the jar and a little cooking oil in the bottom of the jug. I was just gathering a few sticks to cook this last meal, and then my son and I will die.”*

What a pitiful scene! She is resigned to her fate. She desires only to die with dignity, both she and her son.

¹³ *But Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid! Go ahead and do just what you’ve said, but make a little bread for me first. Then use what’s left to prepare a meal for yourself and your son.”*

What?!? How callous! How can he ask her to serve him when she is in such a desperate condition? Has he no compassion?

Indeed he did, though you may not read it in his words. Remember, he was acting on a promise from God.

¹⁴ *“For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There will always be flour and olive oil left in your containers until the time when the Lord sends rain and the crops grow again!”*

She trusted God, too.

¹⁵ *So she did as Elijah said, and she and Elijah and her son continued to eat for many days.* ¹⁶ *There was always enough flour and olive oil left in the containers, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah.*

We offset our fear of lack by greed. Me first, until I have all that I want and all that I can imagine I might need.

But God’s answer is to give instead.

Living to Give

We read last week, in Ephesians 4:

Ephesians 4:28 If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need.

Instead of taking for yourself or accumulating for yourself, work toward having enough to give away. This, my friends, is the aim of work. This is why God has provided you a job. Not simply to feed your face or your cravings, but to enable you to become a Giver.

Jesus taught it plainly:

Luke 6:38 Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.”

Richard Wurmbrand, spent many years in Communist prisons for his faith in Jesus Christ. He once sat on this platform to tell his story. He said, “I have seen Christians in communist prisons with 50 pounds of chains on their feet, tortured with red-hot iron pokers, in whose throats spoonfuls of salt had been forced, being kept afterward without water, starving, whipped, suffering from cold, and praying with fervor for the communists. ... Afterward, the communists came to prison too.

“Now the tortured and the torturers were in the same cell. And while the non-Christians beat the communist prisoners (their former torturers), Christians took their defense. I have seen Christians giving away their last slice of bread (we had at that time one slice a week) and the medicine which could save their lives to a sick communist torturer who was now a fellow-prisoner.”

Though it may be contrary to human nature, it is in keeping with the Holy Spirit of Jesus, who now lives in you. Though your mind clamors to prop up your life with things and stuff, your heart will only find freedom and joy in giving your life away a little at a time, secure in the fact that God is able to provide all that you need, according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Trust the Giver

The answer to fearing there will not be enough is not found in striving to get more or hoarding what you have, but in purposefully trusting God, who made you and has vowed to take care of you and giving to those whose need is urgent.

Psalms 23:1 Yahweh is my shepherd: I shall lack nothing. (WEB)

Psalms 34:10 Those who trust in the Lord will never lack any good thing.

Proverbs 28:27 Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing.

God has designed a program of spontaneous sharing that will meet each one's need:

Titus 3:14 Our people should not have unproductive lives. They must learn to do good by helping others who have urgent needs.

2 Corinthians 8:14 Right now you have plenty and can help them. Then at some other time they can share with you when you need it. In this way, everyone's needs will be met.

Put your trust in God. Just when you sense the fear of lack creeping up, turn to God and declare that you will trust Him in spite of the circumstances and feelings of insecurity.

Trust in His eternality (He knows the future, including yours). Trust in His goodness, His kindness toward you. Trust in His care, His promise to provide. Trust in His power, and His ability to act on your behalf.

Next week, we'll consider God's answer to the fear of conflict.