

“Be Not Afraid”

“Be not afraid” is a phrase that appears frequently in the Bible and still speaks to us today. When those in power use fear to manipulate and control, causing abuse, violence, and oppression, it can be challenging for us to live and act in accord with Quaker values. Living in a time of fear can corrode our ability to listen and respond to the Spirit.

Early Friends were persecuted for practicing their faith. They showed love and courage in the face of public ridicule, confiscation of property, arrest and imprisonment, and sometimes death. Although Friends today are blessed with the freedom to worship openly, examples of the courageous witness of early Friends are an inspiration for us facing oppressive social and political conditions.

Fear can be a healthy and useful response, for instance when it prompts Friends to pay attention and take precautions for the safety of themselves, their loved ones, and others. Fear is an instinctive reaction that can mean literal survival in some circumstances. Fear can also become problematic.

Fear – and the sense of vulnerability it often brings – can separate us from each other and from God. It can cloud our judgment and diminish our abilities to discern, learn, and grow. As each of us grows in the Spirit, we are called to let go of our fears: of making mistakes; of not being approved of; of needs going unmet; of conflict, illness, loneliness, and diminishment; and of not being perfect (or even good enough). We cannot avoid our fears by attempting to control people to make things turn out the way we want.

Living in the Spirit within a supportive, faithful fellowship gives us courage and guidance to let our lives speak, even when we are afraid, and helps us turn toward each other and toward the Light. When fear threatens our resolve, God’s love comforts and strengthens us. When we trust our Inner Guide, we can walk through our fears and come out in love.

Advices & Queries – “Be Not Afraid”

Courage is a fundamental act of faith.

As Friends we examine our fears and have the courage to release those that prevent us from growing in the Spirit and following our Guide. As we continue letting go of our fears and following the motions of love, we are led into a new, more abundant and joy-filled life. Although this life is not always free of pain, it is graced with a courage that will endure any adversity.

We ask those in authority to employ their power to reconcile and unify us, rather than to exploit fear to divide us.

It takes courage to reach out to those who are creating fear *and* to those who are controlled by fear. We work to restore harmony through peacemaking and reconciliation based in mutual love. Disharmony is a manifestation of fear; it results in separation from God, from ourselves, from our fellow human beings, and from all of creation.

- How does fear influence our lives? Are our decisions based on fear, or do we trust the Spirit’s urging toward love and reconciliation? How do we let go of our fears, trusting the Spirit, so that we can restore peace in our meetings and communities?
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- Do we encourage each other through love to act in faithful witness? How do we identify and confront fears that deceive, enslave, and stop us from living faithfully?
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- In times of trial and terror how can we open our hearts, return to God’s love, and move forward with courage?
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- What would we do, as individuals and as a community, if we were not afraid?