

UNIT III

FEAR



Pressure is not new to us. (can have a discussion on the most pressure filled moment or something similar to warm them up.)

Pressure can have at least 2 faces

- a) the desire to be excellent for the sake of being excellent or for the sake of God's glory
- b) the desire to be excellent for the purpose of being viewed and honored as great
 - i. here we run into the *fear of failure* – this causes a negative pressure

How would you describe the fear of failure? Have any of you felt the fear of failure before?

What does fear do to us?

Makes us play small on the field, perform small in the classroom, paralyze us, etc.

Read Mt 26:69-7. “Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a maid came up to him, and said, ‘You also were with Jesus the Galilean.’ But he denied it before them all, saying, ‘I do not know what you mean.’ And when he went out to the porch, another maid saw him, and she said to the bystanders, ‘This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.’ And again he denied it with an oath, ‘I do not know the man.’ After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, ‘Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.’ Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, ‘I do not know the man.’ And immediately the cock crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, ‘Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.’ And he went out and wept bitterly.”

What did fear do to St. Peter?

What are your fears as student-athletes?

Ken Ravizza found that in the experience of athletes during their “greatest moment” in sports, 80% said they felt no fear of failure and were immersed in the activity.

Sometimes when we fear failure and “play small”, we stop risking greatness. One way to fight this: be “task-conscious” rather than “self-conscious”. (Simply put, this means focusing on the actual task before you rather than yourself and what others might think, etc.)

Why are we often so self-conscious when we compete? How does being “task-conscious” help overcome fear of failure?

Identity – Do you guys feel better about yourself when you succeed?

We often find our worth in our achievements. This is a leading cause of our fear of failure. Who we are is not defined or measured by our success or failure. In other words – PUT IT IN PERSPECTIVE.

What are some ways we can “take advantage” of failure? Discuss with the story below.

“Jim Marshall, former defensive player for the Minnesota Vikings, relates what could easily have made him into a failure. In a game against the San Francisco 49ers, Marshall spotted the football on the ground. He scooped it up and ran for a touchdown as the crowd cheered. But he ran the wrong way. He scored for the wrong team and on national television.

“It was the most devastating moment of his life. The shame was overpowering. But during halftime, he thought, ‘If you make a mistake, you got to make it right. I realized I had a choice. I could sit in my misery or I could do something about it.’ Pulling himself together for the second half, he played some of his best football ever and contributed to his team’s victory.

“Nor did he stop there. He spoke to groups. He answered letters that poured in from people who finally had the courage to admit their own shameful experiences. He heightened his concentration during games. Instead of letting the experience define him, he took control of it. He used it to become a better player and, he believes, a better person.” (Carol Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, page 33-34.)

CHRISTIAN LIVING

Read Matthew 14:26-33. “But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out for fear. But immediately he spoke to them, saying, ‘Take heart, it is I; have no fear.’ And Peter answered him, ‘Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water.’ He said, ‘Come.’ So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus; but when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, ‘Lord, save me.’ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, ‘O man of little faith, why did you doubt?’ And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God.’”

This passage speaks a lot into trust, and Jesus’ command to “be not afraid” also challenges us to be courageous.

How might fear affect our relationship with God?

We can start to doubt His goodness, we can become bitter, we can make bad decisions cause we take things into our own hands, etc.

What do we have to fear as Christian people? Nothing. **What do we fear though?** Death, suffering, embarrassment, failure, loss, etc.

As Christians, we should be a people of hope! *“It is not that they know the details of what awaits them, but they know in general terms that their life will not end in emptiness.”* Benedict XVI

What would a life ending in emptiness look like? Have you ever had moments where you felt empty?

If we hope in the reality that our life will never be empty with Jesus Christ, we have no reason to fear. That is why Scripture tells us to “be not afraid” about 365 times. It reminds us that we were not made for this life, but the life to come.

Let’s discuss the following quote from Pope Benedict XVI: *“The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life.”*

What does this new life look like? Why should courage be a fundamental mark of a Christian?

Why is it hard to hope at times? Because we suffer.

When we suffer, it can be hard to believe good will come which will supersede the suffering. Our Holy Father continues:

“It is important to know that I can always continue to hope, even if in my own life, or the historical period in which I am living, there seems to be nothing left to hope for. Only the great certitude of hope that my own life and history in general, despite all failures, are held firm by the indestructible power of Love, and that this gives them their meaning and importance, only this kind of hope can then give the courage to act and to persevere.”

When we become certain that God, who is pure Love, holds all things in His hands, and begin to trust Him, we will be courageous. Do you remember when you were a child, or have you seen other children run and jump into a pool towards their father, confident he will catch them? That is an action based off great trust and hope. Similarly, when we can begin to hope in the God who made us, we will have a similar “courageousness” to the way we act!

If we are truly striving to serve the Lord, is failure possible?

- Sin, or choosing something counter to God’s will, is the only way we can “fail”. This only becomes true failure if we do not repent. If we sin, but get back up and seek forgiveness, there is no lasting failure.
- God doesn’t judge us based off of our accomplishments but instead off our love.

If we love at every moment, we cannot fail. Don’t fail today by choosing to fear tomorrow.

Read Acts 4:1-21 (If you have the time and feel this would bring the point home, then read it. The text is not included here due to the length.)

How is St. Peter now courageous?

Challenge – Spend 15 minutes in contemplative prayer.

“How can one abandon oneself to God and have confidence in Him if one only knows Him from a distance, by hearsay? The heart does not awaken to confidence until it awakens to love; we need to feel the gentleness and the tenderness of the Heart of Jesus. This cannot be obtained except by the habit of meditative prayer, by this tender repose in God which is contemplative.”

- Jacques Philippe