

## FEAR LESS FOR LIFE

By Paul Meier, MD

When terrorists struck the Twin Towers of New York City on 9-11-01, I was stunned like the rest of America and the world. I heard about it while driving to work. Our staff prayed for the victims, their families, our country, and our awesome President, George Bush. Being from Texas, where he had been our governor, we all knew he would handle it wisely and consider it a challenge he was destined by God to accept. In hindsight, I think God even wanted Bush to win the election in a difficult way to toughen him up for this terrorist challenge.

On 9-11, I stayed up late watching Fox News and woke up the next morning with so much grief and fear that my muscles were very tense and I could barely breathe comfortably. I've never had a panic attack, but being a psychiatrist, I've seen hundreds of them and I knew I was on the brink of one. Since I was a lifelong student of Bible prophecy (I've written *The Third Millennium* and three other novels based on Bible prophecy), I knew more than most Americans about the horrible things terrorists could easily do to our air, water, dams, nuclear power plants, etc. I have a friend who was working as a terrorist expert for the U.S. Navy, and he assured me that my "terrorist paranoia" was actually in sight.

Jesus promised in Matthew 24 that after the "fig tree" (probably Israel) "buds forth" (Israel became a nation in 1948), the generation that followed would see more and more earthquakes, signs in the heavens, and more and more ethnic groups making war with other ethnic groups. Of course, good, scholarly Christians have a wide variety of ways to interpret Matthew 24. No one (not even me!) can be dogmatic. But putting 9-11 in context with my own guesses about Bible prophecy and my knowledge of potential future terrorist acts gave me a somewhat different perspective.

I was actually shocked that acts like 9-11 have not happened sooner. I have been equally shocked that at the time of writing this article, even greater terrorist acts have not been committed in America. One pilot with a small, one-prop plane could drop one bag of disease-causing material on a windy day over a large city and wipe out hundreds of thousands even if the disease didn't spread from person to person after that.

Short time after 9-11, Thomas Nelson Publishers asked me to co-write a book entitled *Fear Less for Life* to help Americans deal not only with 9-11 but all kinds of fear, anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive perfectionism and panic attacks. So I did, and it was finally completed and released in October 2002.

In researching for the book and through information from my clinics around the country, we found that:

1. People who had a strong faith in God's ultimate sovereignty and love fared better than those who see this life as "all there is."
2. People who can admit their fears, anger, sadness and other emotions also fared better.
3. People who have a strong support group (close family, healthy church life, and intimate friends who know all their secrets and love them anyway) also fared better. Because of this, I co-authored a book on the art of biblically loving and being loved entitled *Unbreakable Bonds* (Baker Book House, September 2002). James 5:16 says that if we confess our faults one to another, we will be healed. We see this in our Dallas Day Program over and over again. People come from around the world to spend six hours a day for three weeks confessing faults and unresolved grief to a small group of other clients and therapists. It

causes profound healing in a short time, as the Bible promises. Still, though, some individuals take longer to heal than others.

4. People who grew up in open, loving, healthy families fared better than people did with various kinds of emotional, physical or sexual abuse in their childhood. The terrorist acts of 9-11 caused painful flashbacks, nightmares, and panic attacks in people who had been terrorized by their own private “Osama Bin Ladens” (mean, selfish parents, rapists, and various other “jerks”) in their pasts.
5. Non-perfectionists fared better than perfectionists did. Some people are born with more perfectionism. Any changes, better or worse, tend to upset extreme perfectionists who like everything to be in a safe routine they can count on to have no surprises. Others are not born perfectionists, but become excessively so (some perfectionism is good for you) because of childhood abuses.

The more out-of-control you feel growing up (alcoholic, abusive parent, controlling parent, etc.), the more controlling and perfectionistic you naturally become to compensate for your fears. For example, in most families the mom and dad have limited insight into their own faults, so they get more abusive with whatever child reminds them unconsciously of the faults they don't see in themselves. This is usually the dad picking on the oldest son and the mom picking on the oldest daughter.

Why do you think 15 of our first 16 American astronauts were firstborn sons? Do you really think that was a coincidence? Of course not. Those guys were perfectionistic enough to drive a rocket to the moon and back. Matthew 7:3-5 describes this “projection” phenomenon.

Anxiety is the fear of finding out the truth about your own unconscious thoughts, feelings and motives (rage, shame, fear of rejection, fear of death, intense sadness, etc.).

Perfectionists have more fear, anxiety, depression, panic, headaches, “chronic fatigue syndrome,” and fear of medications with imagined and real side effects.

Some people need medications to relieve the unbearable pain of these attacks, but most can overcome these with a year or two of outpatient weekly therapy from a well-trained mental health professional, or several weeks of intensive therapy in a Day Program. Quick or slow, these pains of fear are always relievable.

But some fear is healthy. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. In Matthew 24, God tells us that He will not prevent terrorism until He comes back to earth in person. So, fear Him, love Him, and trust Him to help you cope with terrorism, not to prevent it.

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Paul Meier, M.D., is the founder of the nation-wide Meier Clinics ([www.meierclinics.org](http://www.meierclinics.org), 888-7clinic) established in 1976. He is widely acknowledged as a pioneer in the integration of the physical aspects of man with the psychological and spiritual dimensions.

Dr. Meier received his Masters of Science degree in Cardiovascular Physiology from Michigan State University, his Medical Degree (M.D.) from the University of Arkansas College of Medicine, and completed his psychiatric residency at Duke University. Dr. Meier attended graduate courses at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, in 1975-76 while as a full-time faculty member. He also holds a Master of Arts degree from Dallas Theological Seminary, where he served as a full-time faculty member in pastoral counseling for 12 years.

In 1999, Dr. Meier was honored by the American Association of Christian Counselors with a Lifetime Achievement Award at their Worldwide Conference. In 2006, Dr. Meier was named as a Physician of the Year by The National

Republican Congressional Committee and honored at a reception by the President of the United States and Congress in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Meier has been a guest on numerous radio and television programs throughout his professional career, including Oprah Winfrey, The Tom Snyder Show, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, Joyce Meyer, Paula White, and Radio Free Europe. He has been honored to teach and speak at many universities and seminaries throughout the world, often lecturing on insight-oriented therapy and other related topics. Dr. Meier has authored or co-authored over 80 books and written numerous articles for magazines and other publications.