

# 039 Go Deeper Guide

## GO DEEPER: WHAT DOGS TEACH US ABOUT OVERCOMING FEAR

A Reflection Guide for "What Dogs Teach Us About Overcoming Fear"

### INTRODUCTION

In this captivating episode of Making Sense of Faith, Adam Hamilton uses an unexpected teacher—our beloved pets—to explore one of humanity's most universal experiences: fear. Through the lens of neuroscience, animal behavior, and ancient wisdom, Adam reveals how understanding our hardwired responses can lead us toward genuine peace. As you reflect on this conversation, use this guide to explore your own relationship with fear and discover practical ways to find calm in life's inevitable storms.

### 3 REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Take a moment to consider what stood out to you most from this episode:

1. Adam mentions that we're all "hardwired to catastrophize" and assume the worst will happen. Think about a recent time when you found yourself spiraling into worst-case scenarios. How did that fear compare to what actually happened?
2. When Rocky the dog heard thunder, he didn't just hide—he moved closer to his master's face until he could see Adam, then immediately calmed down. What are the practical ways you "get close to your Master" when you're afraid? What draws you nearer to a sense of peace?
3. King David wrote "whenever I'm afraid" rather than claiming to never experience fear. How does this honest acknowledgment of fear change your perspective on what it means to have faith or trust?

### 2 KEY INSIGHTS

## 1. Fear is normal and necessary—until it's not

*"We are hardwired for fear, and that is a blessing until it's not. So what happens with many of us, with all of us, is we get afraid. We flinch at things that we don't need to be afraid of."*

**Question:** How can you tell the difference between helpful fear (that protects you) and unhelpful fear (that paralyzes you)?

**Reflection:** Think about your current anxieties. Which ones are protecting you from real danger, and which ones are causing you to "flinch at things that you don't need to be afraid of"? What would change if you could learn to distinguish between the two?

## 2. Proximity to peace changes everything

*"Once he could see my face, he settled down and he went back to sleep. Didn't matter that it was still thundering outside. As long as he was close to his master, he knew he was gonna be okay."*

**Question:** What specific practices help you feel "close to your master" when life's storms are raging around you?

**Reflection:** Rocky found peace not because the storm stopped, but because he positioned himself near his master. What are the "spiritual disciplines" or practices that help you feel closer to God or to peace? How might you intentionally position yourself closer to that source of calm during difficult times?

# 1 PRACTICE EXERCISE

## The "Get Close to Your Master" Practice

**When you notice fear or anxiety rising, try this simple 5-minute practice:**

1. **Pause and breathe deeply** - Acknowledge that your amygdala has kicked in and that this response is normal and protective.
2. **Name the fear** - Like David writing his psalm, put words to what you're afraid of. Say it out loud or write it down: "I am afraid..."
3. **Choose your proximity practice** - Select one way to "get close to your Master":

- Sing or listen to a meaningful song
  - Repeat a comforting phrase or prayer
  - Text a trusted friend
  - Step outside and notice something beautiful
  - Read a verse or quote that brings you peace
4. **Stay present** - Like Rocky watching Adam's face, focus on this moment of connection rather than the "storm" around you.
  5. **Notice the shift** - Pay attention to any change in your body, breathing, or mental state.

Remember: The goal isn't to eliminate the "thunder" in your life, but to find calm in the midst of it by staying close to what brings you peace.

## QUOTES TO CONSIDER

*"Whenever I'm afraid, I put my trust in you... I trust in God. I won't be afraid. What can mere flesh do to me?"*

*"The closer we are to God, what we realize is what can mere flesh do to me and God I trust and I will not be afraid."*

*"There's something about singing the words of scripture, singing the Psalms that draws us close to God."*

## CLOSING REFLECTION

Fear will always be part of the human experience—it's how we're wired for survival. But like Rocky finding peace in his master's presence even while the storm raged on, we too can learn to find calm not by eliminating life's uncertainties, but by cultivating practices that keep us close to our source of peace. As you close this reflection time, consider one simple way you can "move closer to your Master's face" the next time anxiety strikes. Remember that courage isn't the absence of fear—it's choosing trust in the presence of fear.

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*This reflection guide was created to accompany the Making Sense of Faith podcast episode "What Dogs Teach Us About Overcoming Fear." For more*

*resources like this, visit [makingsenseoffaith.com](http://makingsenseoffaith.com).*