



# SEEDS

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Fear of Dancing  
by Nate Macy

Here in Oregon there seems to be an epidemic of fear. Maybe you've felt it where you live as well. It seems like there aren't enough resources to solve the big problems. There isn't enough money to fix the schools, roads, and other social services and yet some businesses are "too big to fail" and receive bailouts. There isn't enough creativity to resolve conflicts about health care, enough solutions to solve terrorism, enough patience to actually hear each other. The climate of apprehension has made us all feel that the only proper posture is a defensive stance of self-preservation.

Perhaps we've just grown accustomed to it. The last eight or nine years we've been fed a non-stop diet of terror, manipulated and incapacitated by the incessant voices that tell us that we should indeed be afraid. Afraid of those people over there, afraid that our money will run out, afraid that we will get sick, afraid that whatever is central and precious to us will be taken away.

Fear is not only bred out of our political and national discourse. We carry fear around with us as regularly as if it were our wallet or driver's license. We carry our fear of failure, our fear of not being good enough, our fear of disappointing others or God.

Yet this is not the witness of the Gospel. Living in fear is not Good News, nor is it what Christ calls us to. 1 John 4:17-18 says, "God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we're free of worry on Judgment Day—our standing in the world is identical with Christ's. There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love." Jesus calls us not to worry about what we will eat and what we will wear, reminding us that we are more valuable than the flowers and the birds. But all the same, fear permeates our lives.



Photo courtesy of [Dinty Moore](#).

Perhaps it is because we don't really trust that God is capable to meet our needs and address our fears. Perhaps it is because we know that to trust God with our fear may mean confronting additional realities of which we are fearful. Perhaps it is because we lack ways to conceptualize what it would be like to live into a full trust of God with our fear.



Photo courtesy of [Stephen Granade](#).

These words from the 13<sup>th</sup> century saint Mechtild of Magdeburg might serve as guide for us today. In her writing *The Flowing Love of the Godhead* she says, "I cannot dance O Lord unless you lead me." What a beautiful image, so much said, so succinctly. God calls us not to wring our hands and march through life in strict time but, to paraphrase both Mechtild and George Fox, dance joyfully over the earth. The only way we do this is to allow God to take the lead, to guide us in the dance. We follow God, not as a marching general but as the bride, swept up in the first dance at her wedding by her lover.

Mechtild continues later in this same writing, "Fish cannot drown in the water, birds cannot sink in the air, gold cannot perish in the fire," and still further on, "Thou art by nature already mine! Nothing can come between Me and thee! Therefore, must thou put from thee, fear and shame and all outward things."

What have we to fear when we dance with God? It is where we are designed to be, what we are created for. The mystics and martyrs of old understood that when we live in the center of God we cannot be permanently damaged, and that the hurts and fears that face us, although real, are as nothing compared to living under the tyranny of fear rather than in the freedom of Christ.

Before you dismiss this as all very nice, but overly rosy, remember that this is the core of the Gospel: that those who lose their lives shall find them. We must learn to dance with God rather than with our fears, not just ideologically, but in the fullness of our lived lives here and now.

To listen to Nate's song *How Can I Dance*, please link [here](#).

Nate Macy, a GOOD NEWS *Associate*, is a member of Newberg Friends Church. He holds a BA in Christian Ministry and an MA in Spiritual Formation, both from George Fox University. His ministry includes composing, worship leadership, retreat leadership, spiritual direction and music production. He has released two CD's, *Hope* and the *Psalms Project*.



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