Welcome back to our series

**SPOOKED**

We’re taking a look at some common sources of fear.  
So far we have talked about the fear of …man   
And last week we talked about the fear of …the supernatural

Church, I have to confess. I really like horror movies.  
God can use all things for good; horror movies are partly responsible for me being a part of Redemption Church.

[Story of Chris giving me a ride to Connect Group.]

Be real. God can use you as you are. You are unique; God can work with that.

Anyway, I like horror movies. I’ve seen a lot of them.

What is the scariest thing in horror movies?  
Is it the monster?  
Is it the human monster?  
Is it the gore?  
Is it the jump scares?  
Is it the idea that this thing could be real?  
Nope. Turn to someone and say, “I don’t know.”

**FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN**

It’s the fear of the unknown.   
Today we’re going to be talking about the fear of the unknown.

The unknown can be terrifying.   
In movies, it’s the nervousness that the killer is hiding somewhere.  
chi-chi-chi-ah-ah-ah  
Something awful is about to happen, but we don’t know where or when…

The unknown is much scarier than the monster.

Fear of the unknown manifests in different forms.  
Fear of the dark.  
Fear of death.

I got bad news for you church. You’re xenophobic.  
Turn to someone and say, “You’re xenophobic.”

The word “xenophobic” has been used a lot in the news recently. What does it mean?

From Fearof.net: “Xenophobia is the irrational sensation of fear experienced about a person or a group of persons as well as situations that are perceived as strange or foreign. It is the fear of anything that is beyond one’s comfort zone.”

Do you get uncomfortable when you’re not in control, when you’re not sure what is going to happen? Do you get nervous when you don’t know?

We all do.

And it is God’s fault.

**IMAGINATION**

God blesses us all with an imagination.

As we get older we tend to misuse it.

“What if…?” …………………..

When we face the unknown, our minds can fill in the gaps with the worst case scenario.

In some ways, that can be prudent. It is good to be careful and anticipate problems.  
But taken to the extreme it can be debilitating.

We all face the unknown, every day. If imagine that it is always filled with the worst of the worst, our lives would be terrifying.

**FEAR PREVENTS…**

Fear prevents us from doing things.

Fear prevents us from being who God has called us to be.

Let’s look at an example from scripture. It’s in one of my favorite books of the Bible:  
Judges.

We’re going to take a look at the story of Gideon. You may remember his victory. You may remember the fleece. But there are a few details that tend to get forgotten.

Here’s the backstory: Israel had strayed from God.

**JUDGES 6:5-6 NIV** They (the Midianites) came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. **It was impossible to count them or their camels**; they invaded the land to ravage it. 6 Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord for help.

Okay. That is a problem. That danger is known and it’s reasonable to be afraid.  
Now here is God’s solution.

**JUDGES 6:11-12 NIV** The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son **Gideon** was **threshing wheat in a winepress** to keep it from the Midianites. 12 When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, “The Lord is with you, **mighty warrior**.”

He is threshing wheat in a winepress. Does this sound like a mighty warrior?

**JUDGES 6:13 NIV** “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?’ But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.”

**JUDGES 6:14 NIV** The Lord turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?”

**JUDGES 6:15 NIV** “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.”

**JUDGES 6:16 NIV** The Lord answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.”

Long story short, Gideon prepares a meal for this angel. The angel touches it with its staff and it erupts into flames.

**JUDGES 6:22 NIV** When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the Lord, he exclaimed, “Alas, Sovereign Lord! I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!”

**JUDGES 6:23 NIV** But the Lord said to him, “Peace! **Do not be afraid**. You are not going to die.”

Are you listening Gideon?

**JUDGES 6:25-26 NIV** That same night the Lord said to him, “Take the second bull from your father’s herd, the one seven years old. Tear down your father’s altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. 26 Then build a proper kind of altar to the Lord your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second bull as a burnt offering.”

Gideon does it. The next day the people of the town want to kill him, but he escapes.

But then, when it’s time to deal with the Midianites… He’s not so sure.

Judges 6:36-38 NIV  
Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised— 37 look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.” 38 And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew—a bowlful of water.

After all that has happened, Gideon says, “I don’t know… I need a miracle to be sure.”  
And God does it! Okay, so we should be ready to go at this point, right? NO!!!

Judges 6:39-40 NIV  
Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry and let the ground be covered with dew.” 40 That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.

What?!?!

Do we do this? We’ve seen God do amazing things in the past. We believe. God calls us to do something… and we’re not so sure. I don’t know. God, is that really you?  
Do you really want me to do that? Maybe if you show me a miracle I’ll know it’s you.

Okay, but that might have been a fluke. Can I get one more miracle?

Yes. We all do that. And we do it when God calls us to much less threatening things than fighting an army that cannot be counted. We do that when God calls us to share our faith.

Why? Why do we do this? Because there is so much we don’t know.  
What if it doesn’t work? What if I look stupid? What if I do it wrong? What if they think I’m a weirdo? What if…

Child, where is your faith?!

In the first week of this series Pastor Chris mentioned that fear is faith in the wrong things.

When we fear something we have more faith in its ability to harm us, than in God’s ability to protect us.

When we fear the unknown we are putting our faith in things that DO NOT EXIST!

Lord, thank you for your patience with us.

**FEAR PREVENTS…**

Gideon was the one called to deliver his nation and defeat this oppressive army.  
But he almost let his fear of the unknown prevent his country from getting saved.

What are you doing?

What is fear preventing you from doing? What has God called you to do, but you haven’t done it because… well, I just don’t know…?

But if you’re lazy… (like me) fear of the unknown does make a great excuse.

**PROVERBS 22:13 NIV** The sluggard says, “There’s a lion outside! I’ll be killed in the public square!”

**FEAR PREVENTS…**

I can’t go out. Something bad might happen. I’ll just stay on the couch and watch more Netflix.

I can’t step out in faith. Something bad might happen. STOP IT!!!  
Brothers and sisters, God has called you to do mighty things, and you are letting your fear of things that don’t exist prevent these mighty things from taking place!

Get going! And if there is a lion outside, we’ll deal with it. God is with you! That lion should be afraid of you!

Look, I know it’s not always easy. There is a lot we don’t know. This world can be a dangerous place. And there is an enemy out there that wants to kill, steal, and destroy.

But what do you put your faith in?

There is a lot we don’t know. It is unknown to us. But it is known to God.

You know what else we don’t know? We don’t know the incredible things that God can do through us.

Back to the story of Gideon. So *NOW* Gideon is convinced… and he raises an army.  
But God says, “Nope that’s too many people. Gideon, your army is too big.”

**JUDGES 7:3 NIV** “Now announce to the army, ‘Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.

Note, when God has something that He wants done, if you’re too afraid, he’ll let you go home. He will find someone else to get the job done.

Remember, they are preparing to fight an army that is impossible to count.   
Now Gideon is down to 10,000 soldiers. Guess what? Still too many.

So God has Gideon tell the soldiers to go and drink some water and some drank it with their hands but a few put their faces down and lapped it up.

**JUDGES 7:7 NIV** The Lord said to Gideon, “With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the others go home.”

What??!? 300? How is this going to work out? What is going to happen?  
I don’t know but God is at work, and with him all things are possible.

It gets even better.

**JUDGES 7:16 NIV** Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside.

What?!?? What is going on?

Alright men, I know we’re vastly outnumbered, but we’ve got superior weaponry.  
Everybody take a trumpet and a jar. Careful there’s a torch in there…

I DON’T KNOW HOW THIS CAN POSSIBLY WORK OUT!!!  
The truth is, it can’t. Except God is involved, and so it does.

**JUDGES 7:20 NIV** The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!”

**JUDGES 7:21 NIV** While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled.

Who is afraid now? But wait…

**JUDGES 7:22 NIV** When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the Lord caused the men throughout the camp **to turn on each other with their swords**. The army fled…

The Midianites were afraid… of the unknown. How many soldiers are out there?   
I don’t know. Can we beat them? I don’t know. Should we run? Probably.

And they were so scared that they drew their swords and started attacking each other. I’m running for my life, and I’m going to murder anyone who doesn’t get out of my way fast enough! They started killing themselves; Gideon’s army didn’t even have to fight.

Again, take note, if you give yourself over to fear, to fear of the unknown, you will start destroying yourself.

But did you see what God did there? That victory was impossible. It could not have been known ahead of time.

If you’re afraid of the unknown, and you’re not going to act until you know how it will work out. Then you are not going to act. And if there is going to be a victory it will come through somebody else, and there might not be a victory at all.

If you are afraid of the unknown, know this: God is mighty. He can handle it.

But what if it’s like this…? God can handle it.  
But what if it’s worse? God can handle it.  
But what if there’s a lion? God can handle it. Jesus is the lion, and He is on your side.  
Get going!

**IMAGINATION**

Who could have imagined what God was going to do through this timid little guy threshing wheat in a wine press?

That’s our problem. We are so fast to imagine the worst. And so slow to imagine what God can do. We can imagine all the things that the enemy can do. But thinking God might be able to help, that He might be able to do something… that’s silly. Nah.

NO! Too often we have it so backwards.   
**EPHESIANS 3:20 NIV** Now to him who is able to do **immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine**, according to his power that is at work within us,

Is there stuff out there we don’t know? Sure. There always will be. But can God handle the worst of it? YES! Because he made it all in the first place!

**UNIVERSE\_VS\_IMAGINATION.JPG \*\*\*MUSICIAN\*\*\***

If you want to use your imagination, think about all the things that God can do.  
He’s got solutions that you would never think of in a million years.

**1 CORINTHIANS 2:9 NIV** However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" -- the things God has prepared for those who love him—

Don’t fear the unknown. Get excited about the unknown.   
I don’t know what God is going to do next, but I have a feeling it is going to be awesome!

Fear prevents. Fear inhibits. Fear holds you back. What is God calling you to do, but you’re holding yourself back because you don’t know what will happen?

Stop imagining the worst case scenario. Start imagining all the incredible things God can do… through you! Come on, mighty warrior, God can use you in ways that you have never even imagined. Just trust Him. He is with you. Be bold. Take a step of faith.