

## Conversation Starter

*For the week of December 21-27, 2008*

This week's theme: Be Not Afraid  
Current sermon series: Watching For Jesus  
Sunday's Readings: From the "Christmas Story" as found in the Bible due to the *Lessons & Carols Service*

What are you afraid of? Do you have any "phobias"? What is causing you to be anxious right now? Are you worried about something? Does fear rule your life? If you find yourself afraid, anxious, worried or fearful about someone or something, listen to the angel Gabriel's words spoken to Mary at the time she learned she would give birth to a son that she was to name Jesus: "*Do not be afraid, Mary...*" (See *Luke 1:30*) If you are presently afraid, anxious, worried or fearful, listen to the words spoken by an angel of the Lord to Joseph who was considering on leaving Mary when he learned she was pregnant: "*Joseph son of David, do not be afraid...*" (See *Matthew 1:20*) And what about the words of the angel of the Lord spoken to the shepherds on the night of Jesus' birth: "*Do not be afraid...*"? (See *Luke 2:10*) Throughout scripture we find God reminding people to be not afraid. Over and over again we find God calling His people to surrender their fears to Him by trusting Him more fully. So, if you are afraid, God is saying to you just as He said to Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and countless people throughout the centuries: be not afraid.

1. What are you afraid of or worried about? What is causing you to be anxious right now? What fears are ruling your life?
2. How do we overcome fear, anxiety and worry?
3. Describe a time in your life when God helped you through a fearful time. What were you afraid of? How did God help you? What positive emotions did you experience after the fearful experience was past?
4. Why do we worry about so many things?
5. Why do we so easily become fearful?

If time permits, continue past this point for further discussion:

READ Isaiah 43:1-2.

READ Philippians 4:6-7.

6. What are some ways/strategies God provides to be set free from fear?
7. In what ways should the verses of scriptures from Isaiah and Philippians help us when we're afraid?
8. Is it possible, on this side of heaven, to live life without ever being fearful or anxious? (Using Jesus as an example doesn't count.)
9. Spend time praying with group members who are struggling with fear and anxiety.