Welcome to Week 3 of News Cleanse!

Last week, we considered the *effect* toxic news is having on us (if you missed it, catch up here). Today, we'll zoom in on one of the most common side effects of noisy news: fear.

PONDER | PRAY | PRACTICE

Is your news making you fearful or faithful?

Sometimes I question the wisdom of my lifelong sports fandom. To follow a sports team is to voluntarily live in the agonizing dissonance of uncertainty. Every play is enjoyed from the edge of my seat because, of course, the season hangs in the balance.

But it's an entirely different experience to watch my favorite team after I've recorded the game and already know we win. The plays don't change, but I become a radically different watcher. I still pump my fist at the highlights, but don't start biting my nails when they flounder. I have a confidence that says: *Things might look bad, but I know how this story ends.*

Similarly, the news tempts us to consume headlines like a sports fan watching a live game. With every scary, complex, divisive story, we're on the edge of our seats because the future of the world appears to be in the balance. But it's an entirely different experience to consume the news when we know how the story ends. God has given believers fear-crushing clarity, pulling back the curtain of history and promising a sweeping victory followed by a very good, very long future.

Consider this remarkable picture of God's promised ending from Revelation 21:

“Look, God’s dwelling is with humanity, and He will live with them. They will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away. Then the one seated on the throne said, ‘Look, I am making everything new.’”

Revelation 21:3–5 (CSB)

This is how the story ends. This is the final score: one day, every tear will be wiped away, death will be defeated, and everything broken or distorted will be made new.

Fear flourishes when the future is fuzzy. Not knowing if you’re choosing the right mate feeds a fear of commitment; not knowing whether the harness will break feeds a fear of heights; not knowing what you’ll find in the creaky attic feeds the fear of intruders. But fear cowers when the future is clarified.

God’s good news about the future creates a seismic shift in how believers consume the day’s headlines. The content of the news doesn’t change, but an eternal perspective makes us radically different consumers. We’re filled with confidence that says: *Things might look bad, but we know how this story ends.*

Unshackled from fear, we are free to live boldly. Free from the outrage cycle, free to love neighbors who disagree. Free to pray urgently for justice, listen deeply to those affected, and love widely – like our victorious God.

Wishing you peace,
Peter Nittler
Writer | The Pour Over

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

What news stories tend to tempt you most toward fear? Why do you think that is?

What does your fear around the news tell you about your expectations for the future?

How does fear affect your confidence in God?

PONDER | **PRAY** | PRACTICE

Victorious King of Creation,
You are the architect of the whole world's trajectory:
the designer and finisher of every storyline.
You are orchestrating the plot points of the whole universe
and the intricate details of my life,
leading it all toward final renewal and rest.

But now, I confess that I have not been at rest.
I have lived as if on pins and needles,
poked and prodded by the cares of this moment, this day,
and always looking downward and inward.
You have called my eyes upward and outward,
breaking me out of my spiraling anxieties with Your resounding
"Fear not!"

Living One, Keeper of the Keys of Death and Hades,
Your reign of peace is coming as surely as spring overtakes winter.
Your renewal will still hurricanes, avalanches, and wildfires.
Your eternal reign will silence kings' defiance, and
Your just and righteous gavel will crush the violent and abusers.
Your city's walls will lock out division and hatred, and
Your gates will welcome the lowly who have longed for Your appearing.
Your light will shine over all that has been hidden, and
the radiance of Your goodness will satisfy the earth forevermore.

When I am tempted to fear,
when I'm dragged into anxiety's spiral,
reach in and deliver me.
Turn my gaze to Your promises and
make me bold in the waiting,

Ever more confident that You are faithful
to complete Your good work of renewal in my own heart and
to finish this world's story so that it trumpets Your glory.
Amen.

Yours in Christ,
Steph Juliot
Writer | The Pour Over

PONDER | PRAY | PRACTICE

Here's your task for the week: Remember eternity. If you're consuming the news, stop when you encounter a story that tempts you to fear. (If you're taking a break from the news, simply recall a recent story that prompted you to be afraid.) Then:

1. Name the fear. (***Hint:*** *What good thing does this story threaten?*)
2. Read Revelation 21.
3. Find a promise in Revelation 21 that speaks to your particular fear.
4. Ask God to replace your fear with this eternal hope.