

# Practice: Finding Courage Through Fear

## Walking with Atticus Part III

On one of our walks Atticus and I were nearing home, just a block or so away, when a couple of dogs got loose from their house and ran after us. I tried crossing the street as quickly as I could to avoid them. One of the dogs wouldn't heed Atticus's warning and a fight ensued. The dogs' owner heard my screams and the fighting commotion and tried to get his dog away as I pulled with all my strength to get Atticus off; no luck. By this time other neighbors had gathered to help. They tried pouring water on them; no luck. Finally one of the neighbors sprayed mace on them and that got their attention. We were able to finally pull them apart. Mace Hurts...a lot! Poor Atticus got sprayed in the face and I got it all over my hands. The other dog and her owner were miserable as well. Atticus had deep scratches on his muzzle and one of his ears was bleeding, but nothing too serious. The other poor dog didn't fare as well. All of us were in shock.

Atticus and I didn't walk at all for a couple of weeks. The first few times out after this, Anthony went with us. I was too scared to walk Atticus without support. Over the next month, walks with Atticus were sporadic. I was afraid and hyper vigilant, anxious the whole time we were walking. Any dog that barked at us made me jump and Atticus was constantly looking behind us. The only reason I was able to walk him at all was my love for him. He needed his exercise, but the magic was gone. I hated being afraid! I hated that I couldn't talk myself out of being scared. And then, Divine recognition flooded through me...love, love, love. God whispered, "love yourself, love your fearful self until your fear dissolves into the moment." I was then able to see Beauty surrounding us once more.

Yes, I'm still afraid at times during our walks together. *And*, I remember to love myself in the midst of the fear; to take fear's hand and keep walking.

Walking with Atticus is my practice. We are challenged and loved. We experience and love the sacred that surrounds us. We are in union with God. We are never alone. *I've learned that courage isn't about not being afraid. It is acknowledging and loving my frightened self and walking onward.* I've come to know that being a loving presence in this wounded and wonderful world is what I was created for. Walking with Atticus opens me and I'm able to experience the beauty of infinite Mystery and abundant unknowing!

Have you experienced a time when you were afraid and felt the loving Grace of God give you the courage to keep going?