

## I. Introduction

- A. We are talking about God's Wisdom on Human Emotion. This is week three in a series, and today I want to focus on fear and anxiety.
- B. We live in an age of anxiety. The American Dream is in crisis for most Americans, especially young ones. An uncertain economic future lies ahead. Nobody knows what can happen with real estate or the stock markets. A lot of people are losing their jobs and new jobs are tough to find.
- C. Fear has been called, "The official emotion of our age," and "the most pervasive psychological phenomenon of our time."
- D. It is very easy to feel afraid. I want to show you some biblical wisdom on fear. And I want to use two Bible stories as a case study in fear and throw in some of my own stories along the way.
- E. But first, let me give you a little test. Here are the names of the top ten phobias in America. Do you know what they mean?
  - 1. Arachnophobia: This phobia occurs in over half of women and ten percent of men—it is the intense fear of spiders.
  - 2. Agoraphobia: It is the fear of people in crowds. It can present itself as fear of crowds, or even just being around people in general. It makes people fear leaving their homes.
  - 3. Aerophobia: This is a fear of flying.
  - 4. Claustrophobia: This fear is of small or confined spaces which make the person feel entrapped.
  - 5. Acrophobia: fear of heights.
  - 6. Emetophobia: Fear of vomit, or of seeing someone else vomit.
  - 7. Carcinophobia: an intense fear of cancer, this phobia is relatively new, but climbing the ladder fast.
  - 8. Brontophobia: the fear of thunderstorms.
  - 9. Necrophobia: A fear of death or of dead things is called necrophobia.
  - 10. Glossophobia: Fear of speaking in public.
    - a) I have this one.
- F. I have to add two more (I did NOT make these terms up)
  - 1. Hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia: The fear of long words.
  - 2. Homilophobia: The fear of sermons—BOO!
- G. All this makes me wonder: why are there so many fears? What is it about human nature that makes FEAR so big in our lives? What is fear all about? Let's get a biblical perspective on fear.

## II. The Nature of Fear

- A. Fear is an important part of your God-given defense mechanism. You are sacred to God. Of all the life on the planet, only humans are created in the image of God. We hold a special place in God's heart. His love for us is unlike His love for any other creation.
- B. All human life is sacred: your life came from God, and it is designed to go back to God.
- C. And God Himself takes it personally when anybody messes with you. God gets involved.
- D. God wants you to be involved too. He gave you an arsenal of weapons to protect yourself from harm and to protect your loved ones from harm too.
- E. One of those weapons is fear. Fear is the inner energy that gets released in the face of danger. When any danger threatens the walls of your city, you feel afraid.
- F. Fear, like anger, is an early warning system. Anger is mainly about injustice. Fear is mainly about danger.
- G. Many times, your gut feels your fear long before your mind has analyzed it. You feel uneasy, apprehensive, cautious, and you can't explain why. Hold onto that fear, and trust it. Something is happening.
- H. That fear is supposed to motivate you to take action: get out of the situation, run away, defend yourself and your kids and neighbors.
  - 1. *"A wise man fears and departs from evil, but a fool rages and is self-confident."* Proverbs 14:16, NKJV.
- I. When you're firing on all cylinders, your fear will keep you from danger. Healthy fear is a good thing. It can save your life.
- J. HEALTHY FEAR shields you against REAL danger.
- K. UNHEALTHY FEAR shields you against IMAGINED danger.

## III. Spirit of Fear

- A. *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."* 2 Timothy 1:7, NKJV.
- B. This is the kind of fear that can wreck your life. The normal New Testament word for fear is the Greek word, *phobos*. It means fear. But the word translated here isn't *phobos*, it's a different word. It's the word *deilos*, which means sissy-fear, intimidation-fear. God never planned that you would go through your life intimidated by all the scary stuff out there—shrinking back from opportunities. God does not want you to turn over control of your life to scary headlines or to imagined bogie-men who are out to get you.

- C. Healthy fear is a temporary emotion that flares up when a danger threatens you, and then calms down when the danger goes away.
- D. But unhealthy fear doesn't go away. It flares up when there is NO real danger, and it doesn't go away. This is *deilos*-fear—wimpy-fear. This is the kind of fear that eats away at your spirit, all the time, like a leaky gas tank.
- E. *Deilos*-fear, wimpy-fear is unhealthy fear—this kind of fear attacks you in three major areas:

#### IV. Three Attacks

- A. It attacks your sense of ability.
  1. It makes you think you will fail—the first big fear that *deilos* produces is FEAR OF FAILURE. It makes you doubt your God-given ability. It makes you hopeless in the face of danger. *Deilos* fear makes you doubt your abilities, your worth and value as a child of God. It makes you doubt yourself and the power of Christ in you.
  2. When you feel this kind of fear, it is definitely not from God. That is NOT God's voice whispering to you that you will fail. That fear of failure is NOT the voice of God. It is not the spirit of God. It is a different spirit, and you need to tell it to get lost.
  3. Instead of the fear of failure, God gives you a spirit of POWER, ability, and capability. If you have Jesus, you have ALL YOU NEED to handle your present situation.
  4. I don't know what you're facing: job cuts, financial stress; a big court date; family craziness; doctors, medical procedures—the heartbreak of loss and death and illness. We live in a tough world.
  5. But in that tough world, God has not given us a spirit of wimpy fear, but of power that says, I can do ALL things through Christ and that is the only voice you should listen to.
  6. The opposite of "a spirit of power" is the fear of failure. I have to confess that I fear failure all the time. Every time I preach. Every time I write. Every time I have a meeting a voice inside me whispers: You don't have a clue what you're doing. Have you ever felt that way? That is not the voice of God. I have to force myself to get past that voice, or else I'd be paralyzed for life.
  7. Don't listen to the wimpy fear inside you. Don't let it win the attack against your capability. But wimpy fear doesn't just attack your sense of ability...
- B. It attacks your relationships.
  1. Two things do NOT go together: healthy relationships and chronic fear. The second big fear that *deilos* produces in you is FEAR OF REJECTION: This is a major fear, and most of us feel it deeply.
  2. It's especially tough when you are in your teens and twenties, but the fear of rejection never goes away.
  3. This is a normal fear, but if you don't get past it, it will ruin your life.
    - a) Fear of rejection is why a lot of guys have a hard time asking girls out on a date, "Hi, my name is Movies, will you go to the John with me?"
    - b) Fear of rejection makes a lot of girls and guys make sexual choices they never would have made otherwise. If I don't give him some action, he'll reject me, and I'll have no friends.
  4. If you have acceptance issues, if you have abandonment issues, if you have peer-pressure issues your real problem is fear—wimpy fear, not the healthy fear. You always worry what other people think about you.
  5. If you fear rejection, you will not have a good marriage. You will not be a good parent. And you will not date healthy men or women. If you fear rejection, your love life will be all messed up, BECAUSE you will always have your shields up, and never let somebody know the real you.
  6. In the Old Testament, the first king of Israel was a man named Saul. He was smart, he was tough, and he was very tall—a full head taller than the average Israelite. He could slam dunk over anyone else in ancient Israel.
  7. But Saul had acceptance issues and he became a terrible king. One time, when he really messed up, God sent the prophet Samuel to confront him.
    - a) *"Then Saul finally admitted, 'Yes, I have sinned. I have disobeyed your instructions and the LORD's command, for I was afraid of the people and did what they demanded.'" 1 Samuel 15:24, NLT.*
  8. God does not want you to be afraid of what other people think. Because if you are afraid of what other people think, you will never bring your true self into relationship. You'll always be editing, and hiding, and redefining yourself to suit other people. You'll be a chameleon for so long; you'll forget your true color.
  9. God does not want you to live with a fear of REJECTION. That spirit does not come from Him. His spirit brings an attitude of power and of LOVE.
  10. The opposite of the fear of rejection is a spirit of love.
  11. Honest, authentic love—where you don't change yourself, and where you don't change the other person. You crawl over your fear, and connect. You give your real self, without masks, without faking, without

- acting all perfect and like you have your act together—you put out your real self, and other people take you as you are or not.
12. And if they reject you, it's their loss. That's the spirit God wants you to have.
  13. But you won't let fear of rejection pressure you into being something other than your true self as God has designed you.
  14. God has not given us a spirit of wimpy fear, but of power, and of love. Fear attacks you in a third way too.
- c. It attacks your sanity.
1. Wimpy fear makes you crazy... either a lot or a little.
  2. It produces fear of FAILURE, fear of REJECTION, and fear of LOSING CONTROL.
  3. This is why the Bible talks so much about worry. Worry is fear. It is fear that you can't control the world around you. You live with a fear called "What if..."
    - a) What if the wrong candidate is elected president?
    - b) What if my company goes under?
    - c) What if my husband leaves me?
    - d) What if my kids get sick?
    - e) What if I get cancer?
    - f) What if the person of my dreams turns me down?
    - g) What if my manuscript gets rejected?
    - h) What if the Antichrist arises?
    - i) What if my car breaks down?
    - j) What if this sermon never ends?
  4. This kind of anxiety makes you crazy, because you can't control the world. Worry is the fear you get when you realize you can't control the universe, and you resent it.
  5. Know any worriers—any horriblizers? People who take every possible problem to its worst possible outcome? Know any followers of Jesus who live in panic palace?
  6. I want to tell you something that God really convicted me of, and I hope He convicts you of it to:
  7. **WORRY IS YOUR STATEMENT TO GOD THAT HE IS NOT DOING A GOOD JOB.** God, you don't know what you're doing, and if I controlled the cosmos, things would be different.
  8. Worry is faith in the impotence of God.
  9. You have to release control of the universe back to God. You can't control the universe. You can't control your spouse. You can't control governments or regulators. You can't control your grown children. You can't control the economy. You can't control anybody or anything outside your skin, and it's time you stopped trying.
  10. And instead of worrying about the details of your life, you better worry about God who is going to crush you. No. No. No. I just said that last part to give you something else to worry about.
  11. The Bible says...
    - a) *"Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression..."* Proverbs 12:25, NKJV.
  12. Anxiety is a million little fears that you load into a gigantic backpack and carry with you all the time.
  13. And it makes you miserable to be with. It makes you crazy. It robs of the ability to think straight and to plan ahead, and to make good decisions, and to bond. *Deilos*-fear attacks your sanity.
  14. But God has not given you a spirit of *deilos*-fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.
  15. Your fear of losing control is misplaced, because God is in control, and He knows what He's doing.
  16. I know, I know, I know. You have a huge, YES, BUT welling up inside you. God is in control, but we still have to make our choices, and prepare for our careers, and save for our retirement. Yes, yes, yes. You will reap what you sow in terms of choices.
  17. BUT, even if you make bad choices, when you rely on God, He promises that you will **REAP WHAT HE SOWS**. And therefore, you should never worry.
  18. SANITY means trusting God in tough times. INSANITY means trusting yourself or anybody else.
  19. Jesus said,
    - a) *"So I tell you, don't worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food, drink, and clothes. Doesn't life consist of more than food and clothing? Look at the birds. They don't need to plant or harvest or put food in barns because your heavenly Father feeds them. And you are far more valuable to him than they are. Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? Of course not. And why worry about your clothes? Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and gone tomorrow, won't he more surely care for you? You have so little faith!"* Matthew 6:25-30, NLT.

20. It's great to feel fear. It's perfectly right, and normal. Fear is not a sin. Emotions are good things, and we should feel them deeply.
21. But, as followers of Jesus, we are not to let the headlines rule our emotions or the doctor's report, or the job market, or the direction of our country, or the upcoming final exams, or your monthly account statements.
22. Sanity means taking back the reins of your life, and to quit farming out your power to other forces besides God.
23. We are to let God and His truth rule everything about us, even our emotions.
24. So, why do you worry about everyday life? You are listening to the wrong voice. You are not listening to God.
25. God has not given us a spirit of *deilos*-fear, but of power (fear of failure), and of love (fear of rejection), and of a sound mind (fear of losing control).
26. Unhealthy fear is faith in the impotence of God.

#### V. The Best Fear

- A. And this brings me to the most psychologically healthy fear any person can have:
  1. *"You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him."* Deuteronomy 13:4, NKJV.
- B. Unhealthy fear is faith in the impotence of God.
- C. Healthy fear is faith in the omnipotence of God.
- D. He is all powerful. If you are going to be afraid of one force in the universe that is outside your control, let that fear be the fear of the Lord.
- E. Dozens of times the Bible tells us to fear the Lord. I used to struggle with this, because I thought it meant that I should be literally scared of God. But how does that make sense if He's also my loving Heavenly Father, that I call Daddy?
- F. The fear of the Lord is REVERENTIAL TRUST IN AND A HEALTHY RESPECT FOR GOD.
- G. So that when you walk in His ways, you don't need to be afraid. Fear not, says the Bible 365 times. Don't let your fears dominate your life.
- H. Yes, there are real threats out there. But there is a real God up there, and in here, and He will not let you down.
- I. In Jeremiah 49:5 God says, "Behold, I will bring your fear upon you." He's warning people who rebel against Him. He's saying that the stuff you fear most, He'll make sure it happens to you. How does that work for your phobias? Makes you want a new phobia right?
- J. But think about this: if God brings your fears upon you, doesn't it make sense to fear the Lord? Wouldn't you rather be in His hands? Doesn't it make sense to entrust yourself to the One Who loved you enough to shed His blood and die that you might be brought to God? Shouldn't you have reverential fear and trust in the God Who calls Himself the God of all comforts and the Father of mercies?
- K. If you fear God more than you fear your other fears, you're in great shape. Because when God brings Himself upon you with His power, you'll have the life you've always wanted.
  1. *"I called on the LORD in distress; The LORD answered me and set me in a broad place. The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"* Psalms 118:5-6, NKJV.
  2. *"For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'"* Hebrews 13:5, 6, NKJV.
  3. *"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"* Romans 8:31, NKJV.
  4. *"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."* Romans 8:28, NAS95.
  5. *"Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean He no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or are hungry or cold or in danger or threatened with death? (Even the Scriptures say, 'For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.') No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us."* Romans 8:35-37, NLT.
- L. What are you afraid of?