

BIBLICAL COUNSELING: FEAR

Understanding Fear

A. Fear is not necessarily sinful.

1. We are to fear God. *Prov 1:7; Ps 90:11; Isa 6:1ff*

2. Fear is a reasonable and helpful response to danger. *1 Cor 10:12*

B. Fear has physical manifestations. *Deut 2:25; Exod 15:16; Isa 35:3-4; 1 Sam 25:37; Gen 27:33*

C. Fear can be very damaging.

1. Fear can keep one from fulfilling his duties to God and others. *Prov 22:13; 28:1*

2. Obsessive-compulsive disorder.

D. Fear becomes sinful when...

1. You fear men more than God. *Prov 29:25; Isa 29:13*

2. You fail to trust God.

3. You want control and certainty which belong to God alone.

4. Fear keeps you from fulfilling your responsibilities to God.

E. Keys to overcoming fear.

1. That which is to be most feared, God's wrath, has been removed by Christ. *Matt 10:28; Heb 2:14-15; 1 John 4:18*

2. The Lord is your shepherd. *Ps 23*

3. The righteous are characterized by boldness, not fear. *Prov 28:1; Rev 21:8*

4. When facing fears the crucial question is: What does God want you to do?

5. For those who fear imperfection, your perfection is in Christ.

6. Only God possesses certainty and control. You must trust Him. *Rom 8:28; Deut 29:29; Prov 3:23-26*

The Fear of Man

A. The fear of man brings a snare. *Prov 29:25*

1. Fear of another person

2. Fear in the sense of being a “people pleaser” rather than a “God pleaser”:

B. View of God and man becomes distorted

1. *When People Are Big and God is Small* by Ed Welch

Introduction to Jeremiah 17:5-8

If You Trust in Mankind, You Will Be Cursed *Jer 17:5-6; 11:3; Gen 3:14, 17*

A. Don't rely upon the flesh. *Jer 17:5*

1. Israel was inclined to trust men. *Jer 2:14-19; 46:25*

- She claimed to hope in God.

- Yet she was resorting to her own devices. *Jer 5:31*

- She trusted false prophets. *Jer 7:4, 8*

- She sought help from foreign alliances. *Isa 31:1-3; Ezek 29:16; 2 Kgs 24:1*

- She forgot God's great deeds of the past, despised God's gracious promises, and ignored His threats.

2. Man in all of his power and glory is but frail flesh. *Jer 17:5a*

3. When you trust mankind, your heart is turned away from the Lord. *Jer 17:5b; 2:13; 5:23; 3:2, 6-10; 2:20*

- He alone is to be the arm of your strength. *Jer 27:5; 32:17; Isa 33:2*

- Trust in anyone or anything else is nothing less than idolatry (spiritual adultery).

- You violate the greatest commandment. *Deut 6:5*

B. If you do, your life will wither away. *Jer 17:6*

1. You will be desolate and hopeless.

2. Such was the condition of Israel as Jeremiah wrote: under God's curse: exile. *Jer 8:13; 11:16; 1:15; 25:9; Deut 28:15ff; 29:22-23; Ezek 17:8-10; 19:10-13*

3. Such is the condition of all humanity apart from divine grace. *Ps 129:6*

C. Application: like Israel, the church is inclined to unfaithfulness to God.

1. Don't entrust yourself to people in the world!

- Government leaders/military powers. *Ps 146:3-5; 44:6; 20:7; Deut 28:52; Isa 31:1-2*

- Employers and doctors.

2. Don't wrongfully entrust yourself to others in relationships.

- Family. *Ps 27:10; Isa 49:15*

- Friendship. *Prov 25:19*

- Co-dependency (co-idolatry).

Trust God and You Will Be Blessed *Jer 17:7-8*

A. Will you entrust yourself to the LORD? *Jer 17:7; Ps 31:24*

1. Hope in God alone. *Prov 3:5-6; Isa 26:3-4*

- Repent of all other hopes. *John 15:5*

- Acknowledge Him in everything you do.

- Entrust yourself by following His Word. *Prov 16:20*

- The issue is not mere outward works or ceremony, but your heart!

2. God alone is trustworthy. *Ps 27:3; 118:8-9; 40:4; 62:5-6; 22:5; Isa 50:10; Prov 14:26*

B. You will flourish. *Ps 52:8; 1:3; 92:13-14*

1. Your security will be unshakeable. *Ps 34:8; Isa 44:4; Phil 1:6; Ezek 47:12*

2. When hard times come, you will endure. *2 Cor 4:8-11, 16-18*

- There is no promise that those who trust God will avoid trials. *Jer 14:1; 42:16*

- The believer lives above circumstances.

- These trials are used by God to strengthen you. *Heb 12:6-11; Rom 5:3-4*

- The remnant will take root and be renewed. *Isa 37:31*

3. You will flourish: continually bearing fruit unto the glory of God. *John 15:5*

Personalize Psalm 23 to Your Counselees

A. Believers who are living in fear have lost sight of the fact that the Lord is their Shepherd

B. It's not about changing circumstances but recognizing that right now the Lord is your Shepherd.

Gen 49:24; 48:15; Ps 77:20

1. He cares for you. *Ps 23; 2-3*

2. He meets your needs. *Ps 23:1*

3. He feeds you. *Ps 23:5*

4. He helps you get through the evil times. *Ps 23:4*

C. Be honest and realistic: You may not be delivered from trials, but God will be with you.

1. Being his sheep does not exempt you from temporary hardship and danger.

- The Lord will sustain you through the valley of the shadow of death. *Ps 23:4*

- It may be God's sovereign purpose to let you suffer through that which you were afraid
Heb 11:32-40

2. The Good Shepherd Never Leaves You. *Exod 3:12; Isa 43:2; John 10:12-13*

- Even in hardship your faith does not have to fail

Data Gathering/Interpretation

A. Of what is the counselee afraid?

B. Why is the counselee afraid?

1. Past experience (i.e., abuse, etc.).
2. Experiences of others (e.g. friend died of cancer).

C. What is the counselee's view of God?

Homework for Those Who Fear

A. Follow the same assignments as listed in the section on worry.

B. Learn to trust God, focusing upon the keys to overcoming fear. *Prov 3:5-6; Jas 4:13-17*

C. Keep a fear journal.



Books

Fitzpatrick, Elyse, *Overcoming Fear, Worry and Anxiety*.

Mack, Wayne, *The Fear Factor*.

Mack, Wayne, *Homework Manual for Biblical Living Volume 1*.

Welch, Ed, *When People are Big and God is Small*.



Booklets

Adams, Jay, *What Do You Do When Fear Overcomes You?*

Emlet, Michael R., *OCD: Freedom for the Obsessive-Compulsive*.



Audios

Fitzpatrick, Elyse. "For Women Worriers."

Newheiser, Jim "Don't Worry, Be Holy. Matt 6:25-34."

Newheiser, Jim "How to Have Joy and Peace. Philippians 4:4-7"

Scippione, George. "What, Me Worry?"



Supplemental Resources

Gustafson, Darrell. "The Panic 'Fear' Attack."

"Fear Homework Assignment Samples"

"Solutions to Fear"

"Worry Homework – Sample Assignments"