

FEARLESS

IMAGINE YOUR LIFE WITHOUT FEAR

SMALL GROUP
DISCUSSION GUIDE

MAX LUCADO



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

NASHVILLE DALLAS MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO BEIJING

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FEAR OF DISAPPOINTING GOD

READ

Read Chapter 3 from *Fearless* before you meet this week.

You may think you have no access to God—that you have disappointed him beyond repair. But it's not true! If you fear you have blown it, take heart in these words: "Yes, you failed. We've all failed. But you aren't a failure. God came for people like us." This week you will have a chance to hand your embarrassments, failures, and regrets to God so you can start again with a clean slate, trusting him to love you despite your past.

REFLECT

Answer the questions in this section before you meet this week.

Noble Doss was a successful college and professional football player. In his college career he dropped a pass that cost his team a trip to the Rose Bowl, and although he has accomplished great things in his athletic career since that moment, it's still something he thinks about with deep sadness and embarrassment every day.

- ♦ Do you have a mistake or embarrassment that you think of daily?

Embracing the perfect forgiveness that is ours through Christ can be a daily struggle. When Jesus healed the paralytic man in Matthew 9, he didn't simply heal the man's legs. He also bolstered the man's hope when he announced that his sins were forgiven.

- ♦ Do you hope for your sins to be forgiven—or are you looking for something more temporary (legs that won't walk, for example) to be healed?

- ♦ If you answered, "No, I don't worry about the forgiveness of my sins," look a little deeper. Is it possible that sin is at the root of your other problems?

In the garden of Eden, the serpent tempted Eve; he said that God was unable to deliver what she needed. Eve quit trusting God and took matters—and the fruit—into her own hands.

- ♦ How did fear inform Eve's actions?
- ♦ Is there an area of your life where you're holding on too tightly, where you fear God can't provide so you'll have to do it yourself?

DISCUSS

Engage in conversation about these questions within your small group.

Noble Doss was happily married for six decades. He was a father and grandfather. He served in the navy during World War II and appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine with his University of Texas football team. But the memory of one dropped past faded too slowly, a daily disappointment that he never could shake. Fifty years later, his shame still brought him to tears.

- ✦ Do you live with a regret that you remember often?

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- ♦ What have you done to overcome a pattern of dwelling on past failures?

Many of us fear we have “outsinned” God’s patience. “God’s well of grace must have a bottom to it,” we reason. “A person can request forgiveness only so many times,” our common sense contends. “Cash in too many mercy checks, and sooner or later one is going to bounce.” The devil loves this line of logic. He wants us to doubt that God really has unconditional love for us, a love that will survive any offense, no matter how often we make it.

LESSON 3

FEAR OF DISAPPOINTING GOD

- ♦ You may know in your head that God says he’ll always forgive, but does your heart believe it? How does your spirit respond to this?

- ♦ What do you believe is the devil’s role in our fear of disappointing God?

FEARLESS

- ♦ How can you think rightly about God's love for you?

To sin is to disregard God, ignore his teachings, deny his blessings. Sin is "God-less" living, centering life on the center letter of the word *sin*. The sinner's life is me-focused, not God-focused. And because the sinner's life is focused inward, fear is rampant. A sinful life is absent the bedrock of God's grace, something we will only know when we look toward God.

- ♦ What is your definition of sin?

LESSON

3

FEAR OF DISAPPOINTING GOD

- ♦ Is it possible that we can only find real bravery when the problem of sin is solved?

Fear, when mismanaged, leads to sin. Sin leads to hiding. When we know we are wrong, we do not see the One who can do no wrong. So instead we hide—not in bushes like Adam and Eve, but in eighty-hour workweeks, temper tantrums, and religious busyness. We avoid contact with God.

- ♦ Why is hiding our first response?

- ♦ What emotion or need does hiding satisfy? What would contact with God truly satisfy?

Jesus loves us too much to leave us in doubt about his grace. His “perfect love expels all fear” (1 John 4:18 NLT). If God loved with an imperfect love, we would have high cause to worry. Imperfect love keeps a list of sins and consults it often. God keeps no list of our wrongs. His love casts out fear because he casts out our sin!

- ♦ Explore the role faith plays in accepting God’s perfect love.

When you feel unforgiven, evict the feelings. Emotions don’t get a vote. To welcome them to dinner and invite them to stay the night is to kick God out to the curb. To welcome fear with open arms is to reject Christ’s promise of security, love, and life. So, when feelings of doubt and dread creep in, send them packing.

- ♦ How can you send doubt packing?

WRAP UP

The great news of the gospel is that God's grace is real. Take some time this week to write down the moments in your life when God's grace has given you a clear view of him. Keep this list as a reminder when storm clouds start to gather overhead again.

MEMORY VERSE

"He who believes in Him is not condemned."

John 3:18

