

## Anxiety and Fear Disposal (5)

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The Bible highlights three primary fears: fear of death, fear of financial ruin, and fear of other people. Of the three, fear of other people can be the most subtle and menacing. *“Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.” (Proverbs 29:25)*

- \*Peer pressure
- \*Your own appearance
- \*View of self changes on the basis of accomplishments or the opinions of others.
- \*Showing favoritism
- \*Saying yes when you should says no
- \*Public actions look better than private thoughts and behaviors
- \*Difficulty loving others because you don’t feel love from them
- \*Care what others think of you to the point of excess

A “yes” answer to any of these means you are acquainted with the fear of man.

### I. GRASSHOPPERS

The instinct of fear has a long history. When the 12 spies were sent to search out the land God had given them, two gave a good report and 10 gave a “fearful” report. (Numbers 13:27-33). Fearing people, being controlled by people, or putting your trust in people—they are all the same thing. *“This is what the Lord says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.” (Jeremiah 17:5-8)*

A. Can you think of other stories in the Bible where we see trust placed in people rather than the Lord?

B. Where in your own life do you allow people to control you? In what ways do you fear them, need something from them, or put your trust in them?

## II. Love Conquers Fear

When clear answers to difficult problems such as this one are elusive, when in doubt, LOVE. Fear and love do not mix. Love expels fear. Children do not fear parents who love them. The principle is clear: you can't fear someone who loves you and whom you love.

If your wife asks: "Why do you love me?" – A wise man will think carefully before he responds. *Why is she asking this?* One reason for the question could be that she does not feel very loveable at the moment.

A. What answers could you give her?

B. The right answer is "I love you because I love you." Why is that the right answer? It has nothing to do with circumstances. It is an answer consistent with the Gospel.

God took all the initiative. He loved you while you were an enemy of His. He does not love you because you are great, but because He is love. Such love is unwavering and secure. The Cross of Jesus-the ultimate evidence of God's love-establishes it. Go ahead; try doubting the Lord's self-sacrificing love revealed at the cross. You can't do it. He loves you because He is love. That is humbling and wonderful.

C. Do you believe this? How do your actions and fears show that you don't really believe it?

D. We all want to be loved, but imagine what it would be like to desire to love more than to be loved, even if that only outweighed your desire to be loved by a small fraction. What are some examples of ways you could love more than you seek love?

E. If you were to employ this divine strategy in your own life, how would the opinions of other people become less controlling?

### III. Fear and Shame

To give more love than you are trying to receive is always good, and it can usually break the spell of the fear of man. However, when fear is coupled with shame, shame confuses relationships and leaves you feeling worthless and dominated by others. You should be on guard if you use any of these words to describe yourself:

- \*Unwanted
- \*Defiled
- \*Abandoned
- \*Rejected
- \*Unclean
- \*Shunned
- \*Exposed

Shame arrives on the scene when sins are made public. Sexual sins are the most common. When it is revealed that you have done something considered “taboo”- that is considered shameful-you feel isolated and dirty. Walk into the room and conversation stops.

When Jesus entered history, everything changed, including the prescription for shame. Jesus preferred hanging out with people considered unclean. (See Luke 7:36-39). Like fear, shame can make us want to run and hide-but not when the shamed person thinks of Jesus.

A. Do you believe that about Jesus? How does your shame affect you?

B. Even if you do not experience shame, all this should make you very hopeful, especially considering any fears of condemnation you might have. The fact that He says: “I am with you” means that you never have to fear dealing with anything alone.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

1. Identify your fear of other people
2. Make the connection between fearing people, needing what people can give you, and loving what other people can give you more than loving God.

3. Imagine the freedom that comes when the fear of man leaves-that freedom, rather than detaching you from others, allows you to love more deeply.
4. Grow in your desire for unbalanced love.