

“SOULed OUT”
Session 3: Destructive and Constructive Fear
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INTRODUCTION

FEAR IS...

A feeling of reverence, awe, and respect, or an unpleasant emotion caused by a sense of danger. Fear may be directed toward God or others, and it may be either healthy or harmful.

Uncertainty in the face of danger

All of us fear what we cannot control

It centers on the question: Will God protect me?

Why people fear death:

- Separation
- Loneliness
- Uncertainty
- Loss of Resources
- Loss of Companionship

While Anger is the strategy of Action, Fear is the strategy of Flight

I. Destructive Fear

A harmful fear is a sense of terror or dread. Believers are instructed not to fear human beings because they cannot ultimately harm us.

Luke 12:4-9

"I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. "I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God.

II. Fear of Authority or Punishment

Romans 13:3-5

For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

Romans 1:18

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

Examples of “Fear of God” in the Bible - Either Dread or Respect

- Adam and Eve (Genesis 3)
- Noah, in preparing to build the ark (Hebrews 11)
- Abraham, tested in the offering of his son Isaac (Genesis 22)
- Jacob, in the vision of the ladder, and the covenant of God (Genesis 28:16-17)
- The midwives of Egypt, in refusing to take the lives of the Hebrew children (Exodus 1)
- The Egyptians, at the time of the plague of thunder and hail and fire (Exodus 9)
- Obadiah, in sheltering one-hundred prophets against the wrath of Jezebel (1 Kings 18)
- Jehoshaphat, in proclaiming a feast, when the land was about to be invaded by the armies of the Ammonites and Moabites (2 Chronicles 20)
- Nehemiah, in his reform of the public administration (Nehemiah 5:15)
- Demons (James 2:19)
- The guards at Jesus' tomb (Matthew 28)
- The women at the grave after Jesus rose (Matthew 28)
- Cornelius, who revered God with all his house (Acts 10)

Awe is not appreciation: It is stone cold terror at the sense of otherness. “I can’t believe this... I am overwhelmed... I feel very small...”

Q: Why do you think the Bible uses such a loaded word like fear in describing our relationship to God? Example: a person described as a “God fearer”

Psalm 147:11

The LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.

Psalm 111:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.

I John 4:18

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

Q: How do hope, love and understanding relate to fear of God?

III. When Fear is out of Balance:

- A. Fear makes us strive for comfort and control.
- B. Fear can distort and give false perceptions
- C. Fear can dominate our thinking

1 Peter 5:8-9

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers and sisters throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

IV. Constructive Fear

Psalm 46:1-5

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

Selah (Pause)

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.

God Tells us NOT to Fear - He doesn't say that about Anger...

Isaiah 41:10

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Romans 8:15-16

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Q: How can we actually stop an emotion like fear?

"Don't' Be Afraid"

Genesis 50:21

Joseph said to his brothers, "So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

Nehemiah 4:14

*After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."
(NIV)*

II Kings 6:16

"Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

Matt hew10:31

So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Matthew 14:27

Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

Matthew 17:7

Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid."

Luke 5:9-10

Simon Peter and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men."

Luke 8:50

Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."

John 6:20

Jesus said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid."

Matthew 17:7-8

Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

V. Redefining Fear

Psalm 25:14-21

The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them. My eyes are ever on the LORD, for only he will release my feet from the snare. Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish. Look upon my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins. See how my enemies have increased and how fiercely they hate me! Guard my life and rescue me; let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you. May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope is in you.

For Personal Reflection:

A. What are you most afraid of?

B. When you are faced with a threat do you tend to get angry or fearful?

C. Have you ever been able to overcome fear by reminding yourself that Jesus is with you? What happened?

D. When you hear the phrase “Fear God” what comes to mind? Is it positive or negative for you?

Coming up...

October 10 Dark and Divine Desire

October 17 The Loss and Restoration of Hope

With more to come...

This series is based on a number of books, but a key text is “*The Cry of the Soul: How our emotions reveal our deepest questions about God*” by Dr. Dan B. Alexander and Dr. Tremper Longman III

The audio and notes for this and previous sessions of this series are available at www.sequimcommunitychurch.org in the Sunday Seminar section