

Lesson 1: What is the Fear of Man?

Before we dig into the study of this course, I'd like to make a few opening remarks that will set our minds on the right path. The first thing that I'd like to bring to your attention is that **this course is a topical study, not an exegetical one**. For those not familiar with the word 'exegetical', exegetical preaching and teaching is what we do here at Emmanuel. We take a book, and preach or teach through it word by word, verse by verse, to discover the author's original intent in their writing. The benefits of exegetical preaching and teaching are many. A major benefit of exegetical preaching and teaching is that the entire counsel of the scripture be taught. As we preach and teach through a book, specific passages that may be difficult, or controversial (culturally speaking) cannot be ignored. A problem specific to topical preaching (teachings that contain certain specific verses that support the topic) is that certain verses that could be problematic to the topic can be ignored. That being said, there is nothing inherently wrong with topical preaching if done correctly. Sometimes we can better understand a doctrine of scripture when we look at it from the bird's eye view of scripture, taking multiple passages and slicing them together to see it as one. So, I want us to see this course as an alternative way of studying the scriptures, not an unbiblical method of study by any stretch, but certainly an unusual way for us as a church. It would never be my intention, or recommendation, to study this way habitually, but I think it will be profitable for us as a short study.

The next remark that I'd like to make about this study is that I feel **it's necessary**. The fear of man is something that is universal, and so I think it will be a blessing to everyone in this room to honestly examine our hearts and combat this sin. I will do my best to be as honest and transparent as possible throughout this study of the fear of man in my own heart, as a way to encourage you in the fact that you're not alone in this sin.

The final remark I'd like to make before we begin, is that **I want to encourage you all to be courageous, and transparent with each other**. There will be times where I will ask questions of the class, in an effort to spark conversation. I will include the questions in your handout, to give you the opportunity to think of something to share before the time comes. I believe that our courage to admit our fears, and share wisdom from scripture before others will help everyone to clearly see the universality of this sin, and it will help us to pray for one another, and help us to grow into a people who fear God alone. **This study will have a maximum impact if you prepare your heart throughout the week.**

You'll notice that I've given you a handout for this study, something that I've done in the past in prior studies (Systematic Theology, and Biblical Theology). I think it may be helpful for us to stay engaged in the class, taking notes where we see fit. I also think not having the notes in your hand helps to keep your eyes on me, so that we set the tone of conversation in this class, more than lecturing. If you're one who would rather read along, or if you missed a point that you wanted to write down, the notes are posted on our website. All that being said, let's begin!

5 – Never 4 – Seldom 3 – Sometimes 2 – Frequently 1 – Always (or Almost)

1. I listen attentively when people discuss matters that please me (or displease me).
2. I strive to be politically correct, more than biblically correct.
3. I like to "fish" for compliments.
4. I gossip about others to people.
5. I desire to achieve/maintain a good reputation.

6. I desire the approval of those I respect in life.
7. I worry about what people think of me.
8. I am willing to sin, rather than be rejected by people.
9. I show favoritism to people.
10. I believe being rejected by most people would be the worst thing in life.
11. I avoid conflicts rather than trying to solve them.
12. I take unnecessary precautions to protect my image.
13. I get angry when people contradict me, especially in public.
14. When I meet someone new, I think about how to impress them so they like me.
15. My fear of rejection stops me from being close to people.
16. I forget that being rejected is part of my Christian calling.
17. I want to be noticed, more than I want to be godly.
18. I give in to peer pressure, more than I stand up for the truth.
19. I do not evangelize often because I fear being criticized or rejected.
20. I dwell on criticism too much and allow it to depress me.

Bonus question: (eyes closed, hand raised) Would you be embarrassed if your score became public knowledge?

FOM Survey: Gather info and plug in Results

96-100, 90-95, 80-89, 70-79, 69 or below

Helpful Resources:

When People are Big, and God is Small – Edward Welch (2)

Pleasing People – Lou Priolo (2)

Humility, True Greatness – C.J. Mahaney (2)

At the top of your handout, you'll see Proverbs 29:25, which is the verse attached to the slide photo for this class. This verse is the key verse for this course, and is something that you would do well to memorize, **"The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe."**

The next quote that you'll read in your handout, is a quote from Ed Welch, answering the question, *"What is the fear of man?"* Ed Welch is a counselor and faculty member at the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation. He has written extensively on the topics of depression, fear, and addictions. He is a well-known, and well-respected voice in this conversation by many of the ministries that you know and love. In his book, "When People are big and God is Small" he writes, **"Many of the people I've talked to also had an awakening when they saw the controlling power of other people. They awoke to an epidemic of soul called, in biblical language, 'the fear of man.' Although they were avowed worshippers of the true God, below the surface they feared other people. That is not to say that they were terrified by, or afraid of others (although sometimes they were). 'Fear' in the biblical sense is a much broader word. // It includes being afraid of someone, but it extends to holding someone in awe, being controlled or mastered by people, worshipping other people, putting your trust in people, or**

needing people...However you put it, the fear of man can be summarized this way: We replace God with people. Instead of a biblically guided fear of the Lord, we fear others."

Title Screen

I came across an article on the website "Psychology Today" to get an idea (from the world's perspective) of what people fear the most. I had visited a few websites before that one, and learned from them that many people fear receiving a terminal illness most. Another website listed losing a loved one most. Another website listed death first. And then I came across a website that listed public speaking. It struck me funny that people according to that website would prioritize dying over giving a speech, but this isn't the first time I've heard this. John MacArthur gave this statistic from the pulpit once, even joking that people would rather be in the casket than give the eulogy!

The article I read spoke about a psychologist, Dr. Signe Dayhoff, who suffered from social anxiety every time he was about to give a lecture to his students at the university where he teaches. He said, *"My tongue stuck to the roof of my dry mouth and I couldn't swallow, I blushed, sweated and trembled."* His anxiety got worse and worse as the years went along. His fear of public speaking got so bad that it interfered with his work, so he found help. He continues, *"As I recovered 12 years ago, using cognitive-behaviour therapy, patience, persistence, and practice, I found that nearly 20 million individuals at any one time suffer from some form of social anxiety. They fear being negatively evaluated in anything they do; fear being rejected; fear being abandoned."*

The fear of man is not limited to terror at the idea of public speaking; it extends to every facet of our lives, at every level of interaction with other people. People we know, people we don't know, people we don't even really care to have a good opinion of us. I often struggle with a desire for respectability in the eyes of the world. So maybe you've had the experience of doing a Christian "activity" in public and felt some embarrassment, when you bow your head to give thanks for a meal in a restaurant you look around to see if there's anyone you know, or to make sure the wait staff won't be coming back for at least 60 seconds. Maybe you've had to go to the doctor, and you know you've got a good forty-five minute wait, so you bring a Christian book along, but you try to find the one with the more ambiguous title, or one that's a bit smaller in size, so that it is easily concealed if you happen to come across someone you know.

Why would anyone ever be ashamed to be seen doing things that would identify them as a Christian, let alone be ashamed before people whose good opinion they really don't care to possess? Why would Be ashamed before people whose names we don't even know, and we'll never see again? Well, like Peter denying Christ to a mere servant girl, my fear of man and your fear of man is not always governed by logical consistency.

I. Where and How Do We Struggle with the FOM?

1. We see it in the workplace

When you work (or when you worked), do you strive to work hard so that people admire your work ethic? Or maybe you purposely don't work as hard as you could, because then others might think you're trying to get on the boss' good side? What about gossip at work: Do you partake in gossip because you

want the ease of fitting in (all the while being glad that the gossip isn't about you)? Do you stop the gossip in its tracks, or are you concerned about what people might think of you if you did?

2. We experience it in how we handle conflict

The fear of man is not limited merely to how we act or what we say, it is also related to what we choose not to say or do. In the way I respond to conflict, I demonstrate my tendency to fear man more than God. I don't love addressing sin in others, sometimes I even avoid difficult conversations, in case they have a negative opinion towards me. I would rather continue to be wronged by someone than to blow-up at them, or for that matter to biblically deal with their sin. Why do I respond in these ways? It can appear as though I'm being a peacemaker, not wanting to stir the pot, but too often I'm a peace-lover rather than a peacemaker. I would rather people maintain a good opinion of me, than honestly and sometimes painfully deal with the problem.

3. In our families the fear of man is exposed

How do we relate to our parents? While it's biblical and right to honour our parents, do we actually crave the approval of our parents too much? How many of us have unsaved parents who do not agree with the Christian faith? How much do we try and hide our faith so as to avoid conflict or discussion? What about in our parenting: While we may not admit it to ourselves, how much do we think our kids behaviour is a direct reflection on our parenting? Our kids can become badges of honor (or shame) before others. We crave the honour and respect of our family members.

4. Even in the Church

The church is another place the Lord uses to grow us in fearing him more, fearing others less, and love them more. Yet, it often tends to be a place that our fear of others good opinions can become dominant. You want to be viewed as mature, or having it together, you think that others around you have it all together and so you can't share your life honestly with them. When we allow our relationships in the church to be characterized by the fear of others, we show that we don't really understand who that other person is, we don't understand who God is, and we don't have an accurate picture of ourselves.

The fear of man runs so deep in my own life that even in teaching this class over the years, I have seen myself fearing you. I fear not handling a certain text with enough grace to satisfy every mind in the room. I fear after many classes whether or not people found the class to be good, or satisfying. I fear whether or not people think I'm even qualified to teach. These fears may be unfounded, and ridiculous to hear, but they are fears that spring up in my heart, and I'm being honest and transparent about the fears that I have.

But I wonder if you've experienced any similar fears of man like I've given examples of? My purpose in sharing some examples from my own life is twofold, to help me challenge my own fears for your respect as we begin this class, but more importantly to start a conversation, to get us to begin looking together at how deep this sin tends to run in our lives, and how it can often be operating outside the realm of our immediate attention. We don't even realize all the ways in which we fear others.

Ed Welch asks a number of questions to help us diagnose our fear of man in *When People Are Big and God Is Small*, pages 14-16, he says “Have you ever struggled with peer pressure?” What are the adult ways in which you succumb to peer pressure: the pursuit of the accomplished work resume—with every move intentionally crafted and flawlessly executed—the need for the perfect spouse, the perfect child, the job title, the house in the right neighborhood, the physical appearance (hair, clothes, the right body), and the list goes on...

Diagnostic Questions:

*Are you over-committed? Do you find that it is hard to say no even when wisdom indicates that you should?

*Do you “need” something from your spouse, your boyfriend/girlfriend, your friend? Do you “need” them to listen to you? Respect you? Do you need them to fulfill a certain role you desire?

*Is Self-esteem a critical concern for you?

*Do you ever feel as if you might be exposed as an imposter? The sense of being exposed, even among the apparently successful, is an expression of the fear of man.

Advance Slide

*Are you always second-guessing decisions because of what other people might think? Are you afraid of making mistakes that will make you look bad in other people’s eyes? Are you afraid to risk?

*Do you feel empty or meaningless? Do you experience “love hunger”? Here again, if you need others to fill you, you are controlled by them.

*Do you get easily embarrassed?

*Do you ever lie, especially the little white lies? What about cover-ups where you are not technically lying with your mouth? Lying and other forms of living in the dark are usually ways to make ourselves look better before other people. They also serve to cover our shame before them.

Advance Slide

*Are you jealous of other people?

*Do other people often make you angry or depressed? Are they making you crazy?

*Do you avoid people?

*Aren’t most diets, even when they are ostensibly under the heading of ‘health,’ dedicated to impressing others? Or for that matter an obsession with physical fitness.

*Have all these descriptions missed the mark? When you compare yourself with other people, do you feel good about yourself? Perhaps the most dangerous form of the fear of man is the ‘successful’ fear of man. Such people think they have made it. They have more than other people. They feel good about themselves. But their lives are still defined by other people rather than God.

*Have any of these descriptions and questions captured you yet? One more question, “have you ever been too timid to share your faith in Christ because others might think you are an irrational fool?”

If you haven't started to gather this yet, the purpose of this study on the topic of the fear of man is not to give you the tools for a boosted self-esteem, rather we are going to begin exploring what the fear of man looks like in our lives and in our culture, what we have been called to (fearing God and loving others), how we have lost this focus, and how we can begin to re-establish the fear of God in our lives and regain a right perspective about ourselves and others. During these classes we will explore the various ways we most often tend to be controlled by the fear of man, for only as we begin to categorize our struggles in this area, are we able to see the paths that biblical repentance must travel. Throughout the next lessons we will see explicitly that overcoming the fear of others is not something we can accomplish on our own. There is One who didn't give into the fear of man and gave Himself up so that we could fear God rightly and thereby begin seeing enslavement to the fear of man eliminated.

A Time for Discussion: What is one of your fear of man stories?

New job – pressures to perform, and please, while remaining godly in every other aspect

II. Categories of Fear of Man

In lessons 3, 4, and 5, we will closely examine the three primary ways in which we tend to fear man:

1. We fear **physically harm**; this can relate to any number of things: The bully down the street, the violent spouse, the violence in your neighborhood, an angry person, sexual abuse and harassment, verbal mockery and insults, Christian persecution/physical suffering for the Gospel, terrorism, racism.
2. We fear that people will **reject us**; this is often connected to things about us in comparison to other people: We judge and compare social standing: Where do I live, what do I drive, what else do I possess? Relationships: I am friends with him/her. I am a part of this inner circle. Was I invited to that party or that outing. Experiences: I have traveled to these countries, been a part of these events, was there when "this happened." Education: What assessments do you make of other people? What assessment do you make of yourself when you hear that someone went to an Ivy League school, prestigious university, private school, community college. Character: Sharing the Gospel, being honest, telling the whole truth even when you know it won't help your image, doing the right thing, etc.

*The fear of being rejected takes on different shapes depending on which side of these equations we find ourselves; if we lack any of these things, we may tend to feel inadequate, worthless, inconsequential; if we possess these things, we may feel contempt towards those that lack these things, we may feel superior, we may condescendingly pity others.

3. We fear the people will **expose us**; a fear of exposure may manifest itself in a variety of activities and attitudes: Pornography/lust, voyeurism, which at its heart seeks to separate sexual pleasure from the hard work and vulnerability of marital commitment and responsibility. Obsession with other forms of fantasy, video games, virtual realities, or role playing. Escapism: drugs/alcohol, food/eating disorders, music/television—at the heart of many addictions you will find this type of fear of man. Perfectionism. Obsession with Work: the young person that comes to work simply to "make a name" for himself, only to waste a lifetime hiding behind fading accomplishments. Hyper-masculinity and Feminism: We see a fear of exposure running through gender role confusions. Hyper-individuality and self-reliance.

As we think through these categories of the fear of man in the coming weeks and whether they are characterizing your life, think of some operative words that would describe your relationship to all of those things/ideas/attitudes. Would you say: I love, I need, I would be devastated not to have, I would hate to have or experience, I am controlled by, I am obsessed with, I would die for, etc. **At the center of a heart that wrongly fears man is a heart that loves self more than God.**

Throughout the next lessons, we will be exploring what the fear of man looks like, what the fear of God looks like, what it would mean to live a life that fears God more than man, and finally understanding that we need a new vision for life, an understanding of what it means to live a life that is controlled by a desire to love God and love neighbor. All of us have seen the fear of man in our lives, but what do we do to begin addressing it in a Gospel centered fashion? This is what we intend to consider in the coming weeks.

III. Who Fears Man?

I Corinthians 10:13 says, **“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man...”** So, who struggles with the fear of man? Well, according to Scripture, this is something everyone struggles with, and as we will see a little later, some of the strongest figures in Scripture were plagued by this struggle. Fear of man is a universal struggle, it is not limited to position, social standing, personality. So who struggles with the fear of man? The apparently strong do, as do the weak, the rich and influential, the poor and inconsequential, the timid, the bold, the believer, and the unbeliever alike.

It is incredibly encouraging, whether in examining this sin or others to be reminded of the truth in I Corinthians 10. One of Satan’s first lines of attack is to convince us that we are the only ones struggling with a particular sin or that our struggle is particularly unique. This is one of the beautiful aspects of being a part of a church, through our involvement in each other’s lives, through honest and transparent conversations with people that according to the world’s designation of status and position and background are completely different from ourselves, we begin to see the commonality of our sin and from there the commonality of our shared hope in Christ.

One of the surest ways to continue struggling with the fear of man is to continue believing you’re the only one going through this struggle or to see your struggle as unique and to refuse to share that struggle with another person.

A Time for Discussion: What are ways you have seen the fear of man in your life?

- I joke too much because I really want people to like me
- If you don’t like me, for any reason, it devastates me. I need to fix it.
- I keep a clean house, but I super-clean it if I know ANYONE is coming over
- I eat well, but I choose a big spread when I have company coming over to impress
- I’ll never dance in front of anyone... literally anyone
- I post where I’ve been on Facebook
- I post what I’ve ate on Facebook

IV. Why do we fear man?

1. **Past experience** tells us that man can cause us harm and pain and difficulties; we are not looking for solutions to our fear of man. Life hurts, we will be rejected, and we will be exposed. In a verse we'll look at later, Christ tells us not to fear those who can only kill the body but do no more. In other words, people can kill us, but even that is not the worst thing to fear.

2. We are proud and self-centered. **Pride** is at the heart of our fear of man. Pride is not limited to the self-confident; it is at the center of the insecure and codependent person. Both individuals are orienting themselves to others on the basis of how they compare: the self-pitying introverted factory labourer is every bit as proud as the egotistical and aggressive CEO.

3. We have a **needs based view of other people**. I need her love, I need his respect and interest in me, I need my children's obedience, I need his friendship, I need a good church, I need these clothes, I need this type of education, I need meaningful work... It becomes very easy to move from using the word *need* to believing that we actually *deserve*.

4. We have a **wrong view of what we truly need** and what we deserve. While all the things that I just mentioned are good things, is it ultimately true that I "need" those things? I may want those things, there may be great advantage to having those things, I may function best with those things, but as a Christian I must ultimately say that no, I don't need these things. The only thing I truly need in this life, or the next, is for my sins to be atoned for so that I may be reconciled to God. Furthermore, the only thing I truly deserve is to spend an eternity in hell for the sins I have committed.

Ed Welch (not in student notes) says, *"If we think that sin is in any way superficial, then we do not understand the true nature of sin. When psychological needs, rather than sin, are seen as our primary problem, not only is our self-understanding affected, but the gospel itself is changed. A needs problem suggests that the gospel is, most deeply, intended to meet psychological needs. In other words, the gospel is aimed at our self-esteem problem. It is aimed at our tendency to dwell on our failures. It is intended to be a statement of God's love saying that 'God doesn't make junk.' This sounds good to us, but it is not the gospel. The good news of Jesus is not intended to make us feel good about ourselves. // Instead, the good news humbles us. In Isaiah 6, for example, the presence of God first destroyed Isaiah's view of himself, then it cleansed him and liberated him from himself and his own sinful desires. After his symbolic cleansing and liberation, Isaiah was freed to be less concerned about himself and more concerned about the plan of God. Jesus did not die to increase our self-esteem. Rather, Jesus died to bring glory to the Father by redeeming people from the curse of sin. Of course, the cross has many benefits, one being that we are no longer cast out of the presence of God and we have intimacy with the Holy one. But the cross deals with our sin problem, our spiritual need."*

As we begin to re-examine what we truly need and deserve, we are able to reorient ourselves according to the one who endured pain, rejection, and exposure to shame. Throughout this course we will be looking at the fear of man through the lens of the Gospel. Dealing with the fear of man apart from Christ's work on the cross may provide some temporary relief and some boosted self-confidence, but it will never get to the heart of the solution we so desperately need: a changed heart, eyes that can see.

V. What does Scripture say about the fear of man?

1. If we are to better understand the fear of man, we must turn to Scripture. What does Scripture say about fearing others? The fear of man originated at the Fall. Genesis 3:6-7, **"When the**

woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.”

2. The fear of man is also short-sighted and insufficient. Luke 12:4-5, **“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.”**
3. It is a destructive trap. Proverbs 29:25, **“Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.”**
4. It’s the opposite of love. 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.”**
5. It minimizes the nature of our position in Christ. Romans 8:35, 38-39, **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**
6. It can only be overcome through the power of the Gospel (Romans 8:31-34/ I John 4:7-12).

VI. Examples In Scripture of Those Who Fear Men More Than God

Adam (Genesis 3),

Abraham (Genesis 12:10-13) still called Abram, feared that Pharaoh would kill him because of his wife’s beauty; therefore he told a half-truth (a whole lie). Abraham was the father of a nation that would struggle with the fear of man; it is wrong to think that our giving into the fear of man will only affect ourselves.

Lot (Genesis 19) demonstrates that fearing man more than God has ramifications far beyond our own lives. Notice Lot, particularly his fear of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah and the fruit that bore in the lives of his family. His daughters impregnated themselves by their father, and his wife became a pillar of salt for love of the city.

Jacob (Genesis 27:41-44) flees to Laban because of fear that Esau will kill him.

Moses (Exodus 2:11-17; Numbers 20:9-13) as a young man flees after killing a man, knowing what he had done could result in punishment and death. Later in his life as the leader of Israel, he strikes the rock; his anger with the people caused him to fear them more than to trust and fear God.

Aaron (Exodus 32:22-24) gives in to the Israelites' demands to fashion idols of gold and then defends his motives and actions before Moses.

Samson (Judges 14:14-17, 16:4-20) gives in to his nagging wife, and later in his response to Delilah, his fear of man was met with an immediate and tragic result.

Saul (I Samuel 18) responds in jealous anger to David's ascendancy.

Jonah (Jonah 4:1-4) is outraged by God's compassion upon Ninevah; his fear of man was manifest in hatred towards the Ninevites.

The Pharisees (many examples throughout the Gospels) feared both the response and opinions of other people, and they viewed those not like themselves with an air of superiority and condescension.

Peter (Luke 22:54-62) denies Christ; (Galatians 2:11-21) Paul confronts Peter for his allying himself to the Judaizers, fearing their opinion and thus adjusting his doctrine in practice and thereby confusing the Gospel.

This is not meant to be an exhaustive examination of the treatment of the fear of man in Scripture, but instead to be exemplary. We will look at many of these verses and examples in greater detail in coming weeks as we seek to gain a better understanding of how Scripture speaks to the fear of man and the fear of the Lord.

VII. What fruit does the fear of man produce in our lives?

In one sense it's difficult to say what fruit the fear of man produces in our lives, the fear of man is the fruit of not living in the fear of the Lord, it is the fruit of pride and self-dependency in our lives,

1. Discontentment—if my hope and trust is being placed in the opinions of other people, I will never be truly satisfied.
2. Unhealthy dependence upon others—my orientation towards others is not correct; therefore, I will need them in an unhealthy manner.
3. Cynicism (definition: Someone that believes that people are motivated purely by self-interest, and they are distrustful of human sincerity or integrity) — if I value the opinions of other people, more than the opinion of the Lord, I will grow cynical as I see that other people cannot bear the weight of my expectations.
4. Bitterness—discontent and cynicism will lead to bitterness the deeper fear of man runs its course in my life.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Based on point VII, How do you see the fruit of fear of man in your life?

- Discontentment: I can never buy enough items that will meet my desire to fulfill my heart, and impress others
- Unhealthy dependence: My life is so full with my kids and my pets, what will happen when they're all gone?

- Cynical: Because I've been lied to, or damaged in the past emotionally, I now no longer trust anyone. I believe that most people at best are using me to their own advantage.
- Bitterness – People aren't treating me with the respect and admiration that I feel that I deserve.

VIII. What does the world do with the fear of man?

We have spent a good deal of time thinking about how the fear of man is in us, what it does to us, how it is woven into the very fabric of our culture. It would be good to spend a few minutes considering how the world describes the fear of man, what it does to cope with the fear of man, and how it uses the fear of man to its own advantage—how does it exploit fear of man in others? How does the world describe the fear of man and/or its manifestations? **Codependence, peer pressure, perfectionism, egotism, self-esteem language, the alpha male, type A vs. type B personalities**, etc.

How does the world cope?

What does the world do to help people cope with the fear of man? I use the word *cope* because there is very little that claims to offer an ultimate solution. We live in the midst of a therapeutic age, and the unfortunate truth is that much of what is taught in evangelical churches today is more colored by the therapeutic model of secular counselors than is built around what the Scriptures say on this topic.

Al Mohler says, "We live in an age where the primary question asked by most persons is 'am I well?' What they mean is, 'Am I well?' in a psychological sense. We have to understand that for Americans this is normal. It is normal to be told that the self is the center of the meaning system, and that the self is a project that they undertake throughout the entirety of their lives. As a result, most Americans believe that their major problem is something that has happened to them and that their solution is to be found within. In other words, they believe that they have an alien problem that is to be resolved with an inner solution. What the Gospel says, however, is that we have an inner problem that demands an alien solution—a righteousness that is not our own!"

In different cultures, the fear of man is experienced in various ways. Even though we are looking at this topic as Christians living in our culture, we should be aware, and may be aware as some of us are not from this culture, that other cultures may demonstrate the fear of man in a different manner. So, in many Asian cultures, there is a significant emphasis placed upon one's relationship with the family; fear of man and the experience of shame can take on more of a community orientation.

Even in Windsor (and represented in our church), we have different subcultures operating within the larger culture. Yet, the main point is not the variety of manifestations of this struggle, but the core of the problem. The world would have us look at the myriad of manifestations, develop models to approach each of these manifestations, and thereby divert our attention from the true causes and solution.

IX. Is there such a thing as legitimate fear of man versus, sinful fear of man? How do we distinguish between the two?

The short answer is **yes, it is sometimes right and proper to fear others**. I do not mean to give the impression that there is not a right and appropriate way in which we can fear others. **We ought to always respect authority** (police, government, parents, bosses). It is right to fear others in the sense that we afford them proper respect. **It is right to feel a sense of fear when we encounter physically dangerous situations**; it would be foolish to take a cavalier and haphazard approach to danger. It is not wrong or sinful to desire that others would approve of and accept us. It is not wrong to desire that every facet of our lives not be exposed to all. **Fear of others begins to become sinful when it dominates our lives**, when we cross the line from enjoying the approval of others to believing that we need or deserve it. When we are so gripped by fear of being physically hurt that we are unwilling to live as the Lord has called us to live in this world, as strangers and pilgrims, recognizing that we will encounter physical pain. The Christian life is not one that needlessly pursues pain, suffering, rejection, exposure and abuse, but neither is it a religion that understands these things to be ultimate.

X. Conclusion

Without being a reductionist, we fear man because we do not fear God or we do not fear God enough. Each time we give ourselves over to the fear of man we are choosing to love ourselves more and fear God less. Ecclesiastes closes with the admonition to **“Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”** In our next lesson, we will begin unpacking what the fear of God looks like, because until we have a solid grasp of what Scripture means when it calls us to fear the Lord, we will not be able to start addressing the fear of man in our lives.

Questions or Comments?