

Fear and God

If we were going to pick a single word that would characterize our current world it would have to be the word **fear**. No matter where one goes in the world one finds people living in fear. For many it is the fear of war. Thousands around the world are living in fear of a war, a fear that has been a part of their lives since birth. Whole generations have grown up knowing nothing but war. In western countries there is the constant awareness of terrorism and wondering when another mass killing will take place and if we will be there when it happens.

In addition to war, despite the reports of current economic progress, most Americans still have some fears related to the state of our economy. A sudden drop of 800 points in one day in the Dow, as we had a little over a week ago, does not help.

In many places, kids are afraid to go to school or walk the streets. People everywhere are afraid to go out at night, to walk alone in places they once enjoyed, or visit places that were once considered safe. We live in a fearful world.

A few years ago, Time magazine had a cover story on Americans and the anxiety that has gripped our society. The article declared *“Now more than ever we are worrying ourselves sick.”* They detailed some of the drugs that are being used to help people, who are literally worried sick, to cope with the pressures and uncertainties of today’s world.

The questions for Christians are simple, *“As Christians, do we have a better answer than more pills? Is there anything we should we fear and are there things we should not fear? If there are things we need not fear, how do we overcome improper or unnecessary fears we always seem to have?”* Fortunately, there are some principles that can be applied by all of us in our daily living.

First, fear, by itself, is not necessarily wrong. In fact, fear is one of those God given reactions to certain situations designed to protect us. We learned as kids that certain things have danger attached to them and out of fear of being injured we should avoid them. As we have grown older, we have been taught to fear many more things, some rightfully so and others unnecessarily.

Second, there is a difference between fear and realistic concern. There are places we should not go because we live in a world of sin. We should be concerned with the financial resources that God has given us. There many things that should concern us.

The challenge we face is our tendency to worry about that which God has promised to care for. It is too easy for genuine concern to become an unnecessary fear that inhibits our ability to live as God would have us live. Unnecessary fear reflects our inability to trust God for His provision. Our Heavenly Father has promised to care for us. Jesus said, *“Look at the birds of the air and flowers of the fields and remember that just as your Heavenly Father cares for them, so too will He care for you.”* (See Matthew 6:25-34)

What are the biblical principles of fear that should control us?

First, there is something, or perhaps more accurately. someone, we should fear. God's Word teaches us that a fear of God should be a major part of all of our lives. That fear takes on two dimensions.

One of the most important statements in the Bible about fear is the one Jesus made as recorded in Luke 12:4-5, Read those verses.

God is a God of love and generally is not one to be feared as Jesus declared except when one does not belong by faith to Him. The Bible is very clear that every person since Adam and Eve has been born with a sinful nature and has sinned. That sin separates one from God. God has made a provision for our sin through Jesus who took our place on the Cross and that every one of us has a choice to make. We can either accept by faith what Jesus has done and receive forgiveness or we can reject that forgiveness and face the consequences. Jesus made it very clear the greatest fear anyone should have is standing before God un-forgiven of sins because he has never trusted in Jesus.

A second principle is that once we have cared for the fear of eternity without God by accepting Jesus, we still should have a holy fear of an awesome God. That fear of God spoken of in the Bible is not a scared fear but a sense of the awesomeness of God because of who He is. God's majesty, glory and power should cause each of us to have a holy fear of Him. Psalm 111:10 tells us that the **"fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,"** that is the beginning of seeing God for who He is and how He can meet our needs.

There are two sides of God's nature which must be kept in balance. On the one side He is our Heavenly Father and we are invited to come before Him as such and address Him as **"Our Father who is heaven."** On the other side we must never forget that God is the almighty One, the One before whom we must bow in worship and submission. He deserves our adoration and our obedience. Our problem is that we have difficulty seeing God for how great He really is. The more we get to know Him and the power of His being the more we can trust Him, living assured that He is able to do exceedingly above what we ask or think. A true holy fear of God bears fruit in our lives because it reminds us that God can be trusted to keep the promises He has made to care for us.

The third principle is that an unhealthy fear of the future is not necessary because God is in control. Jesus was giving last minute instructions to His disciples before He was to go to the Cross. He knew they would face many challenges and even dangers in the years ahead. Read what He said to them in John 14:27. The peace that He promised is not a peace that comes to those who do not understand the circumstances so are not worried or to those who know the circumstances yet could care less. His peace comes to those who know the dangers and uncertainties but have learned to turn over to God the concerns that otherwise would bring fear. Real peace is not found in escaping difficulty but in knowing that we are not alone in it and that He who is with us is able. Real peace comes when we learn to take God at his word and place

our burden upon Him. Jesus said His yoke is light and He is ready to add our cares to it if we will only place them there.

Exodus 19:3-6 presents a picture of God and His relationship to His people. Read those verses. Think about being a treasured possession of the God who is all powerful and promised to meet our every need. In the New Testament Peter use the same imagery to talk about us as Christians. Read I Peter 2:9. Because we are a special possession to God, we do not need to fear that which we cannot control but He can.

The book of Revelation was written to describe the events that will precede the return of Jesus, although the message is applicable in all generations. In Revelation Jesus described the terrible events that will occur before His return and the degree to which Christians will be persecuted and even killed. But in Revelation declares that even in the midst of unbelievable suffering, we need not fear. Revelation is hardly underway when the secret to peace instead of fear is given. Read Revelation 1:17 which tells us, literally, *“Do not be afraid because I am in complete control.”*

An unhealthy fear of today or tomorrow is not necessary if we remember that God truly is in total control of time and eternity and every promise He has ever made will be fulfilled. That does not mean we will not be tried, but it does mean that He will be with us in everything. It does not mean that we will not want but it does mean that He will supply all of the needs He sees as real needs. That does not mean we will not face incredible difficulties, or even escape martyrdom, but read Revelation, in 2:10.

Fear is the by-product of sin and the sinful world in which we live. There are legitimate things happening every day that would be cause to move from caution to fear were it not for the truth that Jesus presented. Read John 16:33. We face an uncertain future, but we must remember He holds the future in His hand. As we walk through the years ahead, He walks with us and even when we come to the point of exchanging time for eternity, He has promised to walk through that valley with us also. God says, *“Trust me and allow me to carry all your cares.”* That is real freedom from fear in a world that seems to know nothing but fear.