

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues

Topic 46 – Fear of Man

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Introduction

How about these situations?

When in a group and someone says something a crude/rude and everyone laughs, you heartily approve or at least give a slight response so no one will think you aren't a member of the group.

Sinching so you can fit into a group that you desire to belong to.

You boast, exaggerate, or lie to make yourself look good.

You are overly dependent on people for affection and acceptance.

You cannot say "no" because you don't want to disappoint people and therefore are overcommitted.

You are easily embarrassed or overly concerned about what others may think of you.

You are controlled by the opinions and values of others.

Not speaking truth for fear of rejection.

These are examples of behavior stemming from an ungodly fear of man. We could also call this succumbing to peer pressure or being a people-pleaser. Today let's look at what God has to say about being a people-pleaser.

Fear of Man Defined

Remember, "phobos" is the Greek word for fear. One of the meanings, determined by context, describes someone who fears or pleases people instead of God.

⁴²Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing *Him*, for **fear** that they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³**for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.** John 12:42-43

⁴⁴"I say to you, My friends, do not **be afraid** of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. ⁵But I will warn you whom to **fear**: **fear** the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, **fear Him!** Luke 12:4-5

¹⁰For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. Gal 1:10

The word "man-pleaser" is used in Ephesians 6 and Colossians 3 referring to the service that slaves render their master (or employees render their employer).

⁵Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; ⁶not by way of **eyeservice**, as **men-pleasers**, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. ⁷With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, ⁸knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. Eph 6:5-8

²²Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with **external service**, as those who *merely please men*, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Col 3:22

“Anthropareskos” means to cause people to be pleased with the implication of being in contrast to God or at the sacrifice of some principle. This describes one who tries to make an impression on others, doing things to be seen.

❖ What are some things you do to please people?

The Scriptures paint a dismal picture of the fear of man.

The fear of man brings a snare to your life.

²⁵The **fear of man brings a snare**, But he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted. Prov 29:25

A person who trusts in people is cursed. They make people their strength and their heart is turned away from the Lord. Instead, blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord.

⁵Thus says the Lord, “**Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, And whose heart turns away from the Lord.**”⁶“For he will be like a bush in the desert And will not see when prosperity comes, But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, A land of salt without inhabitant.”⁷“**Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord And whose trust is the Lord.**”⁸“For he will be like a tree planted by the water, That extends its roots by a stream And will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, And it will not be anxious in a year of drought Nor cease to yield fruit. Jer 17:5-8

Interestingly, by comparing the results of the person whose trust is the Lord with Psalm 1, we find that the person who trusts in the Lord and not in people is someone who has made the Word of God their delight.

¹How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! ²**But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.** ³**He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.** ⁴The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. ⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. ⁶For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish. Psa 1:1-6

Biblical Examples of Fearing Man

There are many examples through the Bible of people who were people-pleasers. They had an ungodly fear of people.

Abraham lied about Sarah being his wife because he feared the people.

¹Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he sojourned in Gerar. ²Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. ... ¹¹Abraham said, “Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. Gen 20:1-11

Herod killed John the Baptist because he was afraid of what his dinner guests might think of him.

⁶But when Herod’s birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before *them* and pleased Herod, ⁷so *much* that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. ⁸Having been prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.” ⁹**Although he was grieved, the king commanded *it* to be given because of his oaths, and because of his dinner guests.** ¹⁰He sent and had John beheaded in the prison. ¹¹And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. ¹²His disciples came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and reported to Jesus. Matt 14:6-12

The Jewish religious leaders who believed in Jesus were afraid to publically confess him because they feared being ostracized from society.

⁴²Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing *Him*, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God. John 12:42-43

Pilate had Jesus killed because he was afraid of the crowd and how that might look to Rome.

²⁴When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this Man’s blood; see *to that* yourselves.” Matt 27:24

¹⁵**Wishing to satisfy the crowd**, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified. Mark 15:15

²³But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. **And their voices began to prevail.** ²⁴And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted. Luke 23:23-24

Peter denied Jesus because he was afraid of his own life and what the crowds might think of him.

⁶⁹Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, “You too were with Jesus the Galilean.” ⁷⁰**But he denied it before them all**, saying, “I do not know what you are talking about.” ⁷¹When he had gone out to the gateway, another *servant-girl* saw him and said to those who were there, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” ⁷²And **again he denied it with an oath**, “I do not know the man.” ⁷³A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Surely you too are *one* of them; for even the way you talk gives you away.” ⁷⁴**Then he began to curse and swear**, “I do not know the man!” And immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, “Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly. Matt 26:69-75

Peter withdrew from the Gentile believers because he feared what the Jewish believers would think.

¹¹But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.

¹²For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, **he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.** ¹³The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. Gal 2:11-13

Biblical Examples of Fearing God

There are also many examples through the Bible of people who feared God above people.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego feared God over the Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. ¹⁷If it be *so*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸But *even if He does not*, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.” Daniel 3:16-18

Peter and John continuing to head God instead of people.

¹⁸And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; ²⁰for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.” Acts 4:18-20

Moses feared God over the his adopted life.

²⁴By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,
²⁵choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,²⁶considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. Heb 11:24-26

Paul feared God over pleasing people.

⁴but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. 1 Thess 2:4

Understanding the Fear of the Lord

God promises that for those who fear Him, there is no need of want (including the approval, affection, acceptance, and praise of other people).

⁸O taste and see that the Lord is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! ⁹O fear the Lord, you His saints; **For to those who fear Him there is no want.** Psalm 34:8-9

Remember from lesson 44 that “phobos” can refer to reverence, respect, honor, and reverential awe. It describes the attitude we should have toward our holy God. We can think of the fear of the Lord as awe of God's might and power, apprehension of God's wrath, and appreciation of God's love.

⁴²They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone kept feeling a sense of **awe**; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. Acts 2:42-43

³¹So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the **fear of the Lord** and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase. Acts 9:31

¹Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the **fear of God.** 2 Cor 7:1

¹²So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling;** ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure. Phil 2:12-13

Solomon with his great wisdom came to this conclusion.

¹³The conclusion, when all has been heard, *is*: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to* every person. Eccles 12:13

The fear of the Lord is essential to a walk with God.

¹How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, Who walks in His ways. Psa 128:1

¹⁰The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do *His commandments*; His praise endures forever. Psa 111:10

⁷The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction. Prov 1:7

¹⁰The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. Prov 9:10

Those who fear the Lord are blessed.

¹How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, Who walks in His ways. Psa 128:1

The Lord takes pleasure in those that fear Him.

¹¹but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love. Psa 147:11 (ESV)

Those that fear the Lord will hate sin.

^{13c}**The fear of the Lord is to hate evil;** Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, I hate. Prov 8:13

This is the kind of fear that must replace the fear of man. If a believer is fully committed with heart level belief that he/she must fear God over people, then he/she has won the battle against being a people-pleaser.

❖ **What is your biggest obstacle to fearing God?**

Addressing Fear of Man Biblically

General principles to address the fear of man.

1. Make a decision of the will that your highest purpose is to glorify God. Your desire to glorify God must be your greatest desire, your highest purpose, more important than anything.

To glorify God is to show His character in our motives, thoughts, words, and deeds. We purpose to make choices that honor God in obedience. We glorify God when we live in a way that those around us can see God's character in us (Ex 33:17-23); when we display the life of Christ living through us (Gal 2:20).

³¹Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever **you do, do all to the glory of God.** 1 Cor 10:31

²⁰I have been crucified with Christ; and **it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;** and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. Gal 2:20

❖ **What is your most important and over-riding purpose?**

2. Strive to walk in the Spirit ("above the line").

¹⁶But I say, **walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.** ... ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, **faithfulness**, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Gal 5:16, 22-23

Living a consistently God-glorifying life is possible only through Spirit-filling. The Christian life is not lived in the believer's own strength. It is a life lived filled with the Spirit as the life of Christ flows through us.

When a believer is submitted to God (Eph 5:18-6:9) and His Word (Col 3:16-4:1), the indwelling Holy Spirit fills (or controls) them and produces Christ-like character, heart motives, attitudes, words, and reactions. The believer in a right relationship with God will be filled with the Spirit. This is the usual, expected state of a believer.

As we bow before God in complete submission, we will be filled with the Spirit and exhibit the fruits of the Spirit. If we find ourselves sinning and therefore bowed before a master other than the Lord, then we must repent and bow again before the Lord. As we repent and once again bow before the Lord as master, we will be filled with the Spirit and the life of Christ will flow through us. We will have the power to live a God-glorifying life and exhibit the fruits of the Spirit.

❖ **Are you consistently walking in the Spirit?**

3. Be actively involved in a local body.

²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. Heb 10:23-25

Believers are united in Christ and connected to one another. The body figure illustrates the diverse unity and interdependence that is present in the church. The body is made up of unique individuals who are united by the indwelling Holy Spirit. God has designed the church in such a way so that care can be brought to believers. The local body is the major way that God brings love, edification, encouragement, admonition, and comfort to believers.

❖ **Are you actively involved in your local body?**

Specific principles to address the fear of man

1. Cultivate a fear of God (reverential awe) by meditating on His attributes as revealed in His Word. (See topic 2).

¹Praise the Lord! **How blessed is the man who fears the Lord, Who greatly delights in His commandments.** Psa 112:1

¹¹**Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name.** ¹²I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And will glorify Your name forever. ¹³For Your lovingkindness toward me is great, And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol. Psa 86:11-13

❖ **Is this your prayer?**

God's Absolute, Incommunicable, or Divine Attributes

- a. Glory – The composite of God's attributes and essence; the sum total of what He is.

¹Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great; **You are clothed with splendor and majesty,** ²**Covering Yourself with light as with a cloak,** Stretching out heaven like a *tent* curtain. Psa 104:1-2

- b. Beauty – God is the sum of all desirable qualities.

⁴For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. ⁵For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the LORD made the heavens. ⁶**Splendor and majesty are before Him, Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.** Psa 96:4-6

- c. Greatness – God is high and lofty, He is above all things.

⁴I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, “Alas, **O Lord, the great and awesome God,** who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, Dan 9:4

- d. Infinity – God has no bounds or limits. He is beyond comprehension.

³³Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! **How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!** Rom 11:33

- e. Eternality – God always was and always will be; existing endlessly from eternity past to eternity future; free from the succession of time.

²Before the mountains were born Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, **Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.** Psa 90:2

- f. Independence – God does not need us or the rest of creation for anything.
²⁴The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; ²⁵**nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things;** Acts 17:24-25
- g. Immutability – God is unchanging and unchangeable; never inconsistent or developing.
⁶“For **I, the LORD, do not change;** ... Mal 3:6
- h. Omnipresence – God is present everywhere at all times.
³**The eyes of the LORD are in every place,** Watching the evil and the good. Prov 15:3
- i. Omniscience – God knows all actual and possible things.
¹O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*. ²You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. ³You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. ⁴Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all. Psa 139:1-4
- j. Omnipotence – God is all powerful and able to do anything consistent with His nature.
¹Then Job answered the LORD and said, ²“I know that **You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.** Job 42:1-2
- k. Sovereignty – All things are under His rule and control, and nothing happens without His direction or permission. Nothing takes Him by surprise.
¹¹also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined **according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,** Eph1:11

God’s Relative, Communicable, or Personal Attributes

- a. Faithfulness – God will always do what He has promised to do. He is steadfast, unchanging, perfectly reliable, utterly dependable, and completely trustworthy.
⁴For the word of the LORD is upright, And **all His work is done in faithfulness.** Psa 33
- b. Righteousness – God always acts in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right.
¹⁴**Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne;** Lovingkindness and truth go before You. Psa 89:14
- c. Truth – God is the true God. He acts only in truth and is as He has revealed Himself.
³This is eternal life, that they may know You, **the only true God,** and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. ... ¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; **Your word is truth.** John 17
- d. Holiness – God is pure and separate from sin.
⁵This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that **God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.** 1 John 1:5
- e. Wrath – God intensely hates all sin.
⁶For it is because of these things that **the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience,** Col 3:6

- f. Jealous – God continually seeks to protect his own honor.
¹⁴—for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God— Ex 34:14
- g. Love – God eternally gives of himself to others for their benefit.
⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Rom 5:8
- h. Lovingkindness – God is benevolently good.
¹Praise the LORD! Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting. Psa 106:1
- i. Compassion – God is good to those in difficulty.
¹³Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. Psa 103:13
- j. Grace – God gives unmerited favor to undeserving people in salvation and sanctification.
¹³And rend your heart and not your garments.” Now return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil. Joel 2:13
- k. Longsuffering – God is patience toward those who deserve to be punished.
⁴Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? Rom 2:4

❖ **How would you describe a balanced view of God?**

- 2. Commit your heart to live in the fear of the Lord.

¹⁷Do not let your heart envy sinners, **But live in the fear of the Lord always.** Prov 23:17

⁴“I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. ⁵But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him! Luke 12:4-5

❖ **Are you committed to living in the fear of the Lord always?**

- 3. Commit your heart to please God over pleasing people.

⁴but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, **not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts.** 1 Thess 2:4

²⁷When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, ²⁸saying, “We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” ²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered, “**We must obey God rather than men.** Acts 5:27-29

❖ **Are you committed to pleasing God first?**

4. Understand that the fear of God will drive you to righteousness.

¹⁸All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood at a distance. ¹⁹Then they said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die.”²⁰Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and **in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.**”²¹So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God *was*. Ex 20:18-21

❖ **Do you have a healthy fear of the Lord that keeps you desiring to obey Him?**

5. Understand that there is confidence and refuge and security in fearing the Lord.

²⁶In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, And his children will have refuge.
Prov 14:26

²³The fear of the Lord *leads* to life, So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.
Prov 19:23

6. Understand that the fear of God gives you contentment.

¹⁶Better is a little with the fear of the Lord Than great treasure and turmoil with it.
Prov 15:16

Concluding Thoughts

The fear of man brings many snares into a person’s life. God’s desire for His children is that that walk in the fear of Him. He wants us to have a reverential awe. As the Spirit applies the Word to our heart, we can be changed and fear God and desire to please Him over other people.

Real Life Scenarios

Yourself #1: You are at your child’s soccer practice (or insert whatever activity you may be involved with). You are wanting your child to have a good experience and you enjoy meeting other parents that are about your age. One of the other parents is particularly outspoken, particularly about religious things. Today, he/she goes on and on about how the failings of religious people and all things related to God. He/She is getting many sympathetic ears among the other parents. You stay quiet and try not to make eye contact so you don’t get pulled into the conversation. But he/she calls your name and asks, “What do you think?” What precepts, principles, and promises from today’s study can be encouraging to you?

Yourself #2: At work, you are striving for a promotion/pay raise. You know from water cooler chatter that several have gotten performance raises recently, but you have not. You feel that you are due, after all, you are great worker. Now, you are in a meeting when your boss praises you for a great idea that will save the company money and certainly cement your raise. The problem is that the idea isn’t yours, it is a co-workers. What precepts, principles, and promises from today’s study can be encouraging to you?

Someone Else #1: A dear friend at church looks exhausted. He/She has had health problems recently but continues full steam ahead with family, work, and church responsibilities. What are some questions you might ask to understand why he/she refuses to give up some responsibilities during this season? In thinking about bringing Biblical care to your nervous friend, what is the first thing you need to know? What precepts, principles, and promises from today’s study can be encouraging to him/her?

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues
Topic 46 – Fear of Man – Additional Study

The “put on” for the fear of man is to fear the Lord. Read the following verses and note what is said about the fear of the Lord.

Psa 33:8 _____

Psa 34:11 _____

Psa 64:9 _____

Psa 86:11 _____

Psa 112:1 _____

Psa 119:38 _____

Psa 128:1 _____

Psa 147:11 _____

Prov 1:7 _____

Prov 1:28-31 _____

Prov 3:5-8 _____

Prov 8:13 _____

Prov 9:10-11 _____

Prov 10:27 _____

Prov 14:2 _____

Prov 14:26-27 _____

Prov 15:16 _____

Prov 15:33 _____

Prov 16:6 _____

Prov 19:23 _____

Prov 22:4 _____

Prov 23:17-21 _____

Prov 24:21-22 _____

Prov 28:14 _____

Prov 28:25 _____

Prov 29:25 _____

Prov 31:30 _____

Eccl 12:13-14 _____

What are some ways to put into practice the things gleaned above? _____
