

# The Word Says



## Fear of Man

Scripture is filled with men and women who are nonheroic, disappointing, morally weak and who wrestled with trusting God; yet, called and used by God. Included in the list are, Gideon, Zechariah, Mary, Peter, Thomas, and so many others. Adam, Eve and Abraham lied; Jacob cheated; Moses murdered and complained; David committed adultery; Peter blasphemed.

Jesus knew He would encounter doubt when He walked the earth. He knew that even when He cured diseases that had no cure, reversed lifetimes of sin struggles and physical maladies, and raised people from the dead, people still wouldn't trust that He was the promised Messiah. even when He did impossible things, (John 10:24), people asked for further proof that they should believe.

Why do we fear the disapproval of others? The Bible calls this the “fear of man,” and it can weave a web of ambiguity around issues that are biblically clear. Is the “fear of man” operational in your life? Below are examples of “fear of man.”

- Have you ever struggled with peer pressure? “Peer pressure” is simply a euphemism for the fear of man.
- Are you over-committed? Do you find that it is hard to say no even when wisdom indicates that you should? Are you a “people-pleaser?” That is another euphemism for the fear of man.
- Do you ever feel as if you might be exposed as an impostor? The sense of being exposed is an expression of the fear of man. It means that the opinions of other people, especially their possible opinion that you are a failure, tends to control you.
- Are you always second-guessing decisions because of what other people might think?
- 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? If so, people and their perceived opinions probably define you. Or, to use biblical language, you exalt the opinions of others to the point where you are ruled by them.

- Do you “need” something from your spouse like “listen to me,” or “respect me.” God is pleased when there is good communication and a mutual honor between spouses. Caution, however, is advised since for many people, the desire for these things has roots in something that is far from God’s design for his image-bearers. Unless you understand the biblical parameters of marital commitment, your spouse will become the one you fear. Your spouse will control you. Your spouse will quietly take the place of God in your life.
- Is self-esteem a critical concern for you? This, at least in the United States, is the most popular way that the fear of other people is expressed. If self-esteem is a recurring theme for you, chances are that your life revolves around what others think. You reverence or fear their opinions. You need them to buttress your sense of well-being and identity. You need them to fill you up.

The point being made is, “fear of man” being present means that people are too big in our lives and God is too small. The fear of man can immobilize us when we should take action and gag us into silence when we should speak. This fear of man feels powerful, but its power is deceptive. That’s why the Bible tells us, “The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe” ([Proverbs 29:25](#)). The Hebrew word here for “snare” refers to traps hunters used to catch animals or birds. Snares are dangerous. If we get caught, we must do whatever it takes to free ourselves.

We must learn to know God—His is more loving and more powerful than we ever imagined. Yet, knowing God is a life challenge. Because of our sin nature, we are easily distracted. Placed by the devil in our life paths are distractions so clever and attention-getting that even Jesus appeared and wrestled a few rounds with us, that would not guarantee a persistent reverence of God. Too often our mountain-top experiences are quickly overtaken by the clamor of the world, and God once again is diminished in our minds.

Scripture does not pander to our adolescent desire to join a fan club. Scripture is sparing in the information that it gives on people. It refuses to feed our lust for hero worship. Fan clubs encourage secondhand living. Through pictures and memorabilia, autographs and tourist visits, we associate with someone whose life is (we think) more exciting and glamorous than our own. We find diversion from our own humdrum existence by riding on the coattails of someone exotic. On this point, Jeremiah 12:5 is clear, “If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, Then how can you compete with horses? If you fall down in a land of peace, How will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?”

If you can’t deal with “small” problems...how are you going to deal with “big” problems? If you can’t handle “small” finances...how are you going to deal with “big” finances? If you can’t take care of yourself...how are you going to take care of a family?

The phrase we tend to end our prayers with, “In His Name” is easy to say, but does not all the time carry over to actual belief. “But if I had seen all of those miracles, I would have believed!” You see, seeing isn’t always believing. But John 20:29 states that those who don’t see Him but still believe are blessed. We may not witness someone being resurrected from the dead, but God still works today in big and small ways.

When did God meet you and do something that seemed impossible in your own life? Our goal must become to establish a daily tradition of growing in the knowledge of God. I invite you this year to establish the practice of starting the day with a brief note to God, “Dear God...”

