

**There's An App for That - Dealing with Fear and Anxiety.
Isaiah 41:10-13, Luke 12:4-7**

Friends, you've probably heard the song "Who's afraid of the big bad wolf" before. If you haven't, it's from the children's story of The Three Little Pigs - and they sang this song as they hid in the brick house of the third pig - where they were safe and sound from the huffing and puffing of the big bad wolf who was trying to blow down their house so he could eat them.

If you stop and think about it, its kind of a gruesome disturbing bedtime story, in fact many of the traditional bedtime stories are - but psychologists will tell you that these kinds of stories play an important role in helping children and adults deal with anxiety and fear in an arms-length way.

Children can confront a scary situation in a story in a safe environment and that helps them resolve and deal with their emotions and they are better prepared to handle their fear and anxiety in real life.

And that may be true to a certain extent for kids - but let me pull a Dr. Phill here - and ask how's that working out for you as an adult?

Knowing what you now know about our world - do fairy tales, or scary movies help you to deal with your fears and anxieties at arm's length and feel less afraid, less anxious, less worried?

Call it a gut feeling friends, but I think we need something more?

Now the good news is that Jesus Christ gives us what we need in the bible. What is it that Presbyterians are famous for saying? - That the scripture is the only rule for faith and life - and it has been for 2000 years since Christ.

Now there have been a lot of things that have changed in our world in 2000 years - most notably is humanity's ability to create and use technology and to improve our standard of living and makes our work easier.

We've gone from scrolls and scribes, to the printing press, to telegraph, to radio to telephone to computer to internet to something which combines all of these together which we call the smart phone.

And smart phones can be very useful because they can download programs, or applications – apps for short, from the internet which allow you to perform certain tasks with them.

There's an app for doing your budget, there's an app for finding a restaurant, there's an app for our church's on-line scheduling program so that you can tell when you've been scheduled for worship team, or ushering – and just by tapping a button on your screen you can let us know that you've confirmed - Hint Hint Hint...

There's even an app for those of us who suffer from vertigo where you can hold your smart phone to your head and it will tell you if you are doing the recovery exercises properly.

There's an app for just about anything – and we're all *amazed!*

But there are some things which haven't changed much in 2000 years – humans still have much to be afraid of, to fear, to worry and be anxious about.

Maybe we don't worry that the sky will fall our heads anymore – instead we're afraid of what might fall from the sky - a meteor, acid rain, UV rays, nuclear warheads, or hijacked airplanes.

So, here's the question – does your smart phone have an App to help you deal with your fear and anxiety?

Well friends, the bible does. In fact the bible has apps for every situation and issues that we find ourselves facing in life and it's been around much longer than the smart phone.

Isn't **that** amazing!

Now don't get me wrong – I'm not down on technology and I'm not nostalgic for a simpler life. From our Reformed

Theological perspective - smart phones are part of what humanity is supposed to be doing in developing the creation.

It's just that our sinful nature so easily takes our accomplishments and says – here's the solution to the problems of the world and forgets about what God has provided to us in the scriptures.

Our sinful nature turns us inward and gives us a false confidence that we can rely on ourselves and our accomplishments

So – you're probably all wondering, what's the app in the bible for fear? And you're thinking I bet its peace, or love or joy or something like that.

Friends we have to be careful of jumping to the stereo-typical bible answers - like when the Sunday school teacher asked her students "what's grey and furry and lives in a tree" and a little girl said I think it's a squirrel but I'm going to say Jesus!

Friends the app that you can "download" from the bible into your life to deal with fear and worry and anxiety is....

"The Fear of the Lord, or the Fear of God." In other words you can fight your fear with FEAR!

Sounds a bit strange I know but that's sort of what Jesus is getting at in the scripture verse we read this morning when He says *"Don't be afraid of humans who can't do anything to you after they've killed you – be afraid of the one who has the power to throw you into hell!" (Luke 12:5)*

You see friends; a very simple way of fighting your own fears and anxieties with the Fear of the Lord is like this...

You fear God more than anything or anyone else – kind of like how they train soldiers at boot camp.

The army makes boot camp seem like a living hell so that war won't seem all that bad.

You see friends, the truth is that if we are truly aware of who and what God is.... we will Fear him above all things!

And in comparison – how frightening is an economic downturn, an illness or disease, a hostile boss, or an unknown future compared to awesome, incomparable, all powerful God, who has no beginning or end and who holds the very existence of the universe in His hand...

Not very when you really think about it.

Now, I understand that what you've just heard probably messes with the image of God that you've been presented with, or it reminds you of a frightening one that you've wanted to get away from.

More than likely our image of God is shaped by popular conceptions of God being loving and kind, and if we've grown up in church that's certainly how we're introduced to God, and it's how we introduce God to others....

So we're probably wondering what's this "Fear" business all about – I've always thought it's all about loving God – with all our heart soul mind and strength – and that correct, in fact that's biblical.

But there are some other biblical facts that we should be aware of too, and with a very handy app I was able to do a word search in the in the NIV translation of the bible about "love" and "fear" and here's what I discovered.

If you try to find the phrase "*love Jesus, or love Christ, or love Jesus Christ*" in the NIV bible you're out of luck. It doesn't exist.

If you look up "*Love God*" in the NIV bible, you'll find that phrase only occurs twice, in John 4:16, and John 4:20. And neither of these instances are commands.

And if you look up "*Love the Lord*" you'll find the phrase occurs seventeen times.

The one we are probably most familiar with is " ***Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind*** [Deut. 6:5] ;

Now, let's contrast that with the command to "*Fear the Lord*"

This phrase occurs twenty seven times; additionally the bible speaks about "*the Fear of the Lord*" twenty one times and mentions the phrase "*Fear God*" twelve times.

So that's sixty times for "Fear" as compared to twenty one times for "Love."

So what are we to make of this? That "Fear" is three times more important in our relationship with God than "Love" is?

I'm sure this is a bit confusing for us, since we typically understand "Fear" as being afraid of something that intimidates us, scares us, frightens us – and ever since we've been little kids in Sunday School we've learned that God and Jesus are our friends – and we're not afraid or scared of

friends are we? So what is the bible talking about with this Fear thing?

Well let me explain it this way. We all understand that words can have more than one meaning right?

If I say someone is "*sick*" –you would probably think I'm making a mean comment about someone's health.

But if I was a teenager I could actually be saying that someone or something is really awesome or great or fantastic! Saying that something is "*sick*" or "*phat*" or "*dope*" is a complement, and it's also very confusing to adults... which is why teens love to do this sort of thing.

But the bible does it too, and when the Bible says that we are to "Fear God" it works the same way. Fearing God is actually a good thing.

Because in the Bible when Fear is used to describe our relationship with and to God it takes words and concepts like

respect, reverence, gratitude, loyalty, obedience, worship and others, and it mixes them all together to describe a way of relating to God – which is reserved for God alone - and calls it “Fearing God.” And of course it includes love.

Psalm 118:4 says *“Let those who fear the LORD say: “His love endures forever.”* It doesn’t say - let those who fear the Lord say – *boy are we scared of God.* No, they know his love.

Because God is both a person and a position.

As a person God is known as Yahweh – the covenant God, the father of Jesus Christ and God’s personality is shown to us through his actions that are recorded in the bible and experienced in our lives.

But God is also a position – a title, a rank, a class of being in reality - and in fact the bible shows us that God is God above all gods – he never had a beginning or an end he stands outside reality and all of reality depends on Him to exist.

We could call this position “The CEO of the Universe, or The Office of the Supreme Being” or something like that- do you understand what I’m saying here?

God is also position – and that’s why it’s an easy mistake for people to think that all religions lead to God – because yes many religions embrace the concept, or agree that there is an “office of the supreme being” but they have no idea about the person of that deity who occupies that office.

So where am I going with this? Well if you can understand that God is both a position and a person it helps you to better understand what it means to Fear God – because as Jesus said this morning, *“fear him who has the power to through you into hell.”*

That’s talking about God in his positional rank – only the Office of the Supreme Being has the legal right to judge humans for how they have or haven’t lived their life and hand out eternal rewards or punishment for that.

Just like it is only the police who have the ability to give our speeding tickets – and so we get nervous if we are going fast around a police car – will he pull us over and if he does will he give us a ticket or will he let us off with a warning?

So the bible teaches us both about the position of God, and the person of God – and our second scripture reading from Isaiah reveals more to us about the person of God.

So, imagine for a moment that you are starting a new job, or a new school, or you've just been having a week full of problems...

And you get a letter delivered to you directly from the Mayor, or the Premier, or the Prime Minister saying - Don't worry, I know you're starting a new job today and you're worried about how you'll be treated, or you're going back to school, or you're worrying about bullies on the playground – well you can stop worrying, I've instructed my best security detail to watch over you and take care of anyone who threatens you and use my name to resolve any issues you might have.

Or maybe you've done something wrong and you're facing charges in court, and the Prime Minister sends you a letter saying – *don't worry, I'm granting you Ministerial pardon – and I'm having your record wiped clean, no one will ever be able to bother you about this again.*

As Christians, that's essentially what we're getting from the person who holds the "office of the Supreme Being."

God says in Isaiah 40:13 *"For I am the LORD (Yaweh – the person), your God, (the position) who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you."*

And Yaweh (the person) has decided to have mercy on us by taking care of our sins through sending his son Jesus Christ.

So you see, once you truly understand the awesome scope of who and what God is – Fearing him makes total sense - and it's not something that contradicts loving God, it's in harmony with it.

And it makes God's actions toward us genuinely sacrificially loving - A God so great giving his only Son for us – who are insignificant by comparison... that is truly love!

So – you understand now that Fearing God is not a bad thing, it's a good thing, and it's the best way to deal with the fear and anxiety and worry in your own life.

But friends, what good is an app if you don't use it? Not much right – so let's look at what the bible says the Fear of the Lord can do for you and how that combats fear and anxiety.

Then you can “download it” by praying and ask the Holy Spirit to install what we've learned in your mind, in your heart, in the very center of who you are so that it brings to fight your fears and anxieties.

So... Proverbs 1:7 says • *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.*

How many of us worry about the unknown? We fear what we do not know. Fear of the Lord gives knowledge.

Proverbs 9:10 says • *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

How many of us are afraid when we don't know what to do, when we don't have the skills needed to cope with something. Fear of the Lord gives skills - wisdom

Proverbs 10:27 • *The fear of the LORD adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short.*

Proverbs 14:27 • *The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death.*

Proverbs 19:23 • *The fear of the LORD leads to life: Then one rests content, untouched by trouble.*

How many of us are afraid to die, or worry about our health, the safety of our children, how many years of life we will or

will not have? If we are eating right, whether we've made the right financial decisions, or if our lives will truly count for something or not! The Fear of the Lord gives life – quantity and quality

Proverbs 16:6 • *Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the LORD a man avoids evil.*

We may not think about it much, but if we do how many of us would be afraid to meet God, to encounter Him face to face, and have to give an account for what we've done with our lives and blessings He gave us.

The Fear of the Lord prepares us for that day.

Proverbs 15:16 • *Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great wealth with turmoil.*

Proverbs 22:4 • *Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life.*

How many of us worry about our possessions, insurance, taking care of them, or we are afraid of someone stealing them or not having enough in the future.

So – what do you think? Do you see how the “Fear of God” can fight your fears and anxieties?

Are you interested in getting this app?

I can assure you that it will help you deal with fear, worry and anxiety? I've certainly experienced it working that way in my life – I know it can work for you as well.

So friends, as you consider if you will embrace the Fear of the Lord in your life to fight your own fears for you, consider what Proverbs 23:17 says “*Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD*”

In this case friends, “Sinners” are those who think that fear and worry and anxiety can ultimately be handled by trusting in things like power and wealth, connections, your own abilities,

your investments, or just being well prepared for anything and everything...

And as you look around you will see people who are not worried, who seem to fear nothing – because they have wealth, power, and connections and so on...

But friends don't let your hearts envy them, don't be fooled – what they trust in is the work of their own hands and in the end is it not sufficient to protect them from whatever they fear the most.

Instead, get the one thing that really works – The Fear of the Lord. Go out and download it today and put it to work in your life.

And the next time you hear that song “who's afraid of the big bad wolf” You'll be thinking – not me – I got the app for that. Amen.