

Dealing with Fear and Anxiety.

Isaiah 41:10-13, Luke 12:4-7

Friends have you ever heard the song “Who’s afraid of the big bad wolf” It’s from the story of the three little pigs and its what they sang as they hid in the brick house of the third pig – safe and sound from the huffing and puffing wolf who was trying to blow down their house so he could eat them.

Kind of a gruesome bedtime story if you really think about it, in fact most of the classic Fairytales are... but psychologists will tell you that these kinds of stories help children and adults deal with fear and anxiety by confronting it in an arm’s length way.

The thinking is that through confronting a scary situation in a story it helps us face our fears and we can resolve and deal with our emotions vicariously and this makes us better prepared to face our fear and anxiety in real life.

Perhaps that’s true to a certain extent – but let me pull a Dr. Phill here – how’s that working out for you?

Is it helping you to feel less afraid, less anxious, less worried?

Well friends, maybe we need something more? And the good news is that Christ gives us what we need in the bible. What are we always 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 humanities ability to create and use technology and how it improves 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 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 – smart phones are part of what humanity is supposed to do 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 that God has provided that to us in the scriptures. It turns us inward and gives us a false confidence to rely on ourselves.

So – you're probably all wondering, what's the app in the bible for fear. I bet its peace, or love or joy or something like that. (Easy answers, like when the Sunday school teacher asked what's grey and furry and lives in a tree – and her students said we think it's a squirrel but we're going to say Jesus)

The app 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. You can fight fear with FEAR

Jesus elaborates on this app when he says in the scripture verse we read this morning. “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!”

Friends, a very basic understanding of dealing with your fear and anxiety by having the Fear of the Lord in your life is simply this... You fear God more than anything or anyone else – kind of like how they train soldiers at boot camp. They make boot camp seem like a living hell so that war won’t seem all that bad.

Friends, if you truly know who and what God is – you 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 God? Not very when you really think about it.

No that might be messing with the conception of God that you’ve always heard about – after all if we’ve grown up in church or if we pay attention to popular conceptions of God

we tend to hear things like God is Love and that we are to Love God – with all our heart soul mind and strength – in fact that’s biblical.

So what’s this Fear business about? Well let me show you a few biblical facts. With the wonderful ability of computers I did some word searches in the NIV bible. Here’s what I discovered.

If you try to find the phrase “*love Jesus, or love Christ, or love Jesus Christ*” in the 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*"

It 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?

That might be confusing for us since most of us understand Fear as being afraid of something. Something that intimidates us, something that scares or 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 cool – it's a complement, and 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.

And this is 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 the deity who occupies that office. Or, the

personality of the deity who occupies that office may be very different from the personality of the deity who is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that is revealed in the scriptures.

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 throw 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 out 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 that’s where our second verse from Isaiah comes in.

Can you imagine a high ranking legal official, or military commander, or the President of the US sending you a letter and 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 secret service agents to watch over you and take care of anyone who threatens you.

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

That’s essentially what we get as Christians from the “office of the Supreme Being” in Isaiah 40:13 God says:

“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 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’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 – eg. pray and ask the Holy Spirit to install it in your heart, and you begin to use it.

So... lets take a look at this.

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 are afraid to meet God, and 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. The Fear of the Lord addresses this issue of provision.

So – what do you think? Can you see how scripture reveals how useful the Fear of the Lord can be in addressing the things that cause us worry and anxiety in our lives.

Are you interested in getting this app? I can vouch for it that it will help you deal with fear, worry and anxiety. I know it has certainly helped me deal with my fear and anxiety.

So friends, I want to end with this piece of advice from Proverbs 23:17 and challenge you with it. • *Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD*

Friends in this case “Sinners” are those who think that fear and worry and anxiety can ultimately be handled by having power and wealth, by trusting in investments, through counting on insurance policies, by implementing policies or executing plans...

And if you will look around you in this world and see people who are not worried, who seem to fear nothing – 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 it will fail in the end when they must stand before God.

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.

So who’s afraid of the big bad wolf? – not me brothers and sisters – I got the app for that. Amen. Let ‘s pray.

