



# WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?

## PUTTING FEAR IN ITS PROPER PLACE

### **Week 3: Fear of Man**

Text: Psalm 23

#### **Big Idea**

Peace doesn't come when your enemies disappear — it comes when your trust in God grows stronger than your fear of man.

#### **Opening Discussion**

1. When have you been crippled by what someone else thought of you?
2. (Encourage honest reflection — it can be something small or something that shaped them deeply.)
3. Why do you think other people's opinions carry so much power over us?
4. Have you ever found freedom from that fear? What changed?

#### **Read Psalm 23:5 Aloud**

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows."

#### **Discuss:**

- What stands out to you in this verse?
- David says this in the presence of enemies — not after the battle.
- What does that teach us about the timing of God's peace?

#### **Section 1: Life in the Arena**

Read the Roosevelt quote (or summarize):

*"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."*

**Discussion:**

- How does “life in the arena” describe the Christian walk?
- Who are the coaches (spiritual mentors) and teammates (fellow believers) in your life?
  - How can you invite them to speak into your fears or blind spots?
- Who are the spectators you’ve been listening to who don’t matter?
  - What would it look like to stop giving them that power?

Read Proverbs 29:25 — “The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.”

**Discuss:**

- What “snares” does fear of man create in your life?
- What does trusting God look like in the middle of that fear — not after it’s gone?

**Section 2: Friendship with God vs. Approval of Man**

Read James 4:4 and Galatians 1:10.

**Discussion:**

- What does it mean that friendship with the world is “enmity with God”?
- Why is it impossible to seek both God’s and man’s approval at the same time?
- When have you had to choose obedience to God even though it cost you human approval?

Leader Note: emphasize that this isn’t about arrogance — it’s about alignment.

David’s life shows that God’s anointing often creates opposition.

Ask: “How have you experienced spiritual pushback when stepping into God’s calling?”

**Section 3: The Anointing — God’s Approval in Christ**

Read again Psalm 23:5b — “You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”

Then read Ephesians 1:6 and 2 Corinthians 1:21-22.

**Discussion:**

- What does it mean to be “anointed” by God today?
- How does knowing you are already accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6) change the way you respond to criticism or rejection?
- Where in your life do you need to trade popularity for purpose?

**Application & Prayer**

Personal Reflection:

- Who’s in your “arena” right now — and whose opinion are you living for?
- What would change if you truly believed God’s approval is enough?

Group Prayer Focus:

- Pray for freedom from fear of man and the courage to obey God boldly.
- Pray for teammates and mentors who speak truth, not flattery.
- Pray for a deeper awareness of your anointing — your identity and empowerment in Christ.