

# F E A R O F M A N

## Class 1: What is the Fear of Man

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

*“Many of the people I’ve talked to also had an awakening when they saw the controlling power of other people. They awoke to an epidemic of soul called, in biblical language, ‘the fear of man.’ Although, they were avowed worshippers of the true God, below the surface they feared other people. That is not to say that they were terrified by or afraid of others (although sometimes they were). ‘Fear’ in the biblical sense is a much broader word. It includes being afraid of someone, but it extends to holding someone in awe, being controlled or mastered by people, worshipping other people, putting your trust in people, or needing people.... However you put it, the fear of man can be summarized this way: We replace God with people. Instead of a biblically guided fear of the Lord, we fear others.”—Ed Welch, When People Are Big and God Is Small*

### 1. Where and how do we struggle with the fear of man?

*-We see it in the workplace*

*-We experience it in how we handle conflict*

*-In our families the fear of others is exposed*

*-Even in the church*

#### **Diagnostic Questions from *When People are Big and God is Small* (pg 14-16):**

*-Have you ever struggled with peer pressure?*

*-Are you over-committed?*

*-Do you ever feel as though you might be exposed as an imposter?*

*-Are you always second-guessing decisions because of what other people might think? Are you afraid to risk?*

*-Do you ever lie, especially the little white lies?*

*-Do you avoid people?*

*-When you compare yourself with other people, do you feel good about yourself?*

*-Have you ever been too timid to share your faith in Christ?*

#### **\*How have you seen fear of man in your life?**

##### **Categories of Fear of Man:**

*-We fear being exposed.*

*-We fear being rejected.*

*-We fear being harmed.*

## **Who fears man?**

*-I Cor. 10:13*

## **2. Why do we fear man?**

*-Past experience*

*-Pride*

*-Needs-based view of people*

*-Wrong view of what we deserve*

## **3. What does Scripture say about the fear of man?**

*-It originated at the Fall. (Gen. 3:6-7)*

*-It is shortsighted and insufficient. (Luke 12:4-5)*

*-It is a destructive trap. (Prov. 29:25)*

*-It is opposed to love. (1 John 4:18)*

*-It minimizes Christ. (Rom. 8:35, 38-39)*

**Examples in Scripture of those who feared man more than God:**

## **4. Fruit that fear of man produces in our lives**

*-Discontent*

*-Unhealthy dependence*

*-Cynicism*

*-Bitterness*

**\*What fruit do you see in your own life as a result of giving into the fear of man?**

## **5. What does the world do with the fear of man?**

*-How does the world describe it?*

*-How does the world “cope” with it? How does it exploit fear of man?*

*-Culture often shapes the experience of fear of man and every ethnicity fears man*

## **6. Is it ever legitimate to fear man and how do we know?**

**Conclusion: We fear man because we do not fear God or we do not fear God enough.**

### ***Additional Resources:***

Ed Welch, *When People Are Big and God Is Small*

Lou Priolo, *Pleasing People: How not to be an Approval Junkie*

Ed Welch, *Running Scared: Fear, Worry and the God of Rest*

C.J. Mahaney, *Humility*

John Murray, *The Fear of God: The Soul of Godliness*

### **Course Outline:**

**Week 1: What is the fear of man?**

**Week 2: What is the fear of God?**

**Week 3: How do we fear man? We fear that people will expose us.**

**Week 4: How do we fear man? We fear that people will reject us.**

**Week 5: How do we fear man? We fear that people will harm us.**

**Week 6: A new vision for life: loving God and loving neighbor**