

Sermon Series FREE: Week Three
“FREEDOM – Overcoming the Fear of Man”
Pastor Dale Campfield – Eastgate Community Church
March 7th, 2010

Intro:

Matt 28:19 *“Go and make disciples of all nations...”*

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

This sermon series is different in the respects that we are joining with close to 90 churches in the Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky area to all teach on the same theme of being FREE! Every church will teach their own thing, but we'll all be on the same theme throughout the next four weeks.

You are encouraged to follow along with your personal journal as well as to meet with a small “FREE GROUP”; a small group of other believers who will meet together once a week for the entire six weeks. You can pick up a study guide at the Norlyn Manor.

2 Corinthians 3:17

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom.”

Ps 119:45

“I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your truth.”

Galatians 5:1

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”

This 3rd week of the Free Journey is called:

“FREEDOM – Overcoming the Fear of Man”

The fear of man can hold us back, keep us from moving forward, hinder our walk with God; keeping us from a life of FREEDOM and of His Anointing in our lives.

We need to replace the Fear of Man with Fear of the Lord!

Today, we're going to take a look at what the word of God says about fearing man – and more importantly to receive instruction from the Lord and the empowerment and motivation to replace this fear of man with the fear of the Lord.

As we begin...let me share with you the following quotes concerning the fear of man.

Quote by Ed Welch

In his book, "When People are Big and God is Small"

"Fear of man is such a part of our human fabric that we should check for a pulse if someone denies it."

Quote by Charles Gibbons

In his book "SuperSelf"

"Out of the top 12 fears man faces, #1 is the fear of human beings; the fear of performing in front of them, the fear of speaking in front of them and the fear of working in front of them."

Quote by Dave Harvey

In his message "The Glory that Matters Most"

"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."

Quote by Dave Harvey

In his message "The Glory that Matters Most"

"It's difficult to both 'keep in step with the Spirit' and 'keep in step with Popularity'".

Quote by unknown...

"There are 4 motivations for man: fear, faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is fear."

Quote by Paul

In his book Hebrews 13:6

"So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'"

Quote by Paul

In his book Gal. 1:10

"Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ."

Quote by Paul

In his book Romans 8:15

"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

Quote by King David

In his book Proverbs 29:25

"The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe."

1 Thessalonians 2:4 (Phillips translation)

"We don't aim to please men but to please God who knows us through and through."

Where are you aiming for your freedom?

Further Introductory Remarks: Most of us desire to love God and serve Him, and believe that we are doing so. It is our desire to walk in His freedom to make the greatest IMPACT possible in our lives. However, the truth is that most of us still love and serve ourselves more than we love and serve God, and therefore seek honor from men rather than seek to honor God by our lives.

Matthew 6:24

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other."

Fear of man: The fear of man will keep us from being free, which will keep us from being able to make a true IMPACT in life. It is obvious that we must fear God rather than man. If we fear man more than God, we will displease God most of the time, because man's ways are usually opposite of God's.

The word "fear" means to "tremble".

Illus: Young Missionaries Fear

I met with a new Christian one time that was to meet with a man that had a lot of control over his life, due to his finances. This younger man was scared to talk to the older man. In fact, he literally shook with fear. It was so incredibly sad.

Question: Are you dealing with the Fear of Man?

Allow me to share with you some “Evidence of the Fear of Man”

The fear of man may be evidenced by...

- **fashion-consciousness**

You find yourself always dressing yourself to please someone else. You would like to wear what you want, but because you want to please others, fit in with their way of life, etc., you dress to please them. It's driven by fear.

- **being easily embarrassed (even when doing right)**

You're always embarrassed by what you do, even if it's the right thing to be done. You're always looking over your shoulder to see if anyone is laughing at you or if you've caused someone to “roll their eyes” or “talk to their friends”, which you assume is all about you.

- **a quickness to defend yourself**

You feel like you have to always stand up verbally to defend yourself and you're not afraid to tell a lie to make yourself look good if you need to. I can remember telling someone a lie just because I wanted to make myself look good. It was a small “white lie” as they call them; but still a lie. I figured I would make it true later anyways.

- **constant lies and deceptions to gain honor from others**

- **pretending to understand when we don't**

Have you ever been in a group of people and didn't have a clue as to what they were talking about but you “acted” like you did? We often just go through the motions because we don't want to appear to be dumb or unintelligent.

- **giving compliments which we don't mean**

We try to stroke the ego's of others to make them feel good knowing all along that we don't truly believe what we are telling them. Have you ever told someone they sang great or looked great when they didn't at all? Of course, we have to be kind with our words, but at times we tell people outright lies in order to make them think we like them and want their approval. We're really doing them a disservice. We often avoid giving criticisms and warnings even when necessary.

- **pretending to agree when we should disagree**

They say something about a certain issue and we just go along with it, because we don't want them to think we're not in agreement with them. We want their approval, so we agree with their issues whether we really do or not.

A man-fearer will not only displease God, but will also ultimately be considered totally unstable and untrustworthy by others - because he will change his mind as soon as he faces someone else.

A common management rule states: There is no sure formula for success, but the sure formula for failure is to try to please everyone.

In other words, the "honor" that he receives is only a momentary acknowledgement for "convenience" provided by his man-pleasing deed. Man-fearers are "used" and then despised. Nobody names their sons Herod (who killed one who he believed was "risen from the dead", MAT 14) or Pilate (who killed one who was "a just person", MAT 27) Who knows when a man-fearer may turn against you, and "slay" you, so as to obtain honor from men? Furthermore, even if a man-fearer was loved by another, he himself is not loved but rather his pretended-self is the "one" that is loved.

We must also be aware that we may be man-pleasers even when we are doing godly things. For example, we may be attending church and prayer meetings, or evangelizing and reading the Bible to seek honor from man, or we may even be rebuking error because we fear to be labeled as cowardly by others. What we do when no one is watching gives a more accurate assessment of ourselves.

Fear of God: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (PRO 9: 10). The word 'fear' means to "reverence". One who fears God is more concerned about what God thinks than what men think (ACT 4:19), The result of such fear is a single-minded obedience to God's Word, and a single-minded aim to glorify God. A God-fearer is willing to suffer shame and pain rather than to disobey God (like Daniel and his friends, DAN 3).

The fear of God is the result of loving Him because He first loved us, fearing Him because He is constantly watching us, and expecting from Him all our present and eternal rewards. Since man's ways are usually opposite to God's, there will be a continuous struggle in us whether to honor God or man. The fear of God is evidenced by a godly carelessness regarding fashion, a slowness to be embarrassed before men, a speech that will not only compliment but also warn (in a gracious and loving manner, ROM 10:18), a quickness to defend God's honor and a quickness to admit one's mistakes, a fear to accept compliments and a quickness to give the glory to God.

One who fears God is stable, predictable and trustworthy - he will simply obey God's Word and will not change his mind because of man's faces.

We must cease to act spiritual but we must be spiritual, we must stop concentrating on the outside and start concentrating on the inside if we truly want to be FREE. Management gurus say that there is no formula for success but God says "Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that you do" (DEU 29:9).

Those are the evidentiary items that show us we are dealing with the fear of man, which keeps us from true freedom. Now... Let us get right to the point: we are afraid of others because we love ourselves too much. When you have dealt with self-love, the fear of man will be dealt with at the same time. The fear of man is but a symptom of self-love, and is manifest in six basic areas of our relationships with others. If a servant of God is able to overcome in these six areas, he or she will be free of the fear of man. In order to deal with the fear of man, you must know where it comes from.

The Fear of Man Comes From...

1. DESIRE FOR APPRECIATION

We want others to understand us and appreciate us. We want them to comprehend the meaning behind our actions. We want them to grasp what we are saying. We cannot bear the thought of being misunderstood. We wish for others to appreciate the truth we speak, the word we bring, the insight we have.

We want them to appreciate us so much, that we'll often times not speak the total truth, or add to the truth, or deny the truth in what we say just so they will appreciate us.

To overcome the fear of man, we must not only be willing to be misunderstood and unappreciated, we should expect it. Then we will be free to speak what God has given us and will not be troubled should others fail to grasp the significance of it.

2. DESIRE FOR COMPENSATION

The fact is, we want people to accept us, then we might receive something from them, we may be compensated for our good works or words or whatever means we try to please them. Our fear is that if don't please them somehow, then they may stop compensating us.

The compensation comes in the form of favor with them; they'll be nice to us; our boss won't fire us; we won't get scolded or yelled at; they'll remember us on our birthday's; when we need some cash, maybe they'll help us out.

For preachers, we must be careful that we're not toning down the Word for fear that we will offend those who are taking care of us...the congregation...tithes/offerings...our pay checks!

When we are bringing the Word of God to the people who are supporting us materially it represents an inherent conflict of interest. The temptation is to tone down the Word for fear that we will offend those who are taking care of us.

When our friends hold a special place in our heart we are likewise tempted to speak softly to them to keep the friendship intact, whereas an identical word to someone we do not know will not be as soft. If God bids us to speak softly, then let us do so. But we cannot speak softly to those we have a relationship when the word we bring them should be anything but soft.

Always remember...God is our source...not man! Certainly He will USE other people to bless us, but we do not LOOK to people to be blessed; then you won't be fearful of them and feel like you have to please them all of the time.

3. DESIRE FOR PROMOTION

All of us want to be promoted. To be promoted means to be lifted up, to be advertised to others, to be endorsed or sponsored by others. Whether it be a promotion at work, a promotion of status with our friends, we cannot be fearful of man to the point where we are compromising our integrity, our words, and our actions just to receive those promotions.

4. DESIRE FOR ESTEEM-A-TION

To be esteemed by our friends and family. We not only want to be esteemed by people in their actions, but in their thoughts. At times, we are very fearful at what people are “thinking” about us. We want them to think happy, good and positive thoughts about us. We sit around and drive our own minds wild by just wondering if they are thinking about us.

Did you ever see two people talking and you got the feeling they were talking about you? The fact is, most people are not talking about you or thinking about you, they’re thinking about whether or not you are thinking about them!

5. DESIRE FOR PROTECTION

Sometimes, fear of man takes a much more blatant role in our relationships. Sometimes it takes the shape of literal fear of another person because of their ability to hurt you physically or emotionally.

If you are living your life as a servant of God, seeking His Kingdom first, you have nothing to fear. Even if your very worst case scenario were to play itself out – that person that you fear cannot touch the eternal part of you. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. Fear God. Keep doing what is right. Do whatever you can to bring peace, and leave the results to God. We feel like we have to do whatever they say because we don’t want to lose them. We find ourselves doing things or saying things that are based from fear because we don’t want them to abandon us, thus our protection is gone.

It reminds me of the mob bosses in the movies or the gang members that charge people financially for their “protection”. And, based on fear, the people pay the money. For some, it’s protecting a relationship; maybe a boy/girl friend that you don’t want to lose, so out of that fear of losing the relationship, you do things or say things you wouldn’t necessarily do or say.

For some, it’s not being able to speak the “truth” due to a law or wish of someone else. You want to be protected and not harmed...so you go along with it. It reminds me of Pastor Stan Crouch...he jumped a fence to sit at the doors of an abortion clinic to make a statement. He didn’t care if he wasn’t protected and had to pay a price for it.

Ask yourself...who is your protector? Is it man, or is it God! Surely He will protect me from the arrows that fly by day and the arrows by night. He is my shield and rampart! Schools may outlaw prayer or evangelization. Keep praying. Keep evangelizing. Keep sharing the love of Christ and speaking of his gospel.

Your workplace may ban evangelism. Keep praying. Keep telling those who will hear of Christ’s love, acceptance, and forgiveness. You may be asked to do something unethical by your boss. You may be self-employed and have the opportunity to increase your profits by being unethical. Fear God!

You may receive pressure from unbelieving family members to quit being “so spiritual”. They may pressure you to engage in activities which you can’t do and honor God at the same time. Your response shows whether you fear man or if you fear God. Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.

6. DESIRE FOR NON-CONFRONTATION

We're often times fearful of man because we don't want to be confrontational. We'll eat our steak rare as opposed to having it taken back because we don't want to confront the server. When we have a confrontation, it usually means a battle of some sorts, and we don't always want to go to battle.

Friends...there are some things worth going to battle over. For example, souls!

Not wanting to offend a non-Christian by bringing up spiritual matters in conversation.

If we do not speak about the Lord, about the good news of the gospel with others because we fear offending them or we fear rejection, we are operating in the fear of man and not the fear of the Lord.

Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica...

1Th. 2:4 ...we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.

Is there someone God is telling you to share the gospel with but you've been afraid? The costs of disobeying God's instructions are always worse than whatever might happen to you if you obey.

So...How do you overcome the Fear of man? I'd like to give you a 4 step plan in overcoming the fear of man. These are only four steps that God has given me. I'm positive that there are many other ways as well...but these are four. All of these begin with the word Confidence!

How to Overcome the Fear of Man

1. Confidence in Your Savior.

Remember who God is!

He is your Lord, your Protector, Your Shield, your Peace, your Guide, your EVERYTHING! You can put your confidence in God. He knows what He's doing in your life. He has a Master Plan – because He is the Master Builder!

Phil 4:13

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

2. Confidence in Your Self.

Remember who you are!

You are a child of God, called by God for such a time as this. You are His ambassador to the world around you. You are a mighty man/woman of valor. Stay on your knees and raise your head high! Walk with the confidence that God has given to you.

1 John 3:1

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

3. Confidence in Your Situation.

Remember where you are!

You are right where God wants you to be. As you walk in obedience to the Lord, He will set you up for victory. God never sets us up for defeat, always for victory. Your footsteps have been ordered by God, walk with confidence that where those footsteps take you, you can have confidence because God ordered them.

Ps 37:23-24

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand.

4. Confidence in Your Scripture.

Remember what it says!

You must stand on the word. You walk in obedience then you claim a promise from the Word for your situation. There are over 7,000 promises that God has given to us...claim one for your situation and walk with confidence in that scripture.

Ps 119:133

*Direct my steps by Your word,
And let no iniquity have dominion over me.*

Conclusion:

Quote by Joy Dawson

“Intimate Friendship with God Through Understanding the Fear of the Lord”, p. 33.

“The fear of man is being more impressed with man’s reaction to our actions than with God’s reaction. That’s bondage. When we have the fear of God upon us, we are impressed only with God’s reaction. We are freed from the concern of what people think. That’s freedom! That’s release! That’s great relief!”

Rom 8:37-39

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The fear of man can keep you from walking in a New Dimension of the Presence of God.

The Fear of Man...It Must be Dealt With to Live FREE*

And as you do...

You watch...you wait...you’ll see!