



Maranatha Baptist Church
Equip University
Christian Living Track
Fearing and Following God

Class 1 – What is the fear of man?

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

Introduction

The things we fear set the course of our lives.

Fear of Man

When we say “fear of man” we are describing a deep-rooted respect or reverence for the opinions of others.

Where do we tend to struggle with fear of man? What are some examples?

Diagnosing Fear of Man

Diagnostic Questions, *When People are Big and God is Small* (p. 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?

Class Overview

Three primary ways in which we tend to fear man:

1. We fear that people will physically **hurt us**; this can relate to any number of things:
2. We fear that people will **reject us**; this is often connected to things about us in comparison to other people:
3. We fear the people will **expose us**; a fear of exposure may manifest itself in a variety of activities and attitudes:

At the center of a heart that wrongly fears man is a heart that loves self more than God.

Who fears man?

-I Cor. 10:13

Why do we fear man?

1. Past experience
2. Pride
3. Needs-based view of people.
4. Wrong view of what we need and what we deserve.

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 counteracted by love. (I John 4:18)
- It minimizes the nature of our position in Christ. (Rom. 8:35, 38-39)
- It can only be overcome through the power of the gospel (Romans 8:31-34).

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

What fruit does fear of man produce in our lives?

1. Discontent
2. Unhealthy dependence
3. Cynicism
4. Bitterness

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

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?

-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*
- Kevin DeYoung, *Just Do Something*
- Tony Payne & Philip Jensen, *Guidance and the Voice of God*
- James Petty, *Step By Step*

Class Outline:

1. What is the fear of man?
2. What is the fear of God?
3. How do we fear man? We fear that people will expose us.
4. How do we fear man? We fear that people will reject us.
5. How do we fear man? We fear that people will harm us.
6. A new vision for life: loving God and loving neighbor
7. Anxious or Restful?
8. God's Providence
9. God's Will
10. Faithfulness
11. Tools of the Trade Part 1: God's Word, Prayer, Counsel
12. Tools of the Trade Part 2: Circumstances and Feelings
13. Panel Discussion—Fearing and Following the Lord