

How to Recognize Healthy and Unhealthy Fear

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I. Healthy fear

A. The fear of the Lord

Joy Dawson; (Intimate Friendship with God)

The fear of the Lord should do two things:

1. Produce in us the same attitude towards sin that God has, which is to hate it.
2. To give us a deep respect for and understanding of the holiness of God, the power of God, and the total sufficiency of God to meet man's need.

B. Fear that warns us and leads to making good decisions

Matt 2:19-23 the story of how Joseph protects Mary and Jesus from Roman Rulers.

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, "Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead." So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Then after being warned by God in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee, and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: "He shall be called a Nazarene."

II. Unhealthy Fear:

Gen 3:10 first fear in the Bible:

He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."

A. What kingdom is controlling your life?

The kingdom of darkness operates out of:

Pride (Ezekiel 28:1-14)

Fear (Hebrews 2:14-15)

Unbelief (Genesis 3:1-5)

The kingdom of God operates out of:

Humility (Phil 2:5-11)

Love (Gal 5:22)

Faith (Heb 11:6)

B. Fear gives power to the devil

Roman 8:15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

Job 3:25 "For what I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me.

2 Ti 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of timidity (fear), but of power and love and discipline.

Prov 29:25 The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.

The devil prowls about like a roaring lion

1 Pe 5:8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

C. Unbelief and fear go hand in hand.

Numbers 13:27-14:10 the spies bad report

Numbers 14:9 they were told before going in not to fear the people.

Revelation 21:8 the cowardly and unbelieving are the first ones thrown into the lake of fire

D. 366 times in the Bible God says "fear not!"

John 14:27 Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful

E. In the parables of the talents and minas, Jesus shows that fear leads us to being unproductive.

Mat 25:25 'And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.'

Luke 19:20 "Another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief; 21 for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow.'

F. Jesus came to render powerless the devil

Hebrews 2:14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

III. The DNA of Relationships — Core Fears (by Dr. Gary Smalley; chapter 3)

A. Summary:

1. The external problem is rarely the problem. What we think is the problem most of time is not the core problem.
2. The core problem is our fear. The problem in nearly every conflict is that something touched each person's core fear. We wrestle with a core fear.
3. Each of us is involved in a fear dance. Triggered by a core fear, we get stuck in a destructive Fear Dance that involves our hearts, wants, fears and reactions.
4. Don't expect the other person to be the solution. When we hurt, we want the other person to change so that we won't feel the hurt. But the solution is not to change the other person.
5. The fear dance is functionally dysfunctional. Because the Fear Dance is the only dance many people know how to do, they "function" in the midst of dysfunction. They adopt coping mechanisms, which often only deepened the problem.
6. We can break the rhythm of the fear dance. By identifying our core fears and by understanding that the other person isn't the problem, we can begin to learn new dance steps to healthier relationships.

B. My **core fear** is that I feel:

1. Helpless, powerless, impotent, or controlled.
2. Rejected, as if people are closing me out of their lives.
3. Abandoned or left behind, as in divorce.
4. Disconnected from others or alone.
5. Failure, that I am a failure.
6. Unloved, as if no one could love me.
7. Defective, as if something is wrong with me, as if I'm the problem.
8. Inadequate, as if I just don't measure up to others like I should.
9. Pained, both emotionally and physically.
10. Hypocritical, or like a phony.
11. Inferior, as is as if I'm being placed below everyone else in value (belittled).
12. Cheated or ripped off or taking advantage of.
13. Invalidated, as if my words and actions are being ignored or devalued.
14. Unfulfilled, as if what is happening to me will lead to dissatisfaction in life.
15. Humiliated, as if I have no dignity or self respect.
16. Manipulated, as if others are deceiving me.
17. Isolated, as if others are planning to ignore me.

C. Our Wants

- Acceptance — I want to be warmly received without condition.
- Grace — I want something good (e.g., forgiveness) that I don't deserve.
- Connection — I want to be united to others.
- Companionship — I want deep, intimate relationships.
- Success — I want to achieve or accomplish something.
- Self-determination — I want to have independence and free will.
- Understanding — I want to be known.
- Love — I want to feel attractive to others.
- Validation — I want to be valued for who I am.
- Competence — I want to have skills and ability that bring success.
- Respect — I want to be admired and esteemed.
- Worth — I want to feel important.
- Honor — I want to feel like a priceless treasure.
- Commitment — I want to have unconditional security in relationships.
- Significance — I want to have meaning and purpose.
- Attention — I want to be noticed.
- Comfort — I want to feel a sense of well-being.
- Support — I want to be cared for.
- Approval — I want to be liked and accepted.
- Wanted — I want to be sought after.
- Safety — I want to feel protected and secure.
- Affection — I want to feel fondness and warmth.
- Trust — I want to have faith in others.
- Hope — I want confidence that I will get what I love and desire.
- Joy — I want to feel satisfied and happy.

D. What we fear is a result of what we feel we can't live without

We Can't Live Without ...	So We Fear ...
Acceptance	Rejection
Grace	Judgment
Connection	Disconnection
Companionship	Loneliness
Success	Failure
Self-Determination	Powerlessness
Understanding	Being Misunderstood
Love	Being Scorned
Validation	Being Invalidated
Competence	Feeling Defective
Respect	Inferiority
Worth	Worthlessness
Honor	Feeling Devalued
Dignity	Humiliation
Commitment	Abandonment
Significance	Feeling Unimportant
Attention	Feeling Ignored
Support	Neglect
Approval	Condemnation
Wanted	Feeling Unwanted
Safety	Danger
Affection	Feeling Disliked
Trust	Mistrust
Hope	Despair
Joy	Unhappiness

E. The most common ways we react when we fear that our wants will not be met:

Reaction	Explanation
Withdrawal	You avoid others or alienate yourself without resolution; you sulk or use the silent treatment.
Escalation	Your emotions spiral out of control; you argue, raise your voice, flying into a rage.
Belittling or sarcasm	You devalue or dishonor someone with words or actions; you call your spouse names or take potshots at him or her.
Negative beliefs	You believe your spouse is far worse than is really the case; you see your spouse in a negative light or attribute negative motives to your spouse.
Blaming	You place responsibility on others, not excepting fault; you're convinced the problem is your spouse's fault.
Exaggeration	You make overstatements or enlarge your words beyond bounds or the truth.
Tantrums	You have fits of bad temper.
Denial	You refuse to admit the truth or reality.
Invalidation	You devalue your spouse; you do not appreciate who your partner is, what he or she feels or thinks or does.
Defensiveness	Instead of listening, you defend yourself by providing an explanation.
Clinginess	You develop a strong emotional attachment or dependence on your spouse.
Passive-aggressive	You display negative emotions, resentment, and aggression in passive ways, such as procrastination and stubbornness.
Caretaking	You become responsible for others by giving physical or emotional care and support to the point you are doing everything for your spouse, and your partner does nothing to care for himself or herself.
Acting out	You engage in negative behaviors like drug or alcohol abuse, extramarital affairs, excessive shopping, or overeating.
Over-functioning	You do what others should be doing, and you take responsibility for them.
Fix-it mode	You focus almost exclusively on what is needed to solve the problem.
Complaining	You express unhappiness or make accusations.
Aggression or abuse	You become verbally or physically aggressive, possibly abusive.
Manipulation	You control your spouse for your own advantage.
Anger and rage	You display strong feelings of displeasure or violent and uncontrolled emotions.
Catastrophizing	You use dramatic, exaggerated expressions to depict that the relationship is in danger or that it has failed.
Numbing out	You become devoid of emotion, or you have no regard for others' needs or troubles.

V. Promises of victory in overcoming fear:

Heb 2:14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. 16 For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.

Rom 8:15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, " Abba! Father!"

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

2 Ti 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of timidity (fear), but of power and love and discipline.

VI. Steps to overcoming fear:

1. Confess the fear as sin.

1 Jn 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

2. Take authority over the spirit of fear. Speak to the specific fear.

2 Cor 4:13 But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed, therefore I spoke," we also believe, therefore we also speak,

Matt 12: 29 "Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

Mark 3:27 "But no one can enter the strong man's house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house.

3. Renounce the fear as having power over you.

2 Cor 4:2 but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame,

4. Confess the promises of God.

Matt 21:21 if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. 22 If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

Mark 11:22 "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. 23 "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

5. Receive the love of God.

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

6. Face your fears.

Eph 4:1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

Eph 5:2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us,

Col 2:6 Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith,