




Bible Studies for Ashfield Presbyterian Church
ashfieldpresbyterian.org.au


STUDY 1: WHY ARE YOU SO AFRAID?

Take a guess what God's most frequent command is in the Bible.

- Love one another?
- Have no other gods before me?
- Praise God?

Hint: If time is short, prioritise the questions highlighted with a star 

You may be surprised to know that we are commanded more than three hundred times not to be afraid! It's the same with Jesus. Out of 125 commands of Jesus, 21 are not to fear, with the second most common command only occurring 8 times.

-  1. Look up some of these verses.


*Gen 15:1; Gen 26:4; Num 21:4; Josh 1:9; 2 Chron 20:15;
Ps 23:4; 56:3-4; Isa 35:4; Isa 41:14;
Dan 10:12; Matt 10:28; Matt 14:27; Matt 28:10;
Lk 1:30-31; Lk 12:6-7; Lk 12:32; Jn 14:27; Acts 23:11; Rev 1:7*


What do they teach us about God, and what he wants for us?

2. When is fear good?

If fear can be good, why is God so concerned that we're not afraid?

3. When is fear bad?

-  4. When is fear sinful?

-  5. What about phobias? These are often a subconscious reaction to something that we can do little about. Are they sinful?

What can you do when these phobias impact your life?

6. What is the distinction/connection between anxiety/worry and fear?

What do you think of this distinction: "Anxiety is fear about what might happen in the future."

- ☆ 7. “Fear is the flip side of loving something. We are fearful of not getting the things we love.” Do you agree or disagree with this?

What is the love behind these common fears:

Lack of money; change; flying; public speaking; heights; dark; intimacy; failure; world war; pollution; pain; death.

8. **Read Mark 4:35-41.** What did the disciple’s question (v38) reveal about their doubts?

Why were the disciples so afraid?

What is the connection between fear and faith (v40)?

Is the fear of v41 different to their previous fear?

- ☆ 9. **Read Mark 6:47-52.** What explanation is given for what is behind the fear of the disciples?

What is Jesus’ solution to their fear?

Matthew’s account of this story (14:22-33) includes Peter walking on the water. What is Peter fearful of?

Why do you think Jesus calls him out of the boat?

What might Jesus want us to do? Why?

10. **Read 2 Timothy 1:6-12.** Of what things might Timid Tim be fearful of?

What antidotes to fear does Paul remind him of?

- ☆ 11. Are you brave enough to share something you’re fearful of? What have you learned about what God has to say to you? What can people pray for you concerning this?

PRAYER POINTS:

STUDY 2: FEAR GOD

1. A constant theme through the Bible (especially in Deuteronomy, Psalms and Proverbs) is that of fearing God. Is it an adequate word to describe the correct attitude to God? Is there another word that might be better?


2. In Deuteronomy, the Ten Commandments are introduced in this way:

*Deuteronomy 6:1-2 These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, 2 so that you, your children and their children after them may **fear the LORD your God** as long as you live **by keeping** all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life.*

What is the connection between fearing God and obeying him?

What else will result from fearing God?

Is it your experience that this works in practice?

-  3. Psalm 34 is an example of a Psalm that explores the practicalities of fearing God (others include Psalm 25; 103; 111). **Read Psalm 34**. What does God promise for those who fear him?

What does it look like, in practice, to fear the LORD?

What does it mean to taste and see that the LORD is good (v8)

Which verse in this Psalm do you particularly connect with? Why?

-  4. Jesus compared fearing people with fearing God. **Read Lk 12:4-7**. Why does it make more sense to fear God?

Are v6-7 contradictory with the command to fear God who can throw you into hell?

Why does Jesus command, in v7, that we DON'T fear?

- ☆ 5. **Read 1 Peter 1:17.** What are we to live in reverent fear of?

What is the motivation for living like this?

From the context, what does this life look like? How can *your* life look more like this?

6. From the verses below, what else are we to do because we fear God?

2 Corinthians 7:1

2 Corinthians 5:11

Ephesians 5:21

- ☆ 7. **Read Philippians 2:12-13.** What does it mean to work out your salvation with fear and trembling?

How does it help that God is at work in you?

- ☆ 8. How can a healthy fear of God help you not to fear other things?

How can a fear of other things stop you fearing God?

PRAYER POINTS:

STUDY 3: FEAR OF DEATH & JUDGMENT

1. Fear of dying regularly appears on lists of the things people fear most. What, specifically, do you think it is about death that people fear?



2. **Read Psalm 23.** What is the Psalmist tempted to be fearful of in this Psalm?

How does God help?

What is God saying to you in this Psalm?

3. **Read Hebrews 2:14-15.** How does Jesus set people free from the fear of death?

4. A verse that is often quoted is 1 John 4:18 *“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives our fear”*. Read this verse in context, from 1 John 4:13-21. What fear is being referred to?

What are we to do to be free of that fear?

The chapters leading up to Romans 8 have described God’s wrath against mankind’s sin (1:18-3:20), how death entered the world through one man’s sin (5:12-21), that the wages of sin is death (6:23), that the sinful nature bears fruit for death (7:5), and that the law, even though it is good, produced death in us (7:3). The conclusion to all this is that, without Christ, we are wretched and needing rescue from this body of death (7:24), and then the exclamation of praise, “Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord” (7:25).



5. **Read Romans 8:1-4.** Who no longer has the threat of God’s condemnation hanging over them?

Why?

How did it happen?

- ☆ 6. **Read Romans 8:5-17.** What difference does it make to life for the person who is in Christ?

What fear is v15 describing?

What does the Christian have instead?

- ☆ 7. **Read Romans 8:18-27.** What do these verses have to say to the person who fears death?

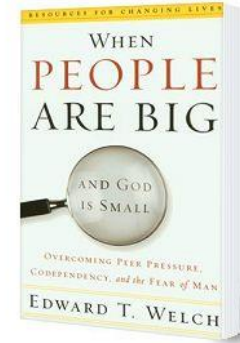
8. Share a verse in this study that is meaningful to you as you face the fear of death and judgment.

PRAYER POINTS:

STUDY 4: FEAR OF MEN

Ed Welch in his book *When People Are Big, and God is Small* identifies three basic reasons why we fear other people;

1. because they can expose and humiliate us
2. because they can reject, ridicule or despise us
3. because they can attack, oppress or threaten us



1. The fear of being exposed before others, shame, came with the first sin (see Gen 3:7 cf Gen 2:25). In what ways do people hide their true selves from people, for fear of being exposed?

How might the following behaviours be the result of a fear of being exposed before others?:

Discomfort with nudity, Discomfort with people staring, or invading personal space, Over-reliance on online social networking, Addiction to pornography, Addiction to fantasy gaming, Embarrassment at public speaking, or singing or dancing in public.

- ☆ 2. The Psalms are full of advice for those who fear. We looked at Psalm 23 in the last study. Complete the table

Passage	What the writer fears	What advice is given
Ps 27:1-5		
Ps 56:1-4		

- ☆ 3. We generally think that peer pressure is a problem only for children and teenagers. But we don't have to look too long in the mirror before we realise it's a problem for us all. We all want to be liked, accepted and included. In what areas of life is this most a problem for you?

Read John 12:42-43. Whose opinion was of most importance to these "believers"?

Share an example of a time when man's opinion mattered to you more than God's.

- ☆ 4. Consider the events of Jesus' arrest and trial from Peter's perspective. How do you see the fear of men working in Peter's words and actions?

Matt 26:31-35

Mt 26:56

Mt 26:69-75

Jn 20:19

Peter seems to have learned some lessons as he grew older. What advice does he give about fear, and responding to fear, in 1 Peter 3:13-18?

5. What commands does Jesus give for those tempted to fear man? How do these help?

Mt 5:10-12

Mt 10:17-33

Jn 16:33

- ☆ 6. **Read Romans 8:28-39.** The first half of Romans 8 addresses the fear of death and judgment. These verses address other things in this life that we fear. How does v28 -30 help as fearful things happen to us?

What specific things are mentioned that we fear?

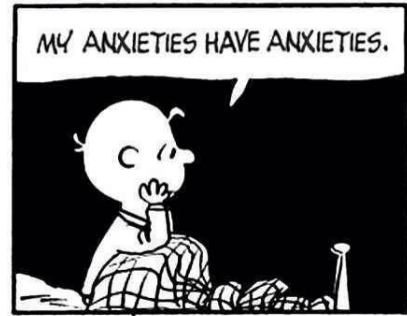
What truths are affirmed in v37-39 that help the Christian face fear?

7. "The most radical treatment for the fear of man is the fear of the Lord. God must be bigger to you than people are... Our problem is that we need people (for ourselves) more than we love them (for the glory of God). The task God sets before us is to need them less and love them more." Edward T. Welch, *When People Are Big, and God is Small* (p19). How can we help each other to fear God more?

PRAYER POINTS:

STUDY 5: WORRY

In the first study we defined anxiety and worry as fear of what might happen in the future. Worry and fear are closely related, and frequently overlap. In Luke 12 Jesus addresses both our fear (12:1-10) and our worry (12:11-12; 22-34).



1. What things do you worry about?

Consider how each worry is about not receiving something you love. What are the things you love that you worry about not receiving?

- ☆ 2. **Read Luke 12:22-34.** What reason is given for why we are not to worry about food and clothes (12:22-23)? What does this mean?

- ☆ 3. Jesus points to two illustrations from life in 12:24-30. What are they?

What point does he make about each?

How do they connect with the specific things Jesus says not to worry about?

What does Jesus emphasise about God's character towards us in these verses?

How does this support his command?

- ☆ 4. In 12:31-34 Jesus counsels us to replace one love with another. What, instead, are we to love? What does this, practically, look like?

The Puritan writer, Thomas Chalmers, wrote a famous book called "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection". His point is that the way to weaken your desire for the things of the world is to love Jesus, and the kingdom, more. How does loving less the things of the world mean they weaken their hold on you, and you worry about them less?

If you are no longer concerned with food and clothes, what things will concern you? What will this look like? What would it take, practically, for you to be able to do this more?

5. What is the connection between the parable of the rich fool (Lk 12:13-21), and the sections on either side about fear (12:1-10) and worry (12:22-34)? Hint: Consider, especially, how 12:34 fits in.



6. What, according to Philippians 4:6-7, is an antidote to anxiety? What promise accompanies the command?

Practically, how does this happen?

Have you seen any evidence of this in your own life?

What advice does 1 Peter 5:6-7 add to this?

PRAYER POINTS: