

Thinking biblically about fear, anxiety and worry

Introduction: Godly concern is a healthy recognition of obstacles we are facing when we are determined to live our life for God's glory and to bless others. Sinful anxiety is about protecting self and my kingdom, my desires and possessions. A wise person sees the level of danger and makes an accurate assessment. A foolish person either disregards the warnings or sees them without any possibility of God's intervention or ability to use them for good. The fool only sees the threat and the danger. Focus on seeing the big picture with God sovereign over all these circumstances, and your anxiety will lessen.

1. Is there ever an appropriate time to be afraid?

- When fear promotes a **healthy respect** for danger - Job 41:33; Ps 64:1

The leviathan was a fierce creature (cf. Ps 104:26 and Is. 27:1), a symbol of something powerful and uncontrollable. Job got the message-if you can't take on one of God's fearsome creatures, don't attempt to take on the God who made the creature! God has placed within us for our protection a capability to fear what harm us. In Psalm 64:1, David is asking God to make him so secure that he has no occasion to fear his enemies (Barnes Notes).

(Fear's goal is self-preservation!)

- When fear results in an **"awesome reverence"** for God - Ecc 12:13; Pr 1:7

What is "fear of God?" Living with an acute awareness of His loving hand in every area of my life, guiding me through the revealed Word of God, and recognizing that only when I trust and obey Him can life have true meaning and purpose for me. To fear God is to love Him so intensely that I fear doing anything that might grieve Him.

-The fear of the Lord is:

a choice (Pr 1:29)

the principle part of knowledge (Pr 1:7)

to hate evil (Pr 8:13)

not to envy sinners (Pr 23:17)

his treasure (Isa 33:6)

-The benefits of fearing the Lord:

strong confidence (Pr 14:26)

fountain of life (Pr 14:27)

instruction of wisdom (Pr 15:33)

tends to life (Pr 19:23)

satisfaction (Pr 19:23)

protection (Pr 19:23)

riches, honor, life (Pr 22:4)

God's covenant revealed (Ps 25:12-14)

Increased trust in God; no fear (Ps 112:1,7,8)

2. When is fear inappropriate or sinful?

- When it is a fear of **man**, not fear of **God** - Pr 28:1; 29:25

~Lk 12:4-5 – Christ warned his friends not to fear those that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do, but rather to fear God, who after He kills has power to cast into hell!

~Jn 12:42-43 – Many of the chief rulers believed on Jesus, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him for fear of being put out of the synagogue. They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. They did not stand for what they believed.

- When it **hinders** us from fulfilling God-given responsibilities - Lk 19:12-27

In the parable of the talents, the servants who used the master's gift wisely were called good and faithful servants, but the one who was paralyzed by fear did nothing profitable with the gift from his master and was destroyed. When fear keeps us from obedience in faith in any sphere of life, it is sin.

- When it is used to **manipulate** others - Dan 3; 1Sam 17

Nebuchadnezzar tried to use fear to manipulate Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego with a threat to throw them into the fiery furnace and later with Daniel into the lion's den. They all feared God more than man and chose to obey God rather than man. Fear of punishment or death did not move them from what they knew was right. Goliath likewise manipulated Saul's army by using fear, but David feared God more than he feared a giant.

- When its focus is **SELF** rather than loving God and others - 1Jn 4:18

Fear is selfish because it about protecting myself, my feelings, my stuff, rather than asking how I could heartily show love to God and others. Love reaches out to give and to meet the needs of another, but fear focuses on what I might lose, making me move away from the problem. Love causes me to work toward solutions even when I don't really feel like doing that. Fear makes my world grow smaller and smaller as I seclude, hesitate, and self-protect. Love is so powerful it can cast out my fear when I allow God's love to flow in me and through me!

- When it is the result of **unsound thinking**, uncontrolled and self-perpetuating - 2Ti 1:7

Fear produces fear and may lead to a sinful response producing even more fear. It is like a spiral that grows with increased tension until irrational fear takes control of our lives, control that should belong only to the Holy Spirit. Perfectionists, controllers, and those with OCD struggle with fear

