

Guardrails Fear of Man

The fear of the Lord is a guardrail keeping us on the narrow road (Matthew 10:17-30). Though we are created for relationship with God and with others, sin has drastically affected our God-given desire for acceptance. If we are not careful, we will want human praise *more* than praise from God. Without guardrails, we will seek the approval of others by obsessively trying to please them, by performing in such a way as to garner their attention. Having a healthy fear of God – where we are utterly in awe of who He is – keeps us from perpetual people-pleasing and positions us to receive the abundant life He has to offer us (Matthew 10:28-30; John 10:10). We grow in our fear of God by intentionally spending time getting to know Him better, by focusing on who He is and who He is revealed to be in Scripture.

GET THINGS STARTED

Have you ever had the thought to pray for someone, to share your testimony, or to give an impression or a prophetic word to someone but held back because you did not know how they might respond? How concerned or sensitive should we be to how others might take what we share with them? Why do you think so many Christians are afraid to appear too radical in their faith?

GO DEEPER

1. According to Matthew 10:17-22, why should we be on guard against other people? How should we understand in our modern-day context Jesus' words that *all men will hate you because of me*? What point is Jesus making from these few verses?
2. From John 12:42-43, what was the struggle within some of the Jewish leaders who believed in Jesus, and why is it significant for us? Can we please God *and* please people? Why or why not?
3. In Proverbs 29:25, why is the *fear of man* a snare?
4. Why should we fear God, according to Matthew 10:28-30? What does it mean to fear God, especially considering 1 John 4:17-18?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. How much do you seek the approval or affirmation of those around you, and fear their rejection? Do you tend to fear man (others) more than you fear God? How does your desire to please those around you compare to your desire to please God?
2. How do you know if you are truly walking in a healthy fear of God? What is a step you can take to grow or mature in your fear of Him, to know Him better?
3. What does it look like for you to have healthy relationships with others (without the fear of rejection or the pressure to gain their approval) as you pursue knowing Jesus better?

PRACTICE IT NOW

Take time together as a group, in prayer, to ask God to instill in you a stronger and deeper fear of Him as a spiritual guardrail. Ask God to give you greater understanding of what it means to fear Him and to pursue pleasing Him over pleasing others. Pray that you will know Him better and become even more captivated and awed by who He is. Ask God to root out of you any unhealthy tendencies to seek human praise over praise from God, to seek human approval over God's approval.