

WISDOM FOR EVERYDAY LIFE | Session 5: Turning Fear into Awe

SESSION GOALS

The point of every session is a main idea with the goal of informing our knowing, feeling, and doing.

MAIN IDEA: If you fear God, you need fear nothing and no one else.

Head Change: To know that the fear of the Lord makes you wise because it reorientates your priorities and perspectives.

Heart Change: To feel grateful that being filled with the fear of God leaves no room for other fears to take up space in your life.

Life Change: To defeat unhealthy fear in your life by getting to know God better and better, and so living in greater and greater awe of Him.

OPEN

What's your biggest fear? Why? Has fear ever saved your life? Has fear ever robbed you of life?

The Bible really only talks about two categories of fear: the fear of God, and the fear of everything else. In the final session of the series, Stephen explores what it means for us to fear God, and how fearing God defeats the power of toxic fear in our lives.

VIEW

As you watch, write down how Stephen answers these questions.

List some of the negative repercussions of unhealthy fear.

Is the fear of the Lord described positively or negatively in the Bible?

What is the antidote to our debilitating fears?

How does fear of God lead to wisdom?

Show SESSION #5: *Turning Fear into Awe* (10 minutes)

REVIEW

Stephen says, 'If you fear God, you need fear nothing and no one else.' **Does this seem farfetched, or too good to be true, or right on? Does Stephen's phrase 'a hopeful fear of God' sound counterintuitive or contradictory to you?**

To 'fear the Lord' means to be so captivated by His majesty and so in awe of who He is that other fears find no traction in our lives. **How would you explain to a friend who has recently put their faith in Jesus that the fear of God induces courage?**

Stephen explains that the first thing we need to do is *focus our fears*, in other words, figure out what kind of fear we're dealing with and how we'll respond to it. **Do you agree that fear is inevitable? Why, or why not? If you feel comfortable to do so, talk about how fear has stripped you of confidence, or incapacitated you in some way, or driven you to do something regrettable. In which area of your life does fear tend to take up real estate – relationships, work, finances, or something else? Why do think your fear is triggered in this particular area?**

Stephen says, 'It's one thing when fears fly around your heart; it's another thing when fears take up home in your heart, and they get on the inside of you so that wherever you go, whatever you are doing, whoever you are with – the fear is there.' **Can you relate to this kind of all-consuming, under-your-skin fear? If so, how have you dealt with it in the past?**

The Bible talks about two categories of fear: 1) the fear of God, which is described in a surprisingly positive way throughout scripture, and 2) the fear of everything else, which is described negatively. **What bonus biproducts of fearing the Lord does Stephen mention? Have you experienced any or all of these? Do you think it's possible that, if you fear the Lord, you need never fear bad news? Why, or why not?**

Stephen points out that, in our cultural moment, the incidence of fear has greatly increased. On the whole, people are more fearful, and the rising generation describes a significant struggle with fear. The media have even dubbed Gen Z as 'Generation Fear'. **Where in your spheres of influence and engagement have you seen a rise in fear over the past year, or ten years? What do you think has caused it? Do you agreed that as the fear of God decreases in our culture, all other types of fear seem to increase? What happened to your fear levels when you became a Christian?**

To develop a healthy fear of the Lord, Stephen explains that the second thing we need to do is *find our awe*, because that enables us to face and overcome all other fears. Proverbs 9:10 says, 'The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.' Proverbs 14:26 says, 'Whoever fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge.' **Roleplay a conversation in which you explain to a colleague who is curious about your faith that fearing the Lord doesn't mean being scared of Him, but rather leads to wisdom and safety.**

Proverbs 19:23 reads, 'The fear of the LORD leads to life; then one rests content, untouched by trouble.' This proverb isn't promising we won't face trouble. Rather, we can 'rest content' in the midst of trouble. **Share about a time when you found yourself in trouble, and yet the trouble – the shock, grief, trauma, or fear – didn't overthrow your contentment, because you leaned on the Lord.**

The antidote to every other type of fear is to fear God: to have reverence, awe, and wonder for who God is and what He has done. **Have you ever been so captivated and overwhelmed by who Jesus is and what He has done for you that it filled your heart entirely, leaving no**

space for any other fear? How would it change your response to the fears you're facing this week if you were to recapture that sense of wonder?

Proverbs 9:10 says, 'The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...' The fear of the Lord makes you wise because it reorders your world and reorientates your perspective. **How did your fear of God influence a decision you made over the past year? How might fearing God take away your fear of decision making?**

Proverbs 16:6 says, 'Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the LORD evil is avoided.' **List some of the ways fearing the Lord protects you and keeps you safe (physically, socially, relationally, financially, and so on).**

Proverbs 14:27 says, 'The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a person from the snares of death.' **How would you explain to one of your kids or a Sunday school class of six-year-olds that fearing God is the most liberating and life-giving way to live?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

The psalmist writes, 'But with You there is forgiveness, that You may be feared. (Psalm 130:4) **When you first repented of your sins, how did it change your view of God?**

Read Isaiah 41:10–13. **What kind of fear is being spoken about in these verses (the good kind – fear of the Lord – or the toxic kind)? What reason does God give us for living fearlessly, joyfully, and confidently?**

Read Matthew 10:28, Luke 12:32, and John 14:27. **Discuss how Jesus differentiates between worldly fear and godly fear.**

Paul writes to Timothy, 'For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.' (2 Timothy 1:7) **Do you think fearing God increases your power, love, and self-control? If so, how?**

LAST WORD

The more we understand and appreciate what it cost Jesus to buy our forgiveness and freedom, the more we're flooded with amazement, and the more we begin to experience the holy fear of the Lord – which makes us fearless in the face of every other fear. May you be filled with reverence and awe for God's glory, beauty, majesty, power, and compassion, and may the wonder of all that crowd out every other fear.

DEEPER WALK

Select at least one activity below to complete before moving on to another series.

Read: Read Psalm 27:1 in a few different Bible translations. Meditate on God's awe-inspiring attributes and allow your fears to dissipate in light of His splendour.

Write: Write out all your fears, enormous and miniscule. Then counter each fear with a biblical truth about God's love, power, and wisdom.

Pray: If someone you love is weighed down with worry, offer to pray for them. Ask God to overwhelm them instead with a sense of His presence and peace, so much so that their awe of Him eliminates all their fears.