Fear – two ways to look at one word

1. **An emotional response to a threat**; a basic survival response to a specific stimulus or impending danger, evil, pain – whether real or imagined; a feeling of agitation and anxiety caused by the presence or imminence of danger. Many believe this is one of a small set of basic emotions we are born with; like joy, sadness, and anger.

2. **To be in awe of; to revere**

First, look at fear as an emotional response to danger
It makes perfect sense to be afraid under certain circumstances (healthy fear). For instance, if you’re standing in front of the lion exhibit at the zoo and see the lion lift the latch to escape – there’s a good chance of impending danger and you need to take flight! Remember, early humans that were quick to fear dangerous situations were more likely to survive and reproduce.

On the other hand, to be afraid to go to the zoo on the off chance that the lion might escape from his cage is an imagined threat. Could it happen, yes; do you know it will happen, no. (unhealthy fear).

Where do our fears (emotional responses) come from?
People develop specific fears as a result of learning; But, fear is complicated. When healthy, it can be a natural, good sense response that would cause you to run from a dangerous situation. When unhealthy it can be both emotionally and spiritually crippling.

Fear (as an emotional response) is only as deep as the mind allows
We are bombarded with “scary” things; terrorism, global warming, terrorist attacks, spiders, death, being a failure, heights, violence, being alone, the future...and the list goes on. As Christians, how do we respond (logic) to our fears (emotion)? Unless the ‘danger’ is very real, and very present (lion, again) we can take our fear out and examine it by asking ourselves a few questions.

1. **Is my fear real or perceived?** Something has actually happened or will happen vs. anxiety and worry over what might happen. Worry is a form of fear and it wears you out!

2. **Is my fear legitimate;** logical based on what I’ve seen, heard, believe to be true, etc?

3. **What does scripture, reason and tradition have to say about my fear?**

4. **With courage, can I face this fear and overcome it** (with God’s help)?

It is important to have a healthy respect for our fears, after all, God gave us this emotion, too. However, are there times, outside of dangerous situations, that if we choose safety we are also reinforcing our fear? Sometimes, fears are an opportunity to develop courage; and courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear (being honest, being true to yourself). Courage is doing what you’re afraid to do (speaking in public, dressing differently). There can be no courage unless you’re scared.

And, finally, fear as reverential awe
Christians believe fear is a healthy response to God. The Bible commands that we fear God and yet also love Him. This may seem like a contradiction at first—but when we think about what the Bible actually means, the contradiction goes away.

"Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere him" (Psalm 33:8). We usually fear something (such as a vicious dog or a violent storm) when we expect it to harm us. In other words, we fear something that has no concern for us, and is a source of constant danger to us. But, God isn’t like that. He created us, loves us.

To fear God is not to shrink back from Him in terror. To fear God is to have a deep reverence for Him, and to stand in awe at His holiness and majesty and power and love.
Words of Wisdom about fear.....

Try a thing you haven’t done three times. Once, to get over the fear of doing it. Twice, to learn how to do it. And a third time to figure out whether you like it or not

"There are times when fear is good. It must keep its watchful place at the heart's controls. There is advantage in the wisdom won from pain."

"The meaning I picked, the one that changed my life: Overcome fear, behold wonder."

"'Come to the edge,' He said. They said, 'We are afraid.' 'Come to the edge,' He said. They came. He pushed them...and they flew."

"Courage is a special kind of knowledge: the knowledge of how to fear what ought to be feared and how not to fear what ought not to be feared."

"Anything I've ever done that ultimately was worthwhile... initially scared me to death."

"How do you know so much about everything? was asked of a very wise and intelligent man; and the answer was 'By never being afraid or ashamed to ask questions as to anything of which I was ignorant."

"Anxiety is a thin stream of fear trickling through the mind. If encouraged, it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained."

"If you fear making anyone mad, then you ultimately probe for the lowest common denominator of human achievement."

"The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else."

"The reserve of modern assertions is sometimes pushed to extremes, in which the fear of being contradicted leads the writer to strip himself of almost all sense and meaning."

"Character isn't inherited. One builds it daily by the way one thinks and acts, thought by thought, action by action. If one lets fear or hate or anger take possession of the mind, they become self-forged chains."

"Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness."