

life groups' study guide



Life Groups exist at Kingsway to provide authentic relationships for spiritual growth, caring for one another, and reaching out to others.

Baggage: Replacing Fear With Freedom

Replacing fear with freedom

"Fear makes the wolf bigger than he is."--- German Proverb

"Courage is not the lack of fear but the ability to face it."--- Lt. John B. Putnam Jr. (1921-1944)

"What we fear comes to pass more speedily than what we hope."-- Publilius Syrus - Moral Sayings (1st C B.C.)

"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear."-- H.P. Lovecraft

Introduction

Lists of common fears include fear of death, public speaking, heights, closed spaces, spiders, snakes and the dark.

- Do you have a phobia on the list above? Or another not on the list?
- How do you deal with the fear?

If fear is a bad thing, why do we seek out the emotion through experiences such as amusement park rides or horror movies?

Bible Study

Fear is often the result of circumstances we do not understand or seem to have little control over the outcome.

Consider the situations of these historical figures:

1. Adam and Eve cover themselves with fig leaves and hide from God in the garden. (Gen 3:6-10) When God approaches them, Adam admits he is "afraid because I was naked."
2. Mary, a virgin engaged to be married, is visited by an angel (in Luke 1:26-38). The angel greets her as a woman who is "richly blessed" and has "found favor with God," yet he immediately tells her not to be afraid.

3. A group of disciples are in a boat on the Sea of Galilee. It is night, they are a long distance from shore, the waves are battering the boat, and they believe they see a ghost walking toward them on the water. (Matt 14:22-27). Jesus is recognized as the one walking on the water and his first words are, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

Looking at each of these events in context:

- What is the source for the fear in these widely different events?
- Is the fear justified in any case?
- God anticipates the fear in each case. What does that tell us about God, man and our fears?
- Why does fear appear to be the first reaction in these situations?
- Are our fears "natural" (a part of our nature)?

Overcoming fear

The Bible is filled with stories of fearful situations and remedies for fear.

Read Mark 4:35-41

- The disciples are with Jesus. Does being a Christian eliminate the emotion of fear? (vs 35-36)
- What is the source of the fear? (vs 37)
- Jesus is unafraid. What is the disciples' reaction? What are their exact words? (vs 38) Why do we lash out at those closest to us when fear arises?
- What is Jesus' response to the fear? (vs 39) What does Jesus suggest is the real problem?
- Does this end the fear? (vs 41) Is it the same fear after the incident is over? If not, what has changed?
- How can we practically apply the cure for fear that Jesus gives in this situation?

Read Matt 6:24-34

- This passage deals with worry and anxiety-- a common manifestation of fear. Verse 24 is often separated in Bible groupings of verses, yet it is implied as the basis for the text that follows in verse 25. What does the teaching about serving two masters have to do with fear? (vs 24)
- What are we specifically told NOT to worry about? (vs 25) How often are these sources of our worry and anxiety?
- What reasons does Jesus give for not worrying about these things? (vs 26-30)
- What are the cures for these specific worries that Jesus provides in these verses? (vs 30-34) How do we practically apply these commands?

The gift of community

The Bible is full of accounts where God provides a partner in time of trouble.

- Moses was given Aaron (his brother) to accomplish the work God gave him to do in freeing the Israelites. This was a situation in which Moses had many fears and doubts.
- Mary was given Elizabeth (a relative) to be with her in a surprising pregnancy.

- The Bible refers to Christians as “brothers and sisters”. Can you share an example where God provided the partner(s) you needed in a time of trouble?

Read Matt 26:36-45

- Jesus is facing a fearful situation beyond our ability to comprehend. (vs 36) Who does Jesus take with him in this situation? (vs 37)
- What is Jesus doing in the garden? (vs 36)
- What does He ask of his friends? (vs 38)
- Despite disappointment, Jesus does not send them away. (vs 39-41) What does He ask them to do in this verse?
- Despite a second disappointment, he asks them to accompany Him in His imminent trials. (vs 42-46) Why do you think he wants them around at this time?
- What can these verses tell us about the gift of community in the Body of Christ in the midst of our struggles, trials and fears?
- Jesus modeled the community of a small group of friends. How can such a community help you overcome your fears and worries?

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. (1 John 4:18)

- What does John mean “there is no fear in love”?
- Only God has “perfect” love. How can our understanding of His perfect love remove our fear?
- How does fear involve punishment?
- How can our being perfected in love remove fear?

A good fear—awe and respect for God

The Bible is filled with verses describing an appropriate fear—the fear of God.

- Exodus 1:21
- Psalm 19:9
- Psalm 111:10
- Proverbs 10:27
- Proverbs 31:30
- Ecclesiastes 5:7
- Matt 10:28

How does having a proper fear of God reduce a misplaced fear of earthly circumstances?

What steps can we take to increase our reverence for God?

Pray for a proper perspective of God, his provision for dealing with fear, and a community of believers to walk with you in the midst of a fallen world.

