

Generosity

Week 4: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wise investments.

Mike Colaw

Proverbs 9:10

Luke 12:4–7

Quick Review:

We are taking a journey with Rich and Lisa.

At the same time we want you to become aware of a few really important ideas.

Week 1: You have immeasurable worth and have something to offer. Matthew 13:31-43

Week 2: What you truly trust is made clear by where you place what is valuable to you. Luke 12:13-21

Week 3: What does the New Testament actually say about giving? In the same manner immeasurable generosity was given to you offer it to others. Luke 12:22-34; 2 Cor. 9:6-11; Luke 7:47-50; Acts 4:32-37

Week 4: The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom

Fear Drives Us:

We will see how much you remember from Psychology 101.

Take your note card out. Write out what you think people fear most.

1. Extinction—the fear of annihilation, of ceasing to exist. This is a more fundamental way to express it than just calling it "fear of death." The idea of no longer being arouses a primary existential anxiety in all normal humans. Consider that panicky feeling you get when you look over the edge of a high building.
2. Mutilation—the fear of losing any part of our precious bodily structure; the thought of having our body's boundaries invaded, or of losing the integrity of any organ, body part, or natural function. Anxiety about animals, such as bugs, spiders, snakes, and other creepy things arises from fear of mutilation.
3. Loss of Autonomy—the fear of being immobilized, paralyzed, restricted, enveloped, overwhelmed, entrapped, imprisoned, smothered, or otherwise controlled by circumstances beyond our control. In physical form, it's commonly known as claustrophobia, but it also extends to our social interactions and relationships.
4. Separation—the fear of abandonment, rejection, and loss of connectedness; of becoming a non-person—not wanted, respected, or valued by anyone else. The "silent treatment," when imposed by a group, can have a devastating psychological effect on its target.

5. Ego-death—the fear of humiliation, shame, or any other mechanism of profound self-disapproval that threatens the loss of integrity of the Self; the fear of the shattering or disintegration of one's constructed sense of lovability, capability, and worthiness.

-Karl Albrecht Ph.D., *Psychology Today*

Or what about this picture?

(Show the picture, “Fear will motivate you like nothing else in this world.”)

Fear drives us. Way more than we realize.

I battle with ego death for sure. I can't tell you how much money I have spent trying to make sure my life is significant. I also have spent a lot of money trying to make sure my kids' lives are significant.

I will open with a statement and spend all morning working to prove its truth.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wise investments.

With all this in mind let's go to the text.

Scripture:

Luke 12:4–7 (ESV): 4 “I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. 5 But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! 6 Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. 7 Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Luke 12:4

“I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do.

- Let's bring a little broader concept to the word fear. Biblically, fear can also tie into the idea of respect. What is it that garners the most attention from you and why?
- Put yourself in their shoes. There was fear from oppressive Rome. There was fear of keeping face with the religious leaders. For some, there was fear of getting their next meal.
- *“It is remarkable that in all of his writings Paul's prayers for his friends contain no appeals for changes in their circumstances. It is certain that they lived in the midst of many dangers and hardships. They faced persecution, death from disease, oppression by*

powerful forces, and separation from loved ones. Their existence was far less secure than ours is today. Yet in these prayers you see not one petition for a better emperor, for protection from marauding armies, or even for bread for the next meal. Paul does not pray for the goods we would usually have near the top of our lists of requests...”
What is it that Paul prays for the people he loved so deeply? That they would know God better. -Timothy Keller

- We should respect what has true control over our destiny.
- Who or what do you believe controls your destiny?
 - Your kids soccer coach?
 - Your current boss?
 - Your paycheck?
 - Your reputation?

- *“Why should I cherish in my heart a hope that devours me - the hope for perfect happiness in this life - when such hope, doomed to frustration, is nothing but despair? My hope is in what the eye has never seen. Therefore, let me not trust in visible rewards. My hope is in what the heart of man cannot feel. Therefore, let me not trust in the feelings of my heart. My hope is in what the hand of man has never touched. Do not let me trust what I can grasp between my fingers. Death will loosen my grasp and my vain hope will be gone. If I trust You, everything else will become, for me, strength, health, and support. Everything will bring me to heaven. If I do not trust You, everything will be my destruction.”* -Thomas Merton

Luke 12:5-7

5 But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!

6 Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God.

7 Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

- We should respect what has true control over our **destiny**.
- God is in control.
 - God loves you.
 - I think many of us fear wrongly.

Final Thoughts:

Most of us are bound by our fears and that misplaced fear/respect is literally starving us spiritually.

Illustration:

When I was first in ministry there was an elder in our church who took it upon himself to mentor me. I will never forget a 6:00 am breakfast where he was sharing with me that he is more concerned with movies his kids watch than sky diving. "I am not worried as much about what breaks their body as I am what breaks their soul," he shared.

There was a student I had in youth ministry named Jake. Jake accepted the call to be a missionary in a brutal, war-torn country where they are currently killing Christians. In talking with him, it isn't that he is more courageous than you or I, it's that he is more concerned with honoring God than being killed for his faith. He has rightly placed fear.

C. S. Lewis appears to have understood this truth deeply. Even at the height of his success as an author, Lewis never appeared to clamor for the spotlight, and he lived a relatively modest lifestyle. After Lewis's death in 1963, people came out of the woodwork to share how incredibly generous Lewis was with his wealth. As Lewis's stepson, Douglas Gresham, put it in his excellent book, *Lenten Lands*, "*No tramp or beggar would be turned away empty-handed by [Lewis]. Although convinced of his own poverty, he would gladly give to anyone who asked.*"

Even when I was back in high school, I remember leaving a football practice early to come to youth. Honestly, I was nervous. I was afraid I would lose face with my peers, lose respect from my coach, be punished and even lose opportunities. The truth is I did lose some of those things. I just remember my dad over and over again drilling down on what was most important in my life and encouraging me to respect that most.

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What does this have to do with generosity?

Most of you don't give of your time, talent and treasure to the kingdom because you fear and or respect wrongly. For example, ego-death has locked you up. You are not really in massive debt to your things; no, you are a slave to your ego's fear of losing respect from temporary systems and values that have no direct eternal worth.

Next Steps Cards:

- How would you use your time, talent and treasure differently if you really believed Christ's work in your heart and the world around you was truly and eternally most important in your life?
- Is there any wrongly placed fear/respect that is keeping you from deeper trust in God?

References:

- 5 Basic Fears, Karl Albrecht Ph.D. Last accessed: November 15, 2018
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/brainsnacks/201203/the-only-5-fears-we-all-share>

- The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Lk 12:32–34). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.
- Douglas Gresham, Lenten Lands. Quote about C.S. Lewis.