LET'S TALK ABOUT FEAR
To be human is to know fear. Fear is an emotion that, as human beings, we have all experienced and can understand. God knew that at the fall of man, we would fear, and that we would be tempted to let fear rule our hearts and lives. But God, being rich in mercy and grace, doesn’t leave us to deal with fear alone. He speaks to our fears and, not only that, he promises to deliver us from our fears. It is important to know what fear is, what the Bible says about it, and how God promises to help us in the midst of fear.

WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT

**Lesson One:** What Is Fear?
**Lesson Two:** Reasons to Not Fear
**Lesson Three:** Reasons to Not Fear (continued)
**Lesson Four:** Panel (Overcoming Living by Fear)
**Lesson Five:** How to Not Fear
**Lesson Six:** How to Not Fear (continued)

*Written by: Matt Mugumya*
Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”

2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” 4 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” 10 And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself” (Gen. 3:1-10).
When you hear the word fear, many of you may have an immediate emotion or possibly a memory come to mind that you associate with fear. As human beings we all know and have all experienced fear. For some of us, this is an isolated emotion or feeling that we don’t know very often. For others, fear is an emotion that we feel daily; it can be debilitating.

But what is fear? Is it an emotion? Is it a sin? Is it normal?

Fear is an emotion/feeling that is induced by a sense of danger or sense of uncertainty. Fear is something we see in the very beginning of the Bible after the fall of man. The first sin committed by Adam and Eve was disbelief. They believed the lie of the Enemy, which resulted in believing that they knew better than God. This decision exposed them. Genesis shows us directly what the result of that decision was: fear.

We see in verse 8 that after they clothed themselves, they fled and hid. God comes to find them and asks, “Where are you?” Adam’s response is this; “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” For the first time, Adam was aware of a new emotion–fear. In that moment in the garden, he had an understanding that he was not God and that he should in fact be afraid of who God is and God’s perfect judgement.

Because of the fall, we all deal with fear. We all have different things we fear and we all have different levels of fear. For some fear comes with feeling a lack of control. While control is merely an illusion, many of us our prone to fear when we feel “out of control.” Yet, God speaks directly to fear. He commands us to not fear; he gives us promises to aid us in our fear, and he teaches us what healthy fear looks like.

Fear can easily control our thinking. For some of us, it can be all-consuming and, if we are honest, debilitating. That intensity of fear makes decision-making especially difficult. It’s hard to make decisions that aren’t based upon those fears. What we see in this Scripture is that our fear can cause us to hide. It can cause us to retreat and even hold us back from finding the joy that God has offered us when we live in the peace that he offers us.

For the next five weeks, we will take time to discuss fear in its multiple facets. We will continue to expand on what it is, why God commands us to not fear, and when he commands us to fear. We will even hear from a panel of different people who have walked through seasons of life of fearing and what it has looked like for them to cling to God.
THE CHALLENGE

- Think about how you view fear. Do you give it reign over your life or do you recognize God is in control and has promised to never leave you nor forsake you?

QUESTIONS FOR THE GROUP

1. When you think of being afraid what comes to mind?

2. Are you someone who is prone to fear? Why or why not?

3. What is your normal response when you feel “out of control” in certain areas of your life? Fear? Anger? Shut down?

4. Why is it important to understand fear?
NOTES:
But for now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you: I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers; they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. “Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made” (Isa. 43:1-7).
Last week, we spent time talking about an understanding of what fear actually is. Fear is such a big topic, because as we mentioned last week, it is an emotion and response that we all can resonate with and have all experienced.

**WHO IS GOD?**

In this passage, God is speaking to his children, and commanding them not to fear. One thing we quickly learn from this passage is that God knows that, left to our sinful state, we are prone to be afraid. In just five verses he repeats himself twice, “do not fear.” When we read this passage, we are quick to dismiss it, because anyone who has been afraid knows that simply telling ourselves “Do not be afraid, do not be afraid,” is easy to say but hard to actually put into practice.

But what we see in Isaiah is that God does not just give them a command, he follows his command with a promise. God tells them, “I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are mine.” God doesn’t simply give them a command, he gives them a command and reminds them that they have been saved.

Why are they not to fear? Because they have been redeemed. Because the God of the universe calls them his own.

**BEING KNOWN BY GOD**

We all know what is like to want to be known and loved. Many of you come to youth group because you know that you will get to see your friends. Many of you come to youth group because you feel known. But there are a few of you in here that really struggle or find yourself even afraid of coming here, because you don’t feel known, and you are not sure if you belong here. What God reveals through this passage is that being known brings comfort. Being known brings hope and being known relieves our fears.

While God reminds them not to fear and gives the reassurance that they are chosen and his, he does remind them that they will have trials. He doesn’t say, “Fear not, for life will be easy and I will give you a life full of ease and happiness.” No, in this passage God clearly communicates, “when you walk through the waters…when you walk through the fires”. For some of you, you have already experienced what it feels like to walk through waters and fires. Life is hard. We live in a fallen world where people die, people disappoint us, and our expectations are not met. It is no wonder that we are all prone to live in fear.

And yet, we have a reason not to fear. While we know that we will walk through difficult days, we can rest in the promise that we are chosen, we are redeemed, and we are secure.
THE CHALLENGE

• Consider how knowing God and knowing you are known by God can allow you to not live in fear.

QUESTIONS FOR THE GROUP

1. When are you the most prone to fear? How do you handle fear?

2. What do you find most comforting about God’s promises on why you don’t need to fear?

3. In what ways have you seen God comfort you in your fears?

4. What are some promises you cling to in times of fear?

5. How does knowing God change the way you think about fear?
LESSON THREE

REASONS TO NOT FEAR

Main Idea | We can obey God’s command to not be afraid because he has promised to supply every need of ours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Out of my distress I called on the Lord, the Lord answered me and set me free. The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? The Lord is on my side as my helper, I shall look in triumph on those who hate me. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes (Psalm 118:4).

Fear, as we have discussed over the last two weeks, shows itself in so many different forms. Some of us fear situations and circumstances, some of us struggle with the fear of man, and some of us, if we are honest, find ourselves feeling afraid when we aren’t even sure what it is that we are fearing! But God isn’t unaware of this. Our fears do not surprise him nor do they worry him, but he does give us reasons as to why we should not fear.

WHY SHOULDN’T WE FEAR?

The psalmist in this passage is in distress; he feels as though his world is falling apart. To some extent, we can all resonate with this. We have all had moments in life when we have felt this. Whether it’s the distress of failing a test, or finding out that one of your parents has cancer, or that your parents may not stay married, or the distress of wondering if you will ever have friends; we all know what it is like to sit in fear.

The psalmist in this passage is speaking truth to himself. We talk often about what it means to preach the gospel to yourself and here in this text we see the psalmist preaching truth to himself. He found himself afraid, and yet, he reminds himself of this foundational truth: “What can man do to me? The Lord is on my side as my helper, I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.”

Why should he not fear? Why not worry when he feels like he is in distress? Because the Lord is his helper.
YOU MUST KNOW HIM TO TRUST HIM

It’s common sense to say that in order to trust someone you must know them. If someone you do not know gives you a command, you aren’t likely to obey it. But if you are given a command by someone who you know—someone whose good intentions you trust—you are more likely to follow. This remains true in our relationship with God. He commands us to not fear, because he is with us. But if we do not know that to be true, we are more prone to fear. The more we understand the heart of God, the more we desire to trust him and not walk in fear.

Fear exposes our desire for control. We desire to know the future, we desire to be able to control outcomes, and yet when we come face to face with fear, we realize we have no control. Fear exposes that we desire to be self-sufficient, and in the psalms, we are reminded that we must take refuge in the Lord, because left to ourselves, we have nothing.
THE CHALLENGE

- Take time this week to really evaluate what it looks for you in your own personal life to know God. Do you walk with him daily? Do spend time getting to know his heart?

QUESTIONS FOR THE GROUP

1. Why does God give us the command to not fear?

2. Do you find it challenging to obey the command “do not fear?”

3. What do knowing God and trusting God look like for you on a daily basis?

4. What does it look like for you to preach truth to yourself?
LESSON FOUR

OVERCOMING FEAR

Main Idea | Fear can be debilitating, and many of us have to regularly fight to not let fear rule our hearts. God has given us his Word and community to help us fight fear.

Panel Speakers | Essence Brown, Karesse Warren, Matt Mugumya, Aria Neal, Julian Gay, Bill Dinsmore

Tonight we are going to hear from a few different people in different seasons of life. We have communicated in the last few weeks how fear looks different for each of us, but how we have all encountered it. Our goal and hope is that as you listen to all of these people in different walks of life, you would be encouraged in your own walk—whether you yourself struggle with fear or you are walking alongside someone who does.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PANEL:

1. Introduce yourself and explain what fear looks like for you in your life.

2. When do you find yourself most fearful? What do you do with that fear?

3. In what ways have you seen the benefit of having others in your life help you as you walk through fears?

4. What are some promises that you cling to help you as you fight fear?
Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, what is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things (Phil. 4:4-8).

Paul gives a command that a lot of us know by heart: do not be anxious about anything. Easy to say, easy to read, but for those who live in fear and anxiety: it is so difficult to obey.

In truth, there are certain commands in the Bible that we often read more as suggestions than commands. This passage, like any other command that we are given in the Bible, does not simply give us a command as to what to do, but gives us the promise beforehand. Why should we not be anxious? Because the Lord is at hand.

Tonight, we are going to talk a little more practically on how to obey the command to not be anxious and to not worry. This is not a solution to experiencing fear. Rather, it’s an encouragement to begin fighting back against fear through speaking the truth to yourself that’s given to us in God’s Word.
CALL TO MIND GOD’S FAITHFULNESS

One thing we see over and over again in God’s word is him kindly telling his people to remember. Why? Because, as sinful human beings, we are prone to forget. Here, God tells his people over and over again, “Remember my goodness, remember my faithfulness.” He knows they are prone to forget and that their forgetfulness turns into fear. In fact, the Israelites created stones of remembrance, as a practical way to call to mind the things that God had done for them. God knew they needed that tangible reminder, so he instructed them to set the stones as reminders (Josh. 4:1-9).

So, how does this relate to you and to fear? Fear is often a result of forgetfulness. We lose sight of the things God has done. We lose sight of the faithfulness that he has shown to us over and over.

What does it practically look like to call God’s faithfulness to mind? It means intentionally calling-to-mind the things God has done. One great way to do this is to grab a journal and write out the ways you have seen God provide in the last year or more. Write down five different verses of God’s promises to you. For example:

“I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Phil. 4:4-8).

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Take time to sit with a friend who knows you well, who knows your life, and ask them to help you recall to mind the ways that God has provided. Ask them to remind you of the times you have been fearful in the past and the ways God has been faithful.

Why? Because of what we read in Philippians 4:8, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, what is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

When we turn our mind to things that are true, honorable, and worthy of praise, we are less inclined to live in the fear that our minds are so often prone to live in.
THE CHALLENGE

• This week, write out some of the ways you have seen God's faithfulness in the last year.

QUESTIONS FOR THE GROUP

1. In the last year (or six months) what is one specific way that you have seen God answer a prayer or provide for you in a way you were not expecting?

2. How do your thoughts/what you dwell on directly impact how you deal with fear?

3. What is your initial response to the command “do not be anxious about anything”? In what ways do you find this to be difficult to obey and in what ways do you find it a comfort?

4. What would it look like for you to practically take time to write out/or recall the ways in which you have seen God be faithful in this past year?
I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. 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! Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are more value than many sparrows (Luke 12:4-7).

During the last few weeks we have talked about fear. We have learned about and discussed the bad kinds of fear. The truth is, though: there is a healthy and right type of fear.

When reading Luke 12:4-7, we must wrestle with an apparent contradiction. In these few verses, Luke records Jesus telling us to not fear man, to not fear those who can only harm the physical body, but to fear the Creator! And then he proceeds to say, “fear not”!

Is Jesus contradicting himself or are we actually called to both fear and not fear? And what does that even look like?

We’ve spent the last five weeks talking about why to not fear and now we are reading through a passage that gives us the warning to fear. Jesus says, “But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has the authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!”

Why should we fear God?

Is this the same type of fear that we have been talking about these last few weeks?

Fearing God is having a right understanding of who he is. He has the authority to cast our souls into hell. Now, if we left it at that we would fear him simply because he sounds like a judgmental God. But there’s more to the story. While God has
the authority and power to eternally condemn us for falling short of his perfect standard, he is a God who judges with mercy and grace that we cannot earn nor do we deserve.

John Piper puts fearing God this way, “God means for his power and holiness to kindle fear in us, not to drive us from him, but to drive us to him. Fearing God means, first, fearing to abandon him as our great security and satisfaction. Or another way to say it is that we should fear unbelief. Fear not trusting God’s goodness. What we should fear is not believing, not having faith. Fear running away from God. But if we walk with him and hug his neck, he will be our friend and protector forever.” ¹

God’s power, holiness, beauty, perfection, and so many other things should lead us to fear him. In fearing him, we begin to know him, and in knowing him, we trust him. As we trust him, we will see that, like John Piper says, our fear of him leads us to love him more and to see him as our friend and protector forever.

Fearing God also exposes how weak we actually are. When we see God for who he is, we see ourselves for who we really are—not all-powerful and all-knowing. This shouldn’t drive us to want to fix ourselves. It should drive us to fear God more and to fight to know God more.

During our study on fear, there has been a consistent theme: We are not in control. When we try to be in control, it leads to a wrong fear. God is in control, and God desires us to fear him and know him. When we know God and trust him, we find rest for our souls.

Our hope is that this series has given you a better understanding of who God is and what fear is (both the unhealthy and healthy fear). We hope that it has helped grow your desire to take God at his Word and find the joy that comes from living and abiding in his commands.

¹ https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-fear-that-draws-us-in
THE CHALLENGE

- Consider how gracious it is of God to allow us to fear him and know him. He is an amazing Savior to let his children have a personal relationship with him.

QUESTIONS FOR THE GROUP

1. What comes to mind when you think of fearing God?

2. Do you have a healthy view of who God is or do you fear him because you think he is an angry God who we have to keep happy? Or do you do what you want because you know he is a God of grace?

3. Why does God want us to fear him?

4. In these last six weeks, what is something that you have learned about who God is or learned about fear?

5. If fear/anxiety is something you struggle with, how have you learned the difference between fearing God and fearing man?