**Course Outline**

**Lesson 1:** What is the fear of man?

**Lesson 2:** What is the fear of God?

**Lesson 3:** How do we fear man? We fear that people will expose us.

**Lesson 4:** How do we fear man? We fear that people will reject us.

**Lesson 5:** How do we fear man? We fear that people will harm us.

**Lesson 6:** A new vision for life: Loving God and loving neighbor

**Lesson 1: What is the Fear of Man?**

**“The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.” (Proverbs 29:25)**

“Many of the people I’ve talked to also had an awakening when they saw the controlling power of other people. They awoke to an epidemic of soul called, in biblical language, ‘the fear of man.’ Although, they were avowed worshippers of the true God, below the surface they feared other people. That is not to say that they were terrified by or afraid of others (although sometimes they were). ‘Fear’ in the biblical sense is a much broader word. It includes being afraid of someone, but it extends to holding someone in awe, being controlled or mastered by people, worshipping other people, putting your trust in people, or needing people.… However you put it, the fear of man can be summarized this way: We replace God with people. Instead of a biblically guided fear of the Lord, we fear others.”*—Ed Welch,* When People Are Big and God Is Small

1. **Where and how do we struggle with the fear of man?**
2. We see it in the workplace
3. We experience it in how we handle conflict
4. In our families the fear of others is exposed
5. Even in the church

**Diagnostic Questions from *When People are Big and God is Small* (pg 14-16):**

* Are you over-committed? Do you find that it is hard to say no even when wisdom indicates that you should?
* Do you “need” something from your spouse, your boyfriend/girlfriend, your friend? Do you “need” them to listen to you? Respect you? Do you need them to fulfill a certain role you desire?
* Is self-esteem a critical concern for you?
* Do you ever feel as if you might be exposed as an imposter? The sense of being exposed, even among the apparently successful, is an expression of the fear of man.
* Are you always second-guessing decisions because of what other people might think? Are you afraid of making mistakes that will make you look bad in other people’s eyes? Are you afraid to risk?
* Do you feel empty or meaningless? Do you experience “love hunger”? Here again, if you need others to fill you, you are controlled by them.
* Do you get easily embarrassed?
* Do you ever lie, especially the little white lies? What about cover-ups where you are not technically lying with your mouth? Lying and other forms of living in the dark are usually ways to make ourselves look better before other people. They also serve to cover our shame before them.
* Are you jealous of other people?
* Do other people often make you angry or depressed? Are they making you crazy?
* Do you avoid people?
* Aren’t most diets, even when they are ostensibly under the heading of ‘health’, dedicated to impressing others? Or for that matter an obsession with physical fitness?
* Have you ever been too timid to share your faith in Christ because others might think you are an irrational fool?

**DISCUSSION QUESTION: What is one of your fear of man stories?**

1. **Categories of Fear of Man**
2. We fear physical harm
3. We fear people will reject us.
4. We fear people will expose us.
5. **Who Fears Man?**

*Answer: Everyone Universally. I Cor. 10:13, “****No temptation has seized you except what is common to man.****”*

**DISCUSSION QUESTION: What are ways you have seen the fear of man in your life?**

1. **Why do we fear man?**
2. Past experience
3. Pride
4. Needs-based view of people
5. Wrong view of what we truly need
6. **What does Scripture say about the fear of man?**
7. It originated at the Fall. (Gen. 3:6-7)
8. It is shortsighted and insufficient. (Luke 12:4-5)
9. It is a destructive trap. (Prov. 29:25)
10. It is opposed to love. (I John 4:18)
11. It minimizes Christ. (Rom. 8:35, 38-39)
12. It can only be overcome through the power of the Gospel. (Romans 8:31-34 / 1 John 4:7-12)
13. **Examples in Scripture of those who feared man more than God**

Adam:

Abram:

Lot:

Jacob:

Moses:

Aaron:

Samson:

Saul:

Jonah:

The Pharisees:

Peter:

1. **What fruit does the fear of man produce in our lives?**

1. Discontent
2. Unhealthy dependence upon others
3. Cynicism
4. Bitterness

**DISCUSSION QUESTION: How do you see the fruit of the fear of man in your life?**

1. **What does the world do with the fear of man?**

*How does the world describe it?*

* *Co-dependence*
* *Peer pressure*
* *Perfectionism*
* *Egotism*
* *Self-esteem language*
* *Alpha male*
* *Type A vs type B personalities*

*How does the world “cope”?*

The world believes that they have an alien problem that can be resolved with an inner solution.

1. **Is there such a thing as a legitimate fear of man, versus sinful fear of man? How do we distinguish?**

Yes. It is sometimes right and proper to fear others.

We ought to respect authority.

We ought to fear any situation in which we face physical harm. Any Christian who had no proper fear of authority, and played ‘cowboy’ in the face of danger, would be considered mentally unstable.

Fearing man becomes sinful when the power of fear dominates our life.

1. **Conclusion**

We fear man because we do not fear God, or we do not fear God enough. (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)