

Equipped to face up to fear (part one)

When you were a child, what were you most afraid of? The dark? Heights? Other people? Well, it's not just children who have fears - adults have them too. Some of us fear the consequences of things we have done; perhaps we are afraid of what people think of us; or we worry about what the future might bring. Fear can get such a hold on us and, when this happens, it becomes a very destructive force in our lives. The Bible doesn't pretend that people don't have fears. It's such an honest book and in it we can read about the very real fears of some of the people mentioned there. In this article we'll look at three biblical examples of fear and, in part two, we'll consider a further three.

Adam and Eve: **fear of being exposed**. The first sin ever committed - disobedience to what God had said - is forever documented in **Genesis 3**. Up until that point, everything had been perfect in Adam and Eve's garden home. They were completely at ease with their physical nakedness which mirrored their complete transparency before God. In their sinless state, they had nothing to hide from him. Sin, however, changed all that. The shame of their nakedness led to fear of facing God in that condition. So, they tried to hide. Is there a particular sin, or pattern of wrong living, that is active in your life at the present time? Does this make you feel afraid because God sees the naked truth behind the outward show? Do you fear the consequences of your sin being exposed to other people? Then, take heart, because there is hope for you! Waste no time in bringing this matter to the Lord Jesus Christ with a penitent heart and receive the forgiveness he offers. Allow his forgiveness to take away the fear of being exposed.

Fear-buster for when you're afraid of being exposed - bring any unconfessed sin to God, receive his forgiveness, and quit the sin.

Abram: **fear of a bad outcome**. Abram and Sarai, as they were originally named, had obeyed God's command to move away from their home town of Ur and, on their journey, took a detour via Egypt to avoid a famine. As they came near to the Egyptian borders, Abram concocted a self-protection plan. Afraid he would be killed by the Egyptians so they could have Sarai for themselves, he decided to resort to lying about the real relationship between them. He was prepared to jeopardize his marriage and put others at risk in order to protect himself.¹ Is fear of a bad outcome leading you down a wrong path? Do you find you're allowing that particular fear to control what you say or do? If fear of negative consequences is making you compromise right principles, with the Lord's help, choose to turn away from what is wrong and do right.

Fear-buster for when you're afraid of a bad outcome - examine yourself to see if this is contributing to any areas of moral compromise in your life.

Saul: **fear of people**. God had issued clear instructions, but Saul chose not to follow these wholeheartedly. He thought he could get by with partial obedience, doing only those things that seemed profitable to him. Why did he do this? Because he was afraid of the people. You can read the full account in **1 Samuel 15**. Are there people whom you're afraid of, not because they present a danger to you, but because you're afraid of their disapproval, criticism, or rejection? Many of us have a desperate desire for the approval of others, and fear of not getting that approval has led multitudes to be people-pleasers rather than God-pleasers. Where are you trying to please people rather than God?

Fear-buster for when you're afraid of people - appreciate that pleasing God is your first priority.

¹ Genesis 12:10-20