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newsletter

"Let him who is without sin cast the First Stone"
And Jesus also said, *"Go and sin no more."* – **John 8**

MINISTRIES

Breaking Free from the Fear of Man



"The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe."
– Proverbs 29:25

Have you ever walked away from a conversation and replayed it in your head a hundred times, wondering what the other person thought of you?

Or held back from saying what you truly believed, just to keep the peace?

Or have you said yes when you wanted to say no, simply to avoid disappointing someone?

That invisible tug, the desire to be liked, praised, included, or approved of, is often more powerful than we realize. The Bible calls this the fear of man. We might also call it a man-pleasing spirit or people-pleasing. It can shape our lives in ways we do not even see until we stop to ask: Whose opinion holds the most power in my life?

Recently, I led a four-week teaching series on this subject. What follows is a summary of the journey we took together. We exposed the roots of approval addiction, uncovered its cost, and pointed toward the freedom that comes only from trusting and fearing the Lord.

The Snare of People-Pleasing

Proverbs 29:25 warns us: *"The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe."*

That word *snare* is vivid. It pictures a trap laid by a hunter, waiting for its prey. Fear of man is like that. It lures us with the promise of safety, but it ends up enslaving us.

This man-pleasing spirit shows up in many ways:

- Needing affirmation to feel okay.
- Avoiding conflict at all costs.
- Constantly comparing ourselves to others.
- Over-apologizing, over-performing, or overthinking.
- Replaying conversations long after they end.

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Boundaries with Adult Prodigal Children



God's Example of Boundaries

The idea of boundaries comes from God. He is very clear about who He is and who He is not. God sets boundaries and consequences for when the boundaries are violated. Following His example, we too can be very clear about who we are and are not. That begins with the most basic boundary words: yes and no. Jesus said in Matthew 5:37, "Just say a simple, 'yes, I will,' or 'No, I won't.' Anything beyond this is from the evil one" (NLT). Boundaries are essential in all of life—even with our children. Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend say it best in *Boundaries*:

"Our model is God...God sets standards, but He lets people be who they are and then separates himself from them when they misbehave, saying in effect, 'You can be that way if you choose, but you cannot come into my house'" (p. 45).

Our Story and Lessons Learned

My husband and I have 3 prodigal children out of 8. At first, they accepted our boundaries. Not anymore. As painful as

it has been, we have had to say, "You can be that way if you choose, but you cannot promote your sin in our house."

For us, that has meant setting clear guidelines in our home: not allowing overnight stays with your partner, no physical displays of affection, keeping alcohol out of the house, avoiding conversations that promote sinful choices, and of course, never permitting violence. Recently, we have had to enforce our boundaries at the loss of relationship with two of our children. Painful stuff! In that painful season, God comforted me through the words of a trusted pastor friend who reminded me: "Stop letting people who are not obeying God give you directions in life." Without boundaries, that is what we let people, who are not obeying God, do to us, give us directions in life. In kindness, we don't need to argue or explain, but simply uphold our yes or no.

Practical Boundaries to Consider

It helps to remember that many of our adult children may be emotionally, intellectually, psychologically, socially, and spiritually stunted. Reasoning often escalates into arguments that gain nothing. Sometimes the wisest step is to state your boundary and leave it there.

One key boundary is to stop the flow of money. Stopping financial dependency must be carefully planned and stated. Unless your adult child must leave your home immediately,

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The Words We Hide Behind



Jim Farrington,
Men's Minister

The scene opens with Dorothy and the rest of her companions entering into the great arena where the throne of Oz sits. A terrifying and intimidating face appears as flashes of fire and puffs of smoke fill the air. While they plead for Oz's promised help, Toto pulls back a curtain to reveal a man operating a console of buttons, levers, and pulleys. The powerful image of Oz was a fabrication, a façade, built out of the fear of being found out.

Isn't that what we do as believers? We work behind the scenes in secret, pressing buttons and pulling levers, convincing people that things are good when they aren't.

Religious Words as Masks

I remember a conversation by text about Romans 13:12-14, which came from my devotion:

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore, let us cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."

The response stood out to me: a polite "thank you," an admission that it was precisely what they needed to hear, and an acknowledgment of what they should be doing versus what they actually were doing. The words sounded religious and contrite, but I realized it was really a mask. We can make an outward show, but if our hearts are immersed in idolatry, then there's no way to put on anything except that fake image. People can respond with godly phraseology without any intent to change. We humans sure know how to fool people, don't we? We work hard to throw people off track, to protect the doors we keep open to sin and addiction.

The Deceitful Heart

Jeremiah 17:9 is a true testament to the foolishness and wickedness our hearts can harbor—reminding us that *the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?* That's a hard truth to take in. Even in our best intentions, we can fall into sexual sin and then smokescreen everyone around us into thinking we really want freedom. I once was that man. But no longer.

The freedom I now walk in from pornography addiction was not easily won. It was a battle. It took transparency, boundaries to keep me protected, ongoing accountability,

and people in my life who challenge me to keep walking out this journey. It's what 1 John 1:4-7 calls us to, saying:

"And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. This is the message which we have

heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

Learning to Walk in the Light

Recently, I was discussing 1 John 1 with a man. He struggled with the verse that says those who claim to walk in the light but walk in darkness are lying and not practicing the truth. This hit me in a fresh way: if we are walking in the light, then we are *not* walking in darkness—we are practicing the truth!

Masks and Fig Leaves

How many of us in the body of Christ hide behind a mask or an image? I once read in a Bible study plan on YouVersion that *"when you meet a man, you meet his fig leaf."* I believe that. Many of us are trapped in prisons of our own making. The trauma that happened to us is not our fault, but our response to it is.

Aaron's Golden Calf Excuse

Exodus 32 gives us a vivid picture. Moses had been gone a long time on the mountain. The people, weary of waiting, grew impatient and pressured Aaron to make them idols to worship (gods). Seemingly afraid of what would happen if he said no, he used gold earrings and an engraving tool to fashion a golden calf. The people declared, *"This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt."* All the great things God had done for them somehow went right out of the window.

But Aaron did something that I think we may have all been guilty of in one form or another. He built an altar before it

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(the idol) and made a proclamation saying, “Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord.”

Do you see it? Aaron appears to be covering his tracks by making this bold proclamation, but he dressed rebellion in religious language. Later, when confronted, Aaron excused himself, saying, “The calf just popped right out of the fire.”

How often do we try to project a different image than what God sees? How frequently do we use religiously inspired words to cover up our rebellion, our secret sin? No one likes to admit they love their sin, or that they make room for it, carefully crafting ideas to plan out how to get away with it, and descend deeper into darkness.

Sin’s Grip on Us

Pornography, for example, even erodes the physical structure of the brain. That makes the permissiveness by which we make room for it even more dangerous, because it warps our ability to choose against it. But Scripture is clear:

2 Corinthians 6:16: “And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the Living God.

And God has said: I will dwell in them, and walk among them. I will be their God and they shall be My people.”

2 Corinthians 7:1: “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Beloved, I conclude with Hebrews 12:1, which exhorts us:

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

The Lord is calling us to honesty and freedom. Let us not be like Aaron, covering sin with religious language, or like Oz, hiding behind smoke and curtains. Instead, let us walk in the light as HE is in the light, cleansed and strengthened, running the race with endurance.

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Honoring Convictions, Praying for Courage

We were shocked, along with many others, at the tragic death of Charlie Kirk, who was fatally shot during a public campus event on September 10, 2025. His passing is felt far beyond political circles. While many may have disagreed with his positions, it is fitting to honor those convictions of his that resonated with biblical truth and that our ministry also affirms. He consistently upheld that every person is made in the image of God — “sacred, unique, created in the image of the Divine” — and therefore that life is endowed with dignity and purpose. For him, this was not mere rhetoric but a direct affirmation of inherent worth. From that foundation, he and those who partnered with him urged students to resist “sexual anarchy,” reminding them that God designed sexuality as a gift meant for joy, fruitfulness, and human flourishing. He also upheld that there are only two genders, a conviction that shaped his response to society’s questions about identity and sexuality. And he called young men, in particular, to step away from complacency and embrace responsibility, vocation, and courage in how they live.

As we grieve, we extend our prayers to his family, friends, and all whose lives were shaken by this tragedy. And we also look forward in hope, asking God to raise up other courageous young men and women who will add their bold, Christ-honoring voices to the conversation of faith in this generation. May we be faithful to speak with clarity into cultural and political questions, not out of partisanship, but out of loyalty to Christ and His truth.



Christian counselor Rick Thomas defines approval addiction as seeking from others what we should be receiving from God. That is exactly what the fear of man does. It misplaces our need for security, value, and love.

Where It Comes From

Most of us do not wake up one morning with approval addiction. It grows over time.

Childhood Messages: Some learned early that love felt conditional. Affection came when we got it right. Criticism loomed when we did not. Others grew up in homes where kindness was scarce, and silence left a hole they now try to fill with affirmation.

Social Pressure: As teenagers, fitting in feels like survival. Today, the pressure just changes form through those curated highlight reels of social media, the subtle measuring of success by appearance or achievement, the fear of missing out.

Personality and Pain: Natural peacekeepers can drift into people-pleasing. Perfectionists can become enslaved to others' opinions. Past rejection, betrayal, or trauma can leave us hyper-vigilant against disapproval.

All of this quietly shapes us into believing that we are only safe when others approve of us. When that belief takes root, we live adjusting, performing, and striving so we will not be rejected again.

But at its deepest level, the fear of man is not only a people problem. It is an identity problem. If I do not know who I am in Christ, I will try to build my identity on borrowed opinions. Praise feels like permission to be okay; disapproval feels like proof I am not enough.

The Cost of Living for Approval

Fear of man is costly. It weighs down our emotions and shapes our obedience.

Saul at Gilgal

Think of King Saul. God's clear command through Samuel was to destroy the Amalekites and all their possessions. Yet Saul spared King Agag and the best of the livestock. When confronted, he admitted, *"I have sinned. I violated the Lord's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the men, and so I gave in to them"* (1 Samuel 15:24). Fear of people's disapproval cost him his throne and his standing with God. Saul's story reminds us that the fear of man does not just shape feelings—it can derail obedience itself.

Aaron at Sinai

Or Aaron at Sinai. While Moses was on the mountain with God, the people grew restless and pressed him to make a god. Under that pressure, Aaron gave in, melted their gold, and shaped a calf. Moses rebuked him, asking, *"What did this people do to you, that you have brought such great sin upon them?"* (Ex. 32:21). Aaron's excuse was weak: *"They gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!"* (v. 24).

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

This account is striking. Aaron had been called to be a priest before the Lord and to serve the people, yet he quickly complied with the people's will instead of leading them in truth. Scripture doesn't explicitly say Aaron feared the people, but his failure to restrain them (v. 25) shows how human pressure can compromise even a man of God. Whether through weakness, poor judgment, or fear, Aaron's compromise

demonstrates how the fear of man can outweigh the fear of the Lord.

The Sobering Lesson

Both Saul and Aaron were leaders called by God and both illustrate the same truth: when keeping people happy becomes our focus, we often end up disobeying God.

And it is not just ancient history. I have tasted the same struggle in my own life. Years ago, during a church conflict, I froze. Instead of asking, *"Lord, what do You want me to do?"* I thought, *"How do I keep the peace?"* Fear made me passive. What felt like self-protection was actually self-sabotage, and what I mistook for peace was destructive to others. In those days, I never imagined that passivity and avoidance could become a doorway to wickedness. My inability to act rightly may have wounded souls in ways that only God's grace can yet redeem.

Fear of man does not just make us insecure—it makes us unreliable. It keeps us silent when we should speak, passive when we should act, and enabling when we should confront. It harms relationships by replacing love with self-protection, and it damages our souls by keeping us bound.

Taking Steps Toward Freedom

Thankfully, God does not leave us trapped in people-pleasing. His Word gives us a way forward.

1. Practice a Preference for God: Steve Macchia calls this noticing God in every relationship, circumstance, and conversation. When He is big in our eyes, people's opinions shrink.

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2. Secure Your Identity in Christ: Galatians 1:10 reminds us to seek God's approval above all. Rooted in Christ, criticism does not crush us and praise does not inflate us.

3. Recognize Triggers: Triggers are like dashboard lights—not the problem themselves, but signals pointing us back to God.

4. Invite Accountability: Confession breaks fear's grip. Sharing honestly with trusted friends and advisors helps bring freedom.

5. Cultivate the Fear of the Lord: Proverbs 19:23 (NIV) says, *"The fear of the Lord leads to life; then one rests content, untouched by trouble."* Awe shrinks fear.

Ultimately, Proverbs 29:25 reminds us that freedom is not just the absence of fear but the presence of trust. Trusting the Lord anchors us in His safety, making His voice steadier than the shifting approval of people. To trust the Lord is to believe that His voice carries more weight than anyone else's. It is choosing His approval over the crowd's, His presence over their pressure.

Trusting the Lord steadies us individually, but it was never meant to stop there as we do need others to help us live it out.

Finding Freedom in Community

We do not break free from the fear of man alone. God designed us to grow in community. Malachi 3 contrasts two groups. Some grumbled, comparing themselves to the world, saying, *"What is the use of serving God?"* But others feared the Lord and spoke with one another, and

The fear of the Lord leads to life; then one rests content, untouched by trouble.
Proverbs 19:23

give them a date that the financial support will stop so they can prepare. Even if they do not prepare, hold to that date. As Christian parents, we must release our adult children to God and trust him for the outcome.

Other important areas where boundaries and consequences may need to be established include:

- Communication
- Living arrangements
- Employment
- Family interactions
- Education

As Allison Bottke reminds us in *Setting Boundaries with Your Adult Children* says: "This kind of surrender doesn't

God Himself listened and wrote their names in His book of remembrance.

That is the fellowship we need: conversations that magnify God, encouragement that anchors us in Christ, and accountability that calls us back to obedience. The fear of man flourishes in isolation but withers in a community where God's greatness is the main conversation.

An Invitation

Has the fear of man set a trap for you? In your relationships, your decisions, or in the hidden places of your heart, where has the pull of a man-pleasing spirit—your need for people's approval—kept you bound? Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart, your mind, and your motives. Ask Him to expose what is hidden, and to empower you for change.

The fear of man does not merely inconvenience us; it enslaves us. This truth is sobering, but the good news is greater still. Freedom is possible. Jesus has already won it through His cross and resurrection, and He gives you the power to walk in that freedom. The same Lord who calls you to fear Him above all else also invites you to trust Him as your refuge and strength.

As Proverbs 29:25 promises: *"The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe."*

May we be a people who walk in that safety—anchored in Christ, freed from the trap of people-pleasing, and alive in the joy of fearing the Lord together, for His glory and the good of others.

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mean we are giving up, that we no longer care what happens to our adult children. On the contrary, it means we relinquish their care to a far greater and infinitely more powerful Caretaker" (p. 146). I hope you find that truth as comforting and reassuring as I do.

Encouragement for Parents

None of this is easy. Setting and keeping boundaries can feel like losing a child twice. Yet we can trust that God sees, God cares, and God is at work. Boundaries are not about rejecting our children, but about faithfully honoring God while entrusting our prodigals to His hands.

Hold fast to this hope: He loves them even more than we do.

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If you are a parent with an LGBTQ loved one,
we have two group options for you...

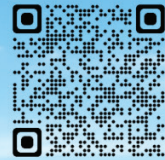
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