

What are You Afraid Of?

A Godly Response to a Pandemic – Part 14

Series Overview

Proverbs 27:1 says, “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.” The COVID-19 outbreak certainly shows that this is true. When 2020 began, we had no idea we would face this new kind of challenge. Though it caught us by surprise, we know God was not surprised. He knew this would happen and will guide us through this challenging time.

This study guide is the second in a new Faith Baptist Bible study series called “A Godly Response to a Pandemic.” Each lesson will provide biblical teaching that enables us to think, feel, and live in a Christlike way throughout this pandemic experience.

Together, we’ll tackle topics like fear, anxiety, and loneliness. We’ll also examine our behavior as a church. Most importantly, we’ll learn about our loving, sovereign God who is all-knowing, almighty, always present, and trustworthy in every way.

Series Guidelines

This series will continue throughout our period of “social isolation” in New York City. To participate, please take the following approach.

1. A new study guide will be provided each Saturday at Shepherd Thoughts. You can follow the guide online or download and print it as a PDF.
2. Use each guide for an in-home Bible study from 9:30-10:30 a.m. on Sunday.
3. If you live with a Christian family, you can study together. If not, try studying together with another believer from Faith by phone or internet using a service like Facebook Video Chat, Google Hangouts, Skype, or Zoom.
4. For each study: (1) begin with prayer, (2) read the Scripture passage, (3) work through the study guide, then (4) end with prayer.
5. Then tune in early to the Faith Baptist Livestream on Facebook at 10:45 a.m. to post questions, feedback, and comments about the lesson. Pastor Overmiller will respond to your feedback before the 11:00 a.m. service begins.
6. You can also leave comments on the blogsite at the end of the study guide page and Pastor Overmiller will respond by sometime Sunday.
7. As a bonus, memorize a verse or more from the passage and think about it throughout the week ahead.

Lesson Introduction

At last, communities throughout the United States are gradually beginning to emerge from COVID19 hibernation. Even so, a host of lingering fears remain. Many people – even Christians – will continue to worry that they might still contract the virus. Then among those who’ve been through that ordeal already, some will worry about catching it again. On top of this, we may also be a little nervous about what’s going on with the social instability we’re facing in various communities throughout the nation.

Though we need to use our heads, we need to use our hearts as well. What I mean to say is that there is a time and place to be cautious and careful. Yet we also have to acknowledge that no matter how cautious and careful we may be, threats to our health and safety will always remain. So, at some point or another, we need to step out of our self-protective zones and take some risks again – risks that are inspired and motivated by a proper, biblical view of God’s love for us as his children.

For centuries and millennia, Christians have learned to choose love over fear, making difficult choices to obey, serve, and worship God, even at the risk of their lives. How can we enjoy the same confidence today as we face the challenges of our times? As John told believers he had pastored in the first century, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” Are we equal to the task and ready to move forward with our lives, embracing love over fear? If not, then what are you afraid of?

1 John 4:18

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

Study Guide

Consider the Background

The Apostle John wrote the Gospel of John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation. He wrote this letter, 1 John, to both new and mature believers in Asia Minor (modern Turkey, esp. near Ephesus). They were being influenced by false teachers and this influence was causing them to lose confidence in both their saving relationship with Christ and close fellowship with one another. John intended for this letter to strengthen their faith in Christ and to equip them to move forward in their Christian lives with confidence.

Examine the Scripture

- What word appears four times in this verse?
- This word can have two primary meanings: either *dread* (as in “being scared”) or *reverence* (as in “showing respect”). Which one does John have in mind here?

Ask Yourself Some Questions

- Name some *phobias* (fears) you had as a child.
- Do you still have these fears today?
- Name some new fears you've developed as an adult.
- Now pause to consider this present time. Name some things that many of us may be afraid of right now.

Examine the Scripture

- What word appears three times in this verse?
- What is the relationship or connection between this word and *fear*?
- The words *no* and *in* are saying that there is no correlation between these two things.
- The word *cast out* means to "throw away, hurl, expel." It's like when a referee ejects a ball player from a game, a sailor throws heavy luggage overboard from a ship, or when an employer shows a delinquent employee "the door."
- *Perfect* means "complete, mature." It's like a puzzle when all of the pieces have been fitted together, so here it is describing a mature, complete perspective about God's love for those who have believed on Christ as God and Savior.

Ask Yourself Some Questions

- If you're afraid of making the right choices in your Christian life, what does that reveal about your understanding and perspective of God's love for you?

Examine the Scripture

- The word *torment* refers to the pain and suffering that comes from correction and punishment.
- What is the pain and suffering, correction and punishment that all people ultimately fear (see Matt 25:41, 46; Rev 21:8)?
- Why should believers not be afraid to die and enter eternity (see Matt 10:28-33)?

Ask Yourself Some Questions

- How much does the fear of death underly your other phobias and fears?
- Why are you afraid to die?
- How does a biblical understanding of God's love for us help us to overcome our fears and make biblical, godly decisions no matter what may happen to us as a result (even if we die)?
- The man who wrote this letter knew what it was like to isolate himself in his house because he was afraid to die. What changed his perspective (see John 20:19-20)?

- How can this truth help us to make difficult choices in the days ahead as individual believers and as a church?

Conclusion

As we prepare to get back to a more normal way of life, we have to entrust our fears to God. Whether we're afraid of catching the COVID virus, being mistreated or marginalized, or something else, we need to get a firm grasp of the love of God towards us. When we're crippled by fear, we're unable to obey God and to accomplish what he has called us to do in a dangerous, hostile world. "Perfect love casts out fear."

Share Your Feedback

Now that you've finished this study, don't forget to tune in early to the Faith Baptist Livestream on Facebook at 10:45 a.m. to post questions, feedback, and comments about the lesson! Pastor Overmiller will respond to your feedback before the 11:00 a.m. service begins.