



Week Three: Fear-Based Behaviors

Text: Selected Scriptures

There is much in the world today that inspires fear for parents, and even causes some to question the wisdom or desirability of having children at all. Sometimes the danger to our children comes from within them. When our children's choices or behaviors produce fear in us we face a choice—will we parent our kids based on fear or will we adopt a God-centered model for our parenting? With the Holy Spirit governing our lives we can relate to our children (and others) in love, with power and self-discipline (sanity). Then, we can better prepare our children to love Him and follow His ways so that we will be able to release them to thrive in a difficult and evil world.

A note to small group leaders:

It is a common pitfall in Bible Study discussions to become distracted by how a topic or a passage pertains to someone else rather than ourselves. In extreme cases, we may even assume the lesson ONLY applies to someone else. Some of us focus on "How I already do this well" or "Why this is impossible for me." A wiser approach is to commit to think deeply about how every passage applies to me, today.

Depending on the stage of life of your group members, you as the leader may have to think creatively about how to help your group members do this. If you have people who are not parents or are not currently raising their kids, be sure

to ask them their thoughts and feelings each week. Be aware that there may be pain in this discussion for those experiencing fertility struggles or who have a strained relationship with their adult kids, for example. It may help to remember that we are all called to reproduce ourselves, spiritually, whether we are parents or not. In fact, older believers are instructed to train younger brothers and sisters in godly living. (Titus 2) And the Apostle Paul compared his ministry of discipleship to the work of a mother and a father of young children. (1 Thessalonians 2)

The following questions are based on the "My Application" guide on the back of the sermon notes in the bulletin. Feel free to revise or customize them according to your group's needs.

Discussion Questions:

1. Did your parents use anger, guilt, and shame when they disciplined you? Do you remember how it felt? How has it shaped you in view of yourself? Did it shape your view of God?
2. When you become afraid, do you tend toward fight (anger) or flight (deny, minimize, blame)? How do these responses damage relationships?
3. Based on Paul's challenge to Timothy (2 Timothy 1:7), what can you do to overcome the effects of fear? Be practical and specific.
4. Read Romans 8:1; Romans 2:2-4; Romans 5:8; 1 John 2:1-2; 1 John 4:16-18. *(Leader, you could assign the scripture passages to various group members before the group starts and have them read to the group.)* How does God treat us when we sin? How can we translate this into how we treat our children or others close to us?
5. If your children are grown, you may have some regrets about how you parented them after hearing this message. What can you do about those regrets?
6. Words are the lifeblood of relationships. Read Ephesians 4:29. Discuss how we can better use our words to build relationships.

Application:

- Return next Sunday for the next installment. Stay engaged. Even if you think it doesn't apply to you yet, or anymore—Ask God what He wants to say to you...and LISTEN.
- Who do you know who needs to hear this series? Invite them to join you.

Prayer:

Pair up. Share with your partner one thing God has said to you through this week's message. Maybe He's showing you something you could begin to do differently. Maybe He's comforting you in your past hurts. Maybe He's urging you to reconcile a relationship.

Pray for each other.

Scripture Memory:

"For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

2 Timothy 1:7