

Chapter 1 Facing Fear and Finding Freedom

1. The variety of fears is endless. One can be the fear of not being pleasing to God. If you have been wounded or hurt by people who were difficult or even impossible to please, you may think God is the same way.

He already knows we will not behave perfectly all the time. That is why He sent Jesus to pay for our failures and mistakes.

There is a possibility you, too, have been deceived. To be deceived means to believe a lie. You can believe that your future will always be affected by your past.

2. What must I do to please God?

There are two main things-One is to have faith in Jesus and Two is to desire to please Him with all our heart.

If we believe and trust in God, we enter His rest according to Hebrews 4; we feel at ease and comfortable rather than fearful and anxious about life.

We believe and God works. We are accepted because of our faith, not our good works. Christians are referred to as believers. If our job were to achieve, we would be called achievers, not believers.

We don't have to live under the pressure of acceptance by performance, followed by a fear of failure each time our performance is less than perfect. We do not have to be addicted to approval and ready to obtain it by any means. If we want to please God with all our hearts, all we need to do is believe in His Son Jesus Christ and believe what He says in His Word.

God does not reject us when we make mistakes, but if we think He does, if we fear He does, the lie we have believed becomes truth to us.

Example: Joyce had an employee that it was difficult for her to have a comfortable relationship with her. If given direction, correction about anything she would withdraw-this happened when her job performance was anything than perfect. She withdrew and Joyce felt rejected by her. She was extremely afraid of being rejected if she did not perform perfectly. Although she was not being rejected by Joyce, her fear of being rejected caused her to withdraw from her. Her withdrawal and

silence then made Joyce feel she was rejecting her or that Joyce had done something wrong. Her belief system was wrong.

We must learn to trust God's Word more than our own feelings. We often bow down to our feelings without realizing how fickle and changeable they are. Our feelings are not a reliable source of information. God loves us and accepts us unconditionally. His love is not based on our performance.

It is our faith in Jesus that makes us acceptable to God and pleases Him, not our performance. Do you believe the God of the Bible or the god of your feelings? How often do you rely on your feelings instead of what God says in areas of your life?

3. Desiring to please Him in all things

The fact that we have a desire to please Him pleases Him. People who have a deep desire to please God may not perform perfectly all the time, but they keep pressing forward and always have the attitude of wanting to improve.

In 2 Chron. 16:9 we see God is searching to and fro to someone in whom He can show Himself strong, someone whose heart is perfect toward Him. That heart that desires to please Him. He sees and cares about our attitude of heart even more than our performance.

1 Sam. 16:7- For the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

4. The thing I fear comes upon me

For the thing which I greatly fear comes upon me, and that of which I am afraid befalls me. Job 3:25

Fear is a terrible emotion-a self-fulfilling one. Job had fears concerning his children and finally reached a place in his life where he saw his fears coming to pass. The Bible says it will be unto us as we believe-Matt. 9:29. We can receive by fear as well as by faith. Have you heard someone say "I was afraid that would happen."

We must remember that not only does God speak to us but Satan also speaks. He is a liar-John 8:44-and when we believe his lies, we are deceived and the door is open for him to work in our lives. We open the door for God to work by placing faith in His Word, and we open the door for Satan to work by placing faith in his word. He places thoughts in our minds that are not true, but can become true for us if they are believed. If we are afraid we are not pleasing to God or people, we will manifest behavior that will actually make us displeasing.

The same principle works with rejection. If we fear being rejected, we

will often behave in a way that will cause people to reject us. We produce what we believe.

If you have been mistreated thru a home life that was not good with violence, abuse, and fear, you develop the feeling that you are flawed and unacceptable. You are ashamed of yourself. Afraid to meet people because you feel they will not like you, and sure enough most of them won't. You get what you believe!

5. God loves us!

We can renew our minds through studying God's Word and begin to think differently. Romans 12:2. As we think differently, we will behave differently, because where the mind goes the man follows-Proverbs 23:7. When you see that He actually is pleased with you and accepts you even though you did not behave perfectly, it will change your thinking.

As yourself what you have been expecting out of life? You may discover the reason behind some of your disappointments. God wants us to aggressively expect good things, not bad ones. God will give us favor and approval if we expect it. Satan will give us rejection and disapproval if we expect it.

God tries to tell us in His Word how much He loves us, that He accepts us, and that even though He already knew every mistake we would ever make, He actually chose us for Himself. **THINK ABOUT THIS!!**

We read it, but have a difficult time receiving it. We let our feelings steal the blessing of God's acceptance and approval. We let people's opinions determine our worth and value rather than relying on God's Word.

Several times a day say out loud "God loves me unconditionally, and He is pleased with me." God separates who we are from what we do!!! As believers in Jesus Christ, we are God's children. We may not always act the way He wants us to, but we never stop being His children. Exactly the same way we are with our children . they never stop being ours.

6. You are no surprise to God

He didn't say, "Oh no! I had not idea you would act like this when I chose you." God has a big eraser, and He uses it to keep our record clean and clear. He already knows what our thoughts are and every word in our mouth that is still unuttered. He is acquainted with all of our ways. Even with all His foreknowledge of our weaknesses and the mistakes we would make, He still chose us on purpose and brought us into relationship with Himself through Christ.

If we never make mistakes, then we are probably not making any decisions either. Our mistakes have value in that we can learn from them.

Take a \$50 bill, fold it, then crush it, then step on it .does it still have the same value??? Many times in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled, and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel worthless, but no matter what has happened or what will happen, we will NEVER lose our value in God's eyes. Dirty or clean, crumpled or finely creased, we are still priceless to Him.

When God says He knows us, He means He really knows us.

God chooses and uses what the world would reject and throw away! Jeremiah was not perfect and God had to correct him about fear, especially fear of people. He was afraid of being rejected and disapproved of. God corrected him about speaking negatively and encouraged him to go forward and not give up.

Elijah was another great prophet but he also had imperfections. He experienced seasons of fear, depression, self-pity, and a desire to give up.

Even imperfect people can pray, and God will hear. Why does God do that? Because He is pleased with faith and a heart that is right. God is not surprised by our human behavior. He is willing to work through us and show Himself strong in our weakness. God has no problem with the knowledge of what we lack; we are the ones who have problems with it. We need to face our weaknesses, not feel bad about them.

Get up every day, love God, and do your best. He will do the REST! God is not surprised by your inabilities, your imperfections, or your faults. He has always known everything about you that you are just now finding out, and He chose you on purpose for Himself. Jesus will present you blameless and faultless to God, if you place your trust in Him. I Cor. 1:7-8

When we face our fears, we can find our freedom. THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE. The word fear means to run away from. We don't have to run from anything; we can confront all things in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is time to stop running. to stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.

AMEN!!!

Chapter 2 Knowing Who You Are

1. One of the greatest cures for approval addiction is the knowledge of who we are in Christ. 2 Cor. 5:21 says we have been made the righteousness of God in Christ.

Why do we think of ourselves any less when the Word says we are righteous? What makes us righteous?

In and of ourselves we are absolutely nothing of any value, but in Christ we partake of everything He deserved and earned. We are joint-heirs with Christ. WOW! In Him we share His inheritance, His righteousness, and His holiness.

How can we be here on earth and be seated with Him in heaven at the same time? We live in two realms at the same time. We have a fleshly life and a spiritual one. We are spirits who have a soul and live in a body. Our feet can be touching earth, and our heart can be touching heaven.

Once we understand how God sees us through Christ, we can refrain from caring what people think about us, and feeling bad about ourselves. We don't have to be addicted to their approval, because we already have God's. We can stop living under condemnation or constantly looking for the approval of others. We can accept ourselves; and when we do so, others will begin to accept us also.

If we are addicted to people's approval, we will always experience pain when that approval is withdrawn. If we look to God for our approval, we will never experience the pain of withdrawal because we have a constant, steady flow of His love and acceptance.

We suffer much agony because we try to get from people what only God can give us, which is a sense of worth and value. Look to God for what you need, not to people.

2. RIGHT WITH GOD

2 Cor. 5:21-Says through Him we might become the righteousness of God. We are viewed by God as being righteous. Eph. 1:5 says he loved us and through Jesus Christ adopted us as His own children, and He did it because it pleased Him and was His kind intent. God loves us because He wants to, not because of anything we do to earn or merit His love.

We understand God with our hearts, not with our heads. We may not know

in our head why God loves us, but we can know in our heart that He does. Being righteous does not mean we are so totally perfect we have no weaknesses or flaws. It means we believe Jesus became sin through His death on the cross, and by becoming sin for us, made us righteous. Being righteous is a state that God, by His grace, places us into through our faith in the truth of what Jesus did for us.

Righteousness is NOT the result of what we do, but rather what Jesus has done for us. Righteousness is imputed to us by the grace and mercy of God-not works.

We first need to know we have been made right. We cannot produce something we do not have. He gives us His love and then expects us to love others. He showers us with His mercy and kindness and then expects us to be kind and merciful to others.

Has your past experiences made you better or bitter? Do you cause other people pain because you received pain through your emotions, or abused physically?

Under the Old Covenant people's sins were covered by the sacrifice of animals, but the new Covenant our sins are completely removed by the blood of Jesus.

3. BE RELAXED IN SPIRIT

Psalm 25:12-13 Who is the man who reverently fears and worships the Lord? Him shall He teach in the way that he should choose. He himself shall dwell at ease.

To overcome an addiction to approval, we need to be comfortable spiritually. Joyce had a job as the pastor's secretary but after only one day she got fired. She wanted it to work out because it was her plan, but God would not allow it because He had other plans for her.

If you want to be unhappy, uncomfortable, and insecure, just spend your life trying to do something that is not right for you. It is just like trying to wear shoes that don't fit.

How about praying- Lord, you know I want to be comfortable spiritually, like being comfortable in the shoes I wear. I just want to be relaxed in spirit, I want my inner life to be at ease.

We need to be relaxed about our relationship with God and our walk with Him. We need to be relaxed around people and not afraid of their disapproval. We need to be relaxed about our gifts and calling in our lives.

We don't need to be tied up in knots or tormented by fears and insecurities. We don't want to have an ungodly need for approval and will do almost anything to feel people's approval of us.

We need to like ourselves and believe we have worth and value. Need to know who we are in Christ and who He can be through me-but we have to let Him.

We need the reality of righteousness, peace, and joy that the Bible says we can have. Romans 14:17.

How about you? Have you had enough tension, discomfort, and insecurity in your life? Are you tired of being tied up in knots? Tired of being afraid of what people think of you and what they may be saying about you? Do you want to be at ease. ? You can relax knowing God loves you, accepts you in Christ, and approves of you as His beloved child. What does beloved mean?

4. FIND SIMPLICITY IN CHRIST

Believing God really is simple, but we have made it very complicated. If we become as little children we will enter the kingdom, if we do not become as little children-then what??

Children don't try to figure everything out, they simply believe. Hebrews 4 says we can enter the rest of God through believing. It says we should be zealous and exert ourselves and strive diligently to enter the rest of God.

Those who have entered the rest of God have ceased from the weariness and pain of human labors. They are NOT tied up in knots, they are relaxed, secure and free to be themselves.

We can become so secure in Christ that as long as we know our heart is right, we know whatever people think of us is between them and God and not our concern.

In 1 Cor. 4 Paul was judged regarding his faithfulness but was not concerned about what people thought of him, because he knew who he was in Christ.

5. GOD IS ON OUR SIDE

If God is for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31

God is for us. Satan is against us. Are we going to get into agreement with God or with the devil? STOP being against yourself just because

Satan is against you!

Sometimes people are against us and Satan works through people as well as independently. He attacks our confidence through the things people say or don't say. How important are people's opinions of us? Are we thinking for ourselves, or are we always taking everyone else's opinion? If people's opinions, judgments, and attitudes toward us are sometimes inspired by the devil, instead of agreeing with what they think and say, we MUST resist it.

We need to be completely delivered from caring what people think. Is that arrogant? or what the Word says?

6. DON'T FEAR BEING NEEDY

Every day tell the Lord, Father, You are looking at a desperate woman. I need You, Lord, and without You I can do nothing.

I John 1:9 says that if we admit our sins and confess them, He will forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness-so what keeps us from being righteous before God? Admit all your faults. Hold nothing back. Admit them to God and to people. Don't make excuses or place blame elsewhere. Be open with people. Most people respect and admire honesty and openness.

Invite Jesus into every area of your life. The Lord knows more about us than we can remember or will ever discover and He loves us anyway. We should also offer Him our weaknesses because His strength is made perfect in our weaknesses. Don't hold anything back-give God everything!

Let's do that now!

The Lord doesn't only see what we are right now, He sees what we can become if He is patient with us. He knows the plans He has for us, and they are plans for progress and success, not defeat and failure. Jer. 29:11

7. A NEW AND LIVING WAY

Believing we are made right with God through our faith in Jesus Christ is a new and living way, and one that gives us freedom, boldness and confidence. Grace is freeing! Our work is to believe while God works on our behalf.

We cannot make myself acceptable to all people, but we can believe God will give us favor with people He wants us involved with. Sometimes we try to have relationships with people God does not even want us to be associated with.

Knowing who we are in Christ sets us free from the need to impress others. We no longer have anything to prove so we can relax and be at ease in every situation.

True friends don't try to control you. They help you be what God wants you to be. Take a friend test right now-who tries to control you? Ask God to give you friends who are truly right for you.

Jesus said we can do nothing apart from Him.

8. PEOPLE CAN BE SUPERNATURALLY DRAWN TO YOU

Knowing who you are in Christ will help you be confident, and as a result others will be drawn to you. People feel confident when they are with other confident people.

People look for things in other people that will make them feel better, safe, and secure. We can lead people in fear or we can lead them in confidence. We are to be confident but we are NOT to place our confidence in anything other than Christ Himself. Confident people never lack for friends. Why? Because they have what everyone wants. They have assurance and confidence, they have worth and value, and they are secure.

The next chapter takes a deeper look at how important it is to understand our righteousness with God. We have to live in that righteousness. Only then we will be free from the misery of an addiction to approval.