

life groups discussion guides

big people–little God: step 1–fear of man



"I'm a creative genius, and there's no other way to word it."

— Kanye West (rapper)

"I don't consider myself to be the best...and I don't like compliments... they distract me."

— Jimi Hendrix (considered by many to be the best rock guitarist in history)

Abiding Trust vs a Moment of Fear

Fear is such a powerful weapon of the enemy of our souls. The extent to which it can impact us is played out in pretty clear fashion on the story of Peter walking on the water. It wasn't Peter's fear that caused him to sink after he initially began strolling across the stormy seas that night. It was fear that caused him to take his eyes off Jesus – and THAT'S what caused him to sink below the waves. I find that terribly convicting. Which probably has a lot to do with the fact that I consider myself to be far too easily distractable. I'm like that dog in the movie "Up" that is talking then jerks suddenly to the side as he yells "Squirrel!!". Now, to compound matters, I can also be a bit of a worrier sometimes. But until now, I've never really put the two together and recognized that worry (and fear of any nature or stripe), can be a distraction that takes our focus off Jesus – and can ultimately cause us to sink.

Q :: Is fear always an unhealthy thing for the believer?

Q :: Please share a time when fear actually drove you into the arms of Jesus, instead of taking your eyes off of Him.

I have a confession to make. When reading the story of Peter walking on the water, I feel a bit badly for Peter. He has the faith to get out of the boat, walk on the water a bit, and still know who to call out to when he starts to sink and when Jesus pulls him out of the water he does so with a gentle rebuke: "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matt. 14:31).

Q :: Why do you think there's no rebuke for the other dudes in the boat who never set foot on the water?

Q :: So, what is really behind this remark from Jesus?

Q :: Peter's faith led him to ask Jesus to invite him out onto the water. Peter's faith led him to actually take some steps upon the waves. But for a brief moment Peter's fear of his surroundings became bigger than his trust in Jesus. Might it be that a lack of faith is revealed when we allow our fear (of anyone or anything) to turn our eyes from an abiding trust in Jesus?

Let's be honest, it is doubtful that you and I will ever be called to demonstrate how powerful (or puny) our faith is by how well we do walking across the stormy seas without allowing the (very real) wind and waves distract us from Jesus (thankfully). However we do have to walk through our lives while other people in this world play the roles of stormy seas, whipping winds and dark ominous clouds.

Q :: Which do you fear most from others:

That they will expose & humiliate you? That they will reject you? Or that they will attack you?

I love the two quotes at the top of this page. Both deal with how each person wants to be seen in the eyes of others. One clearly seems to want to make sure no one misses his "genius", while the other seems to truly not give a fat rat's behind how *anyone* sees him. Now, I'm not a psychoanalyst (nor do I play one on TV), but from where I sit, the quote from Hendrix

seems to be totally devoid of fear, while Kanye West's quote seems to be wrapped up tightly in it. His fear may not be directly related to his boasting, but if you have to shout at people to see you a certain way, it may just be because you fear they will see you another way – or worse...how you TRULY are. And maybe now we're not even talking about music anymore. If this is true, then fear doesn't always look like fear, for it is manifesting itself in a very different way.

Q :: What are some of the ways our fears manifest themselves, or actually show up in our lives, relationships and behaviors?
Or perhaps a better way to think about it might be, what masks do we wear to hide our fears?

I read an article that led me to think that what you fear can actually be a revealer of what it is you feel you need the most, because you fear so greatly that you won't get it. For example:

If you need comfort—you'll fear physical pain

If you need approval from others—you'll fear being criticized

If you need love—you'll fear rejection

If you need admiration for attractiveness—you'll fear getting fat

If you need for people to like the sermon discussion guide you've written—you'll fear just stopping the writing and going to bed. And that feels like a good place to trust God that enough has been said, and the questions he wanted posed were asked.

Conclusion:

I keep coming back to the quote from Jimi Hendrix and finding some really good nuggets of truth in there. I don't know if Hendrix had a desire to be the best guitarist or not. But I believe him when he said he didn't think he was at that time. But it does seem like he has some sort of mission mindset going on, does it not? There is a goal in view. For if there's not a goal, how can compliments be a distraction? And aren't compliments what many clamor for?

To me that begs a set of questions. Am I not a man on a mission? Like Hendrix, I know I am not at my goal. But...how can I get to a place where I am not distracted by even things that most people would prize? My prayer is that I can have absolutely no interest in, or desire for, *anything* that takes my eyes off of my goal.