



LENTEN STUDY FOR 2011

Facing our Fears:

*Living as followers of Christ in a
Fear-Driven Culture*

Week 1: What Are We Afraid Of?

Luke 12:32 *Jesus said: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."*

In both the Old and New Testaments, God tells us, "Don't be afraid". In this study, we will explore the nature of our fears in order to learn the place this natural and universal emotion should play in the lives of people of faith.

Legitimate Fears:

Fear alerts us to the presence of danger, and is critical in helping us avoid or escape harm to ourselves or our loved ones. On a physical level, fear causes an increased heart rate and high adrenaline levels – preparing us for "fight or flight". What we fear is highly individualized, depending upon the life situation and experience of each person. Often our fears are cultural, or passed down through generations of a family. For example, if your parents are terrified of snakes, you will likely inherit that fear – even if you have never had a negative experience with the reptiles.

Unreasonable Fear:

Because of mass media, we have knowledge of disaster and tragedy in other parts of the world that may never affect us or our families. We must distinguish between our legitimate fears and

those vague, underlying fears of situations that may never affect us directly.

For example:

- Fear of a future evil that is imminent, but of very little magnitude
- Fear of an evil of great magnitude, but which is not a present threat
- Fear of an evil that is imminent and of great magnitude, but not really a threat, and
- Fear that we may lose something we love – even though it's something we shouldn't love. (wealth, fame, etc.)¹

Read I Kings 19 and consider the following.

- What was the reason for Elijah's fear? _____

- Were his fears legitimate? Why or why not? _____

- What was God's answer to Elijah's fear? _____

What are your fears? (You may have underlying fears that you barely recognize, yet they affect your attitudes and lifestyle). Write down a list, and pray about each of your fears, asking God to help you determine whether or not each fear is legitimate.

Prayer:

Powerful God, we live in a frightening and chaotic world, but you are our strength and our shelter. Grant us the faith to look to you for help and guidance in these troubling times. Calm our storms of anxiety and grant us your peace. In Jesus' name – Amen.

Next week: Fear for Profit

¹ Scott Bader-Saye, *Following Jesus in a Culture of Fear*, Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007, 53.