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OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF MAN

I. Introduction

- A. My first experience leading corporate worship
- B. The stage: a platform for the fear of man. Why this topic is so relevant at this conference.

II. The Nature of the Fear of Man

“The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.” Prov. 29:25

A. The language of “fear”

“Fear’ in the biblical sense is a much broader word. It includes being afraid of someone, but it extends to holding someone in awe, being controlled or mastered by people, worshipping other people, putting your trust in people, or needing people...However you put it, the fear of man can be summarized this way: We replace God with people. Instead of a biblically guided fear of the Lord, we fear others.” (Ed Welch, When People are Big and God is Small, p. 14)

“Such fear becomes a snare when it gets to the point of letting others control your life- their opinions and attitudes put subtle pressure on you, even hindering you from speaking the truth or doing what is right.” (Tremper Longman, EBC- Proverbs, p. 232, quoting Whybray)

B. Fear of man is idolatry

- 1. Prov. 29:25 contrasts trusting God with fearing man.
- 2. At a basic level, the “fear of man” is replacing God with people. It is a worship problem.

C. People-pleasing is another way of understanding the fear of man.

- 1. Desire for approval (see also Matthew 6:1-6, 16-17)

“They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.” Matthew 23:5-7

2. Fear of rejection

“Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.” John 12:42-43 (NIV: “they loved praise from men more than praise from God.”)

III. Temptations to the fear of man for the worship team member

A. Preparing for corporate worship

1. What/who am I thinking about as I prepare for Sunday? How I will sound? How I will look? My clothing or appearance?
2. How do I prepare my heart for corporate worship? Am I more concerned about what God alone sees or what everyone else sees?
3. What is motivating my desire for musical excellence?
4. Leaders: Am I indecisive because I want others to approve of me?
5. How do I respond when my ideas are not implemented in rehearsal?

B. Evaluating corporate worship

1. How do I define a successful time of corporate worship? A poor time?
2. How is my heart after things don't go as I desired or planned?
3. Do I find myself regularly feeling unappreciated for my service?

C. Giving and receiving critique/correction/encouragement

1. Do I ask questions about my performance hoping for praise? Do I ask for evaluation too frequently? Do I in any way fish for compliments?
2. Am I overly self-critical hoping others will disagree with my assessment?
3. Leaders- Do I avoid correcting others because I crave their approval?

“The ‘fear of man’ describes any situation in which one is anxious about not offending another person.” (Duane Garrett, The New American Commentary- Proverbs, p. 233)

4. Do I ever encourage others with a hope of something in return? (flattery)
5. Do I compare myself with other team members?
6. When critiqued do I make excuses or blame shift?

D. Desiring the praise of those you respect or want to impress.

1. Whose encouragement matters most to me? Why?
2. What am I thinking before or during corporate worship when I know _____ is in the congregation?

E. Using your musical and leaderships abilities for personal glory.

“For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?”
1 Cor. 4:7

F. Fear of man is a gateway temptation.

“The inordinate desire for approval makes the people-pleaser susceptible to many other sinful temptations.” (Priolo, p. 72)

“Whom did you dread and fear, so that you lied, and did not remember me, did not lay it to heart? Have I not held my peace, even for a long time, and you do not fear me?” Isaiah 57:11

IV. Getting out of the “fear of man” trap

A. Realize that the fear of man is deceptive (“a snare”)

“This [the fear of man] ‘brings a snare’ in that it promises one thing and delivers another. It appears expedient to curb our convictions to the opinions of those around us... This is always a deception. This ‘snare’ is a trap set by oneself when he chooses to fear man more than honor God. ‘He who trusts in his own heart is a fool’ (Prov. 28:26a). (John A. Kitchen, Proverbs, p. 672)

B. Growing in the fear of the Lord

“The most radical treatment for the fear of man is the fear of the Lord. God must be bigger to you than people are. This antidote takes years to grasp; in fact, it will take all of our lives.” (Ed Welch, p.19)

“Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.” (Psalm 34:12)

C. Living (and worshiping) in the good of the gospel.

“As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” (1 Peter 2:4-6)

D. Maturing with a heart to please God

1. Paul’s description of his ministry to the Thessalonians: “...so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.” (1 Thess. 2:3-8)

2. Pleasing God is our goal in service. “So whether we are home or away, we make it our aim to please him.” (2 Cor. 5:9)

E. Loving others rather than craving their approval.

1. “Regarding other people, our problem is that we *need* them (for ourselves) more than we *love* them (for the glory of God). (Ed Welch, p.19)

2. Balancing the two great commandments.

F. Cultivating godly ambition

“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” 1 Peter 4:10-11