

The Friendship and the Fear of Man

Intro

- ♣ Matt Redman's cd "The friendship and the fear" and what he was getting at.
- ♣ Our application point is that our friendships are often accompanied by the practice of the fear of man.
- ♣ Resources: "The Glory That Matters Most", Dave Harvey, Sovereign Grace Ministries; When People Are Big and God Is Small, Edward T. Welch

Defining a common struggle

" [Fear of man is] an excessive, sinful concern with what others think about us; an inordinate desire for human approval or an intense fear of being rejected."

-C.J. Mahaney (quoted in Dave Harvey's message, "The Glory That Matters

Ever consider how preoccupied we can be with being approved by others?

8th grade starring role: "Dances With Chickens"

- I wanted the spotlight.
- I wanted to hear them chanting.

Jn.12:42-43 "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." (ESV)

- Exposes not just the surface 'fear', but the core motivation behind the fear.

"Fear' in the biblical sense ... 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."

-Edward T. Welch, When People Are BIG and God Is Small, p.14

Discovering its growth pattern

What we *crave* ◇ we eventually *need* ◇ what we need can eventually *control* us

- The age of the SELF.
 - Self-esteem, self-actualization, self-help, self-determination, self-worth, self-image, self-expression, self-improvement, self-awareness ... and many more!

“That’s the paradox of self-esteem: Low self-esteem usually means that I think too highly of myself. I’m too self-involved, I feel I deserve better than what I have. The reason I feel bad about myself is that I aspire to be something more. I want just a few minutes of greatness.... When you are in the grips of low self-esteem, it’s painful, and it certainly doesn’t feel like pride. But I believe that this is the dark, quieter side of pride – thwarted pride.” -Edward T. Welch, When People Are BIG and God Is Small, p.32

Fear is just an inverted want (David Powlison)

- Our fears point to our cravings, and are not ends in themselves.
- What we’re looking at is nothing other than a subtle form of PRIDE.

What does this look like when it comes to our friendships?

Discerning its impact on our friendships

Tends to silence us

Jn.12:42-43 “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...” (Jn.7:10-13; Jn.9:16-22)

- We don’t want to lose our friendships or relationships, and sometimes we overlook God’s prescription for friendships so as to preserve the friendship.

Gal 4:16 “Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?”

- Silence isn’t always a bad thing; but, don’t cop out.
- If you NEVER or rarely ever speak gracious words of biblical adjustment to your friends, you are in all likelihood a people-pleaser.

Renders our friendships inauthentic / superficial

“We tend to have permanently casual relationships that never grow into real intimacy. There are things to know about each other, but they fool us into thinking that we know the human beings who live within the borders of those details. So we fail to pursue them with good questions. This sets the stage for all kinds of misunderstandings. Our effectiveness as ambassadors is blunted because we don’t know others well enough to know where change is needed or where God is actively at work.

Think about it. Most of the conversations you had today were mundane and rather self-protective. We spend most of our time talking about things that are of little personal consequences – the weather, politics, sports, and entertainment. There is nothing wrong with this except that it allows us to hide who we really are. A person may be terribly distraught about her marriage, yet when people ask how she is, she will quickly answer, “Fine, how are you?” The person asking doesn’t really want to know and the person answering doesn’t really want to tell. They are co-conspirators in a casual relationship. Whether it is over the back of a pew, in passing at a school function, or over the phone, we are all skilled at ‘newsy’ but personally protective conversations.”

-Paul David Tripp, Instruments In the Redeemer’s Hands, p.163-164

- What expectations do we have for our friendships?
- Afraid of shooting straight and going deep in our relationships?

Defeating the fear of man

Cultivate fear of the Lord

Luke 12:4-5

Is 51:12-15

- Everyday we must decide who is going to be the object of our fear (Harvey).
- The fear of man, our craving for “the glory that comes from men”, has to die.
 - o God doesn’t share glory.

Enlist your friends to help identify your sin trends (and do the same for them).

“Our closest friends tell us who we are. They affirm us and cajole us with affection and humor. They can nickname us “Sons of Thunder” and we accept it because we know it is true and because we know it is spoken in love. They will ratify or reject personality inventories and the conclusions that come out of them. Without these closest friends, we are like people without mirrors—we’ll lose the ability to know what we look like, and soon it will be hard to go out in public without drawing stares.”

-Richard Lamb, The Pursuit of God In the Company of Friends, p.89

“When I reflect on how over the years my own friends have challenged me to grow, I recall numerous examples. Most of them relate to the personality thread that is my particular besetting sin. One good friend in high school confronted me on my arrogance. I deflected the confrontation. However, I took more note of it when another friend a few years later framed the same issue in terms of my detachment. Some years later my closest friend—my wife—prodded me to reflect on the anger that often seemed to lurk beneath the surface. A pattern emerged, built around the dynamics of pride, detachment and feelings of entitlement. [These dynamics are right at the center of my blind spot and I need friends to see them] ... Love cannot ignore things that are self-destructive in the loved one. By daring to be honest with us, friends offer us invaluable opportunities for growth. They can help us penetrate our self-deceptions and cherished illusions.”

-David G. Benner, Sacred Companions, p.70

- Who are you befriending this way? Who’s befriending you this way?
- You are not without sin. Are your closest friends loving you biblically, and graciously speaking in a way that challenges your walk or do you need to have a chat and take your relationship deeper?
- Are your closest friends daring to be honest and showing you your ‘cherished illusions’?
- Take the relationship off of ‘silent mode’.