

This is an extensive study and group leaders need to be sensitive about which parts are most applicable to their group. The first question is intended as a quick, light-hearted attempt to open the discussion. Do not attempt to do the whole study.

1. Which of the following is most likely to cause fear for you?

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| a. A snake in the back yard. | b. A spider in the car. |
| c. An oxygen mask drops while you're flying. | d. Your son is driving the car. |
| e. A fin in the water. | f. When the lift breaks down. |
| g. You are told to evacuate your house because of bush fires. | h. Something else. |

2. Can you identify with any of these deeper fears?

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Being made redundant. | b. Failure. |
| c. Being left alone. | d. A painful death. |
| e. Cancer. | f. Hell. |
| g. Growing old. | h. Not being in control. |
| i. Another pregnancy. | j. Something else. |

3. When you have been through a time of "immediate fear" or when some of your deeper fears come to the surface what effect does it have on you:

- Physically?
- Emotionally?
- Spiritually?

4. Can you see any pattern in the following scenarios?

- A middle-aged man refuses to have a blood test for prostate cancer because he believes, "If you have it, what difference will it make?"
- A mother searches through her daughter's bedroom each week searching for contraceptives and drugs.
- A middle-aged woman spends a fortune on anti wrinkle creams.
- A 64 year-old man argues with his wife when she wants to discuss his retirement plans.
- Parents opt for a Christian School for their children as they are concerned about "worldly influences" in the government system.

All of these situations relate to long term or deeper fears, one is a fear of cancer, another is a fear of her daughter rejecting her values, one of growing old, or letting go of being a parent.

PRAYER AND FEAR

5. Read Philippians 4:4-7

- What are the circumstances in which Paul writes the letter?
- What steps does Paul suggest to take towards finding the peace of God?
- What emotions and attitudes does he suggest?

a. Paul is under house arrest, probably in Rome and probably towards the end of his life. He has written to the Philippians to thank them for their concern in his welfare.

b/c. To Rejoice is to have confidence in the presence of God.

"Gentleness" is a difficult word to translate but probably means to be "big hearted." "Supplication" is to pray with a sense of humility.

- Do you have some deep-seated fears that you rarely talk about?
- When you think about your deep-seated fears, how does prayer work for you?

STABILITY AND COPING WITH FEAR

- Do you know people who just seem to "sail through" issues that would worry you? How do they do it?
- When you are confronted with an immediate fear or a long term fear, do you panic, freeze or go into a calm, "We can work this out" mode?

8. Read **Jeremiah 17: 7-8**

- a. How do you react these verses?
- b. What do you think Jeremiah means when he speaks about “when the heat comes” or “in the year of the drought”?

Jeremiah is addressing the problems that could be a part of Israel’s future and the problems that eventually come through the transitions of life.

9. a. What type of person is Jeremiah describing in these verses? (*What is their emotional reaction to fear situations? What are their qualities?*)
- b. Are you like the person Jeremiah describes?
- c. Do you know people like that?
- d. Do you know people who are the opposite of what is described here?
- e. What difference does it make to be a person who “trusts in the Lord”?

Jeremiah is describing God-centered stability. Jeremiah’s oracles or prophecies were dated just before and during the exile, a time of great apprehension and anxiety for the nation of Israel. You may like to point the group to the preceding verses that describe the person who does not have god-centered stability.

IMMEDIATE FEARS

10. a. Have you experienced anything in recent times that has presented an “immediate fear”?
- b. Did your faith apply in any way to the situation or did you become too frightened to even think about faith?

11. Read **Mark 4.35-41**

- a. What are the emotions of the disciples?
- b. How do their emotions change during this short story?

Note the changes. The disciples are relaxed, become apprehensive and then angry and then are filled with awe.

12. a. What are the emotions of Jesus in this story?
- b. What does this story tell us about our fears?
- c. Have you ever panicked and forgotten about the presence of Christ?
- d. Why do you think it was a precious story for the early Church?

The early Church would have loved this story because it was at times under persecution and would have wondered where its next set of problems would come from. They would have relived this event and allowed the story to remind them that Jesus’s presence helps overcome their natural fears.

FEAR GOD?

13. a. The Bible tells us to “fear” God. What do you think that means?
- b. Have you been brought up with the idea that you should fear God?
- c. Has your understanding of what that means changed over the years?

To fear God is to give God the respect that he deserves. It is not to cringe before God but to bow before God. See the sermon for help with this concept.

14. Read **Deuteronomy 10:12.**

How does this verse help us understand what it is to fear God?

This command uses “fear” in the same context as loving, serving, following and obeying God.

15. **How would you complete this prayer?**

Lord,
Help me to be sensible with my fears about...

Finish with Isaiah 43:1-4

But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;

when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.