Proverbs 29:25 “Fear of man is a dangerous trap, but to trust in God means safety.” (Living Bible)

INTRODUCTION

• Today we're looking at the Fear of Rejection.
• Many think the fear of Failure is the same as the Fear of Rejection.
• I think there are some distinct differences.
  o The fear of failure focuses on my performance, on what I do.
  o The fear of rejection focuses on me as a person and who I am.
    ▪ Two very distinct differences.

• As we talk about the fear of failure it's a fear that everyone can relate to.
• We all struggle with the fear of rejection at some point in our life.
• Some of us are consumed by it.
• The fear of rejection seems to grow with us as we age.
• If you did a study on little children you wouldn't see the fear of rejection, because they haven't had the past experience on which to build that fear.
• You might see the fear of failure but not the fear of rejection.

• Has your little boy ever had his finger in his nose in front of someone?
• They have no concerns at all that are picking their nose where everyone can see.
• It was dad that feared.
• A few more years and they may move to the place where, “What do other people think of me?”

I. HOW THE FEAR OF REJECTION BECOMES A TRAP

• God knew that this was a fear that we live with.
• Proverbs 29 “The fear of man is a dangerous trap. But to trust in God means safety.”

• How is the fear of man or the fear of rejection a dangerous trap?
• I've listed seven traps.
• It's not conclusive, there are many more.
• 1. The fear of rejection causes us to conform our life styles and our values.
   o In order to avoid rejection we sometimes become chameleons with those around us.
   o We settle in whether it be through clothes or car or lifestyle or even values in what we believe because we don't want to be rejected for who we are.

• 2. The fear of rejection keeps us from speaking the truth.
   o Many of us will lie or distort the truth in order to keep from being rejected by other people.

• 3. The fear of rejection prevents us from giving and receiving love.
   o This is a biggie.
   o Many people have shut down because they've been burned once and they don't want to be burned again.
   o They fear the rejection so they don't give or receive love.
   o Many marriages are like that.
   o They fear the rejection of a spouse and so they shut down.

• 4. The fear of rejection leads to isolation and loneliness.
   o Because we fear the rejection of other people we build walls around us to protect ourselves rather than bridges to relate to one another.

• 5. The fear of rejection moves us toward unhappiness.
   o This is the bottom line of rejection.
   o It's an unhappy state, constant pressure to try to please other people.
   o That's a miserable way to live life, wondering what other people are thinking of us.
   o These people also tend to be very critical people.
   o If they're critical they can reject other people before people can reject them.

   o When it comes to spiritual matters, how does the fear of rejection affect us spiritually?

• 6. The fear of rejection silences our sharing about Christ.
   o Why don't people share about Jesus?
   o Because they're afraid of other's response about them.
   o It robs us of the courage that we need to share about the most important relationship that we have.
• **7. The fear of rejection keeps us from spiritual maturity.**
  o I'm convinced that we spend far too much time turning our heads, wondering what other people are saying about us rather than focusing our head and our eyes on God.

**II. HOW TO OVERCOME FEARING THE REJECTION OF OTHERS**

Action steps

• **1. FACE THE FACT THAT PEOPLE LET YOU DOWN.**
  o We place far too much value on the opinions of other people.
  o We're shaped by their words and we're tyrannized by what they may think of us.
  o God knew this and that's why He said this in Isaiah 51, *“The Lord says, I am the one who comforts you, so why should you be afraid of people who die? Why should you fear people who die like the grass?”*
  o People have their right to an opinion but why fear their opinion.
    ▪ They're going to die.
    ▪ And their opinion's going to die with them.
  
  o Paul wanted to the people in Galatia.
    ▪ He says, “Do you think I'm trying to make people accept me? No. God is the one I'm trying to please. If I wanted to please people I would not be a servant of Christ.”
  o People are vital to our existence but they're human.
    ▪ They are not God.
    ▪ Because they're human, they're going to let us down.
    ▪ Because they're human, we do not put our faith in them.
    ▪ I've watched so many people in the church put their faith in a person and they were devastated because that person let them down.
      • Face it.
      • People are going to let us down.
      • Our faith is not in people.
      • It's in God.

• An important trust:
  o People will not love you as much as you need to be loved.
OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF REJECTION  
Freedom From Your Fears - Part 7 of 10

- Human love is conditional, inconsistent.
  - If you're living to please other people you're setting yourself up for hurt and further rejection.

- My goal tonight is not to please you.
  - My goal is to please God by teaching His church with the gifts He's given me, and the power of His Holy Spirit.
  - I don't fear your rejection.

- An ironic truth:
  - We focus on the wrong fear.
  - We fear people whose opinion is temporary rather than fearing God whose rejection is eternal.
  - We spend so much time looking around thinking of what other people are going to say and their opinion is only temporary.
  - We don't fear God's rejection and His rejection is eternal.

- If you're checking out Christianity and trying to figure out what it's all about, the Bible tells us that some day there will be a point where God will separate the wheat from the chaff.
  - He will reject those who don't know Him and we need to fear that, rather than fearing other people.

- Matthew 10:28 “Don't be afraid of people who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul. The only one you should fear is the one who can destroy the soul and the body in hell.”
  - Not a pretty verse.
  - It would be one easy to pass over.

- Those of you who are believers, instead of fearing other people we need to fear God.
  - If you're a believer you don't have to fear His rejection but fear Him in the Old Testament sense of awe or reverence.
  - We're fearing the wrong thing.

**2. FOCUS ON HOW GOD SEES YOU**
- This is a liberating truth if you can embrace this.
- In 1 Samuel, Samuel was asked by God to appoint the new kind of Israel.
  - Saul had just been rejected and Samuel was directed to the house of Jesse.
  - When he goes to the house of Jesse, Jesse brings before him seven of his sons.
As he does, Samuel looks at the tallest, the best looking, the most handsome of the seven sons.

- He's thinking, “This must surely be the next king of Israel.”

- But look at what God says, “The Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’” (I Samuel 16:7)
  
  - That's good news.

- This is the constant theme in the New Testament in the words of Jesus.
  
  - Jesus doesn't care what people look like and how religious they look.
  - He goes right after the heart.

- That is the main difference between people and God.
  
  - When people look at us, they look at us externally.
    - They look at our appearance.
    - They look at our homes, our position, our salaries, our car.
    - God doesn't care about that.
    - He looks at our heart.

- The story of Cinderella.
  
  - I don't like the first part of Cinderella.
  - I know it's a cartoon but I don't like the way she's treated.
  - I don't like the step mother, I don't like the sisters.
  - It pains me that they see her as stupid and worthless and good for nothing until the prince comes in.

- Ok let’s make a theological truth about this.

- “The prince is a lot like God. He saw in Cinderella something that other people didn't.”
  
  - God is a lot like that prince, who comes an kneels before you.
  - You may feel like a step child or someone who is not loved.
  - He doesn't put a glass slipper on us.
  - He puts a grace slipper on us.
  - As He puts grace under us, He sees in us what other people don't see.
  - He sees value and potential.
  - He calls us away from being that stepchild to dance with Him and to join His kingdom.
3. **FALL BACK ON GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.**
   - 1 John 4:10 *This is what real love is: It is not our love for God; it is God's love for us in sending his Son to be the way to take away our sins."
   - When I say unconditional love I know what goes through many of your minds, especially if you've been a believer for a while.
     - You go “Heard it!”
     - I meet a lot of people who have heard about God's unconditional love, a lot of people who even theologically understand it.
     - But I haven't met many people that know it, that embrace it, that are able to fall back and know that God loves us not for what we do but for who we are.
     - When you know His unconditional love and you fall back on it, it gives us liberty to live.
       - It gives us freedom to live.
   - Do you know it?
     - Do you know God's unconditional love?
     - When you do, your life will be radically different.
   - God is waiting for us to know His unconditional love.
     - We can relax and be unconcerned about the rejection of other people and focus on His love.
     - He's got the upper hand on us already because He knows everything about us.
   - Hebrew 4:13 *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."
   - Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight.
   - Another translation: *Everything is naked before God."
     - He knows everything about you.
     - He sees our weakness.
     - He sees our insecurities.
     - He sees our failings.
     - He sees our fears.
     - He sees our inadequacies.
And He loves us.

- Some of you have a really hard time with this.
  - I did too.
  - Those of you who have been believers for a while feel like when you sin God rips His love away from you.
    - That's wrong.
  - God's love is unconditional.
    - God hates sin.
    - It disgusts Him and He wants nothing to do with it.
  - But He doesn't pull out His love.
  - Imagine Jesus in a boat and Peter wanting to walk on water.
    - Peter says, “Jesus, I want to come to You.”
    - Jesus says, “Come!”
    - Peter begins to walk on water and then he begins to sink.
    - Jesus doesn't think of him as an embarrassment.

- God loves you unconditionally.
  - Fall back on that love.

- 1 John 4:18 “Where God's love is, there is no fear, because God's love drives out fear. It is punishment that makes a person fear, so love is not made perfect in the person who fears.”

- We can live in this trap of wanting the inconsistent and false approval of other people or we can resign the game and fall back on God's unconditional love.

- I like to think it's this unconditional love that stops our head from moving side to side and seeing what other people think about us and it stops our head and focuses our eyes on the only one who really matters anyway and that's God.

**CLOSING**

- My challenge to you is to allow God's love for you to crowd out the opinions and the desire to please other people.
- Face it.
- Other people will let you down.
- Focus on how God sees you which is so very different from the world.
- Fall back on His unconditional love and focus your eyes on Him.
- I challenge you to try that for a week.