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# Fear of the Future

**M**any of the decisions that God's people make on a day-by-day basis are motivated not by trust in God but rather by fear of the future. That is most often true with financial decisions. For example, many people stay with jobs they fear changing. That is particularly true with those who are forty and older. Society has convinced us to large degree that those over forty are past their prime. That is nonsense and runs totally contrary to God's intention.

Fear of the future causes Christian families to scrimp and sacrifice for retirement. Often the total focus of the earlier years is toward the eventful day when "we can relax and really enjoy ourselves." Unfortunately, the same fear that necessitated the hoarding for the latter years then forces further sacrifices "just in case."

I don't mean to imply that some planning is not God's will; obviously it is. But when a Christian looks inside and finds primary attitudes of fear and worry, bondage has occurred.

## "WOULD A MAN ROB GOD?"

Many families literally rob God and their families because of that underlying fear. They start a savings or insurance plan initially with an eye toward family provision but then more contingencies must be provided for. Finally there are so many contingencies that no amount of protection is adequate, and fear pervades all decisions about money. Some are willing to give a tithe from regular income, but any invasion of their surplus prompts resentment and alarm.

The net result of this life-style is bitterness, conflict within the family, and

growing separation from God.

My heartfelt concern for this spiritual illness is that it is increasing among dedicated believers and is being rationalized as good planning for the future. That is an absolute lie. Any action that is not done from faith is done from sin (Romans 14:23). The growing mania for buffering ourselves against any possible future event is straight from the deceiver. When our sand castle of affluence comes tumbling down—and it will—our faith had better be founded in the person of Jesus Christ and not in material security (Matthew 7:24-27).

## FAITH CONQUERS FEAR

The opposite of fear is faith. Therefore, when dealing with fear, one must first understand faith. In Hebrews, faith is described as things that we hope for and things that we do not presently have. Therefore, if we have no needs, we have no need of faith.

It is God's plan that we have some needs in order that we may develop faith in Him. It is vital that we view these future needs as opportunities to exercise and develop our faith.

In Hebrews 11:6 we are told that God is a "a rewarder of those who seek Him." Each Christian must decide, "Do I really believe that?" No Christian can truly serve God and live in fear. Christ says that it is a black-and-white choice: either you choose to serve God or you choose to serve money (Matthew 6:24).

## CAN YOU REALLY TRUST GOD?

We live in a materialistic generation. Priorities are established based on

desires, not needs. That is not limited to unbelievers. When we see how much confidence other Christians place in money, including those in the pastorate, it's easy to lose sight of the mark. Problems seem to erode our faith when it seems that some who truly trust God suffer financially and physically. Finally, we yield to the impulse and get caught up in the mad rush to protect against the future. We are guilty of attempting to counsel God rather than accepting His counsel.

We will never know with certainty why God allows problems to come into the lives of some godly people. But we can look back upon the lives of the apostles and see that God allowed them to suffer for their maturity and His glory.

Have you ever asked God for something and when it didn't happen you thought God had failed you? Isn't it strange that we usually expect God's answer to be a "yes" rather than a "no"? There are many reasons why God would not respond the way we desire:

1. We ask with the wrong motives (James 4:3).
2. It is the wrong time according to God's plan (Luke 11:3-10).
3. It is contrary to God's greater plan (Acts 21:13-14).
4. We are here to serve God, not for God to serve us (Job 41:11).

## HOW TO TRUST GOD

*1. Find God's direction for YOUR life.* Most of the frustrations experienced by Christians come as the result of patterning their lives after someone else's. Even the most devout believer can drift off of God's path by trying to match assets with another. Remember that God's successes are not graded by accumulated savings.

Accept God's provision as His plan

for your life, and find contentment in the source rather than the supply (1 Timothy 6:7-8).

*2. Make a conscious act of trusting God.* The method of doing that will vary from family to family. For one, it will mean actually withdrawing some of their stored resource and sharing it as God directs them. For another, it means taking the step of faith to leave that fruitless job. For another it may mean being content without that new, bigger home. The ways to practice putting our faith into motion are as different as God's plan for each of us. I would challenge you to find a way to express your faith through a material commitment.

*3. Develop a long-range viewpoint.* Since God rarely works on the same timetable that we do, it is important that we learn what patience is—waiting. Just because you don't understand what is going on in your life, don't begin to doubt God's direction. I don't think that Joseph really understood God's long-range plan as he sat in the Egyptian jail. He did understand what God expected of him each day and was faithful to do what God asked him.

*"Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own"* (Matthew 6:34).

*4. Pray diligently.* It has been said that prayer is God's secret weapon. It's time we let the secret out and begin to exercise the most powerful tool that God has given us. Prayer is the key to unlocking God's blessings and power. It is the most neglected part of most Christians' lives. Faith is not possible outside of prayer, and with prayer all things are possible.

*"Pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"* (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).