



# fellowship church

## Sermon Discussion Guide

Feb 1, 2026 - Pastor Scott Allen

*The Enslaved King and the Free Prisoner (Matthew 14:1–12)*

**Summary** This week's sermon contrasted a heart controlled by the fear of man and a heart that fears God. By teaching through the story of Herod Antipas (a king enslaved to the fear of man) and John the Baptist (a prisoner who was truly free), Pastor Scott explored the dangers of prioritizing human approval over God's truth. He defined the fear of God as *taking God seriously and responding accordingly* to His character and His commands. In contrast, the fear of man is when we take God lightly; people become BIG and God becomes small.

### Discussion Starter

- Was there anything in this week's sermon that was particularly convicting or particularly encouraging to you? Why?
- 

### Reflection Questions

- A central theme in this sermon was the fear of man. In your life, where would the fear of man be most likely to show up? (Peers...work colleagues...a boss or mentor...with those you supervise or lead...somewhere you're in the spotlight...online...etc.)
  - Scott pointed out that "the easiest way to deal with our guilty conscience is to silence the voice of conviction." Has there been a time in your life when you, like Herod, tried to silence the voice of conviction? How did God get your attention?
  - Scott summed up the fear of God as *taking God seriously and responding accordingly*. What factors (external or internal) make this mindset difficult to adopt in our daily lives?
  - Read through the diagnostic questions that Pastor Scott provided for the fear of man (linked below). Which characteristics hit close to home for you?
- 

### Application Questions

- (Personal implications) What biblical or gospel truths do you think are most impactful for combating the fear of man within our own hearts? How do those reorient our hearts?

- Scott encouraged us to *pray our fears* (Psalm 56:3-4; Psalm 86:11). How can prayer transform our experience of fear?
  - (Leaders: consider taking a few minutes for members to pray over their fears in smaller groups of 2–4.)
- (Communal implications) Read Deuteronomy 10:12–13 out loud together as a group. How does this passage describe the fear of the Lord? How can we cultivate this posture in our own hearts? How can we help others do the same?
- Have you ever had a time in your life when God delivered you from a major struggle with fear of man, peer pressure, etc.? If so, would you be willing to share that story to encourage others in the group?
- (Missional implications) If we are called *not* to fear people, what are some more biblical attitudes we can adopt toward others in our life?

**Additional resources:** see pastor Scott's notes here: <https://fellowshiplouisville.org/notes> and at <https://files.snappages.site/F2CN9N/assets/files/Indicators-of-the-Fear-of-Man.pdf>.

(Guide written by: Riley Neal)

## Tips for Group Leaders

- DO ask open-ended questions. DON'T ask questions where a short "right" answer ends the discussion.
- DO encourage mutual participation by every group member. DON'T feel the need to respond or weigh in after every contribution. Avoid monologuing. As the leader, your goal is to facilitate mutual discussion between all group members (Eph 4:15–16).
- DO ask follow-up questions: "What do you mean by that?" "Tell me more!" "Has anyone else experienced something similar (or different)?"
- DO feel free to pick and choose questions that are a good fit for your group. DON'T feel the need to get through every question, and don't worry if you spend most of your time on a few questions that generate a lot of good discussion.
- DO keep the main thing the main thing. Steer your conversation toward the main theme of the sermon and the biblical text. DON'T get sidetracked on less important matters, theological debates, etc. A rabbit trail might sometimes be worth pursuing—if group members are wrestling deeply with the implications of biblical truth for their lives. Otherwise, steer conversation back to the main topic.
- DO get into the text. It could be helpful to read over the passage together or ask questions directly related to the text. Help group members engage the text for themselves and respond to what they see there.
- DO revisit important moments from the sermon—a memorable story, an impactful quote, a convicting point of application. "Remember when pastor X talked about Y? What impression did that make on you?"
- DO allow space for reflection, silence, and thoughtful answers. DON'T feel that you need to jump in or ask a new question just because the group has been quiet for a few seconds. A good rule of thumb is to wait until the silence gets awkward, then count silently to ten before jumping in.
- DO bring discussions home to practical, concrete everyday life. DON'T let discussion and application stay in the abstract realm. Steer discussion toward *what does responding to this sermon look like for me?* If comments are vague or general, ask "what would that look like, practically?"