

## Someone who fears man<sup>1</sup>...

- **Is easily influenced by others** – Have you ever struggled with “peer pressure”? Do you conform to the desires of those around you, even when you know it’s not the best decision? You likely desire their approval and fear their rejection. This is what the Bible calls the fear of man.
- **Struggles to say no** – Do you find it hard to say no even when wisdom indicates you should? Are you overcommitted? Often this is motivated by an inordinate desire to please others.
- **Makes demands** – Do you “need” things from your friends, for them to listen to you, or respect you, or to show you love in a certain way? Is your “love tank” often empty? These kinds of “needs” are actually demands, and they often reveal a desire to be approved by others.
- **Fears exposure** – Do you ever feel like you might be exposed as an imposter, say at a work meeting, or in a group project? You may alter what you say or say very little in hopes that you won’t be exposed as inferior, or as not up to snuff with everyone else. Why? Likely because you fear them.
- **Struggles with decisions** – Do you frequently second-guess decisions because of what people might think of you? Or are you paralyzed in decision-making because you can’t please everyone? Your best friend wants you to do X, but your roommate wants you to do Y. You have to let someone down, but you can’t bear the thought, so you vacillate. But why? Likely because you want their esteem, and you fear losing it.
- **Shades the truth** – Do you lie (especially little white lies)? Or do you shade the truth to make yourself look better, or to cover up shame in front of others? Like Abraham, we often lie because we’re afraid. Afraid of harm, afraid of exposure, afraid of rejection. This is still motivated by the fear of man.
- **Is preoccupied with perceptions** – Do you frequently talk about your accomplishments in front of others, or story-top? Or maybe you don’t ever talk about yourself out of fear that someone thinks you’re proud. Have you ever been too timid to share the gospel because the unbeliever might think you’re foolish? Are you obsessed with physical fitness, dieting, or weightlifting because you’re consumed with how others view you? Are you easily embarrassed? You may be ruled by the fear of man.
- **Struggles to confront** – Do you allow people to perpetually take advantage of you instead of being honest and having the hard conversation? (Peace lover vs. peace-maker). When there is a clear problem that needs to be addressed, would you

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Ed Welch “When People are Big and God is Small”* and *Lou Priolo “Pleasing People: How Not to Be an ‘Approval Junkie.’”* Compiled by Clay Mackie.

rather people maintain a good opinion of you instead of honestly and painfully dealing with the problem?

- **Responds wrongly to correction** – Are you depressed by the critiques of others? Are you defensive? Or maybe you are zealous to correct your mistakes, and work anxiously to please in order to get back in the good graces of whoever you think views you disapprovingly.
- **Pretends at church** – The church is often a place that is rife with the fear of man. Why do we often pretend everything is okay when it isn't? Why are we hesitant to share our sin struggles with those who could help us? We're often dominated by the opinions of others, and we want to be held in high esteem by them.
- **Loves the praises of others** – Do you sometimes fish for compliments? Do you put yourself down in the hopes that others will disagree and praise you? When your teacher is praising your group project, do you secretly hope he mentions your name explicitly? Like the Pharisees, our love for the praises of men often reveal that we are not living for the praise of God.
- **Shows favoritism** – We often play favorites because some people can give us what we want better than others can. Being approved by "important people" makes you feel important, too. We base our value in the assessments of others, which reveals we are living in the fear of man.