

The Christmas message

Philippians 2

“³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but **emptied** Himself, taking the form of a **bond-servant**, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He **humbled** Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

The Christmas message brings to us three insights that shape Christian life.



1. **vision of ethics.**
2. **value of humanity.**
3. **vulnerability of God.**

The incarnation is a model for Christian ethics

with its respect for the image of God in all mankind

displayed through courageous vulnerability (fearlessness).

The ethical path is not always consensual, certain, or clear for two reasons.

1. We need **wisdom** to manage competing & conflicting Biblical values.
2. We are influenced by competing & conflicting personal values (**fear & love**).

Fear of missing out on life is a big problem in ethics

If I tell the truth or selflessly love others, it may cost me too much. I may miss out on life.

A Christian response to the fears that enslave us -

1 John 4:18

Matthew 6:19-33



1 John 4:18

“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”

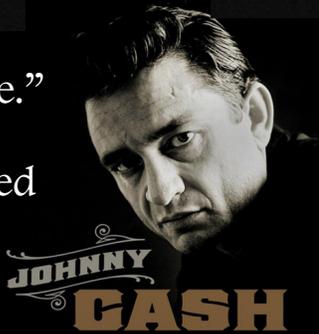
Managing fear is a love issue.

1. After the FALL, all humans know fear and love.
2. Our fear of death (missing out on life) is at the root of all other fears.
3. We overcome fear by abiding in God's love expressed and experienced through the incarnation and crucifixion of the Christ.

“My name is Johnny Cash. There are two different people inside me. Johnny is a good guy, Cash is a bad boy.”

“The two are always fighting to control me.”

“Which ever one I feed tends to win out.”



How to feed love and starve fear

Matthew 6:19-33

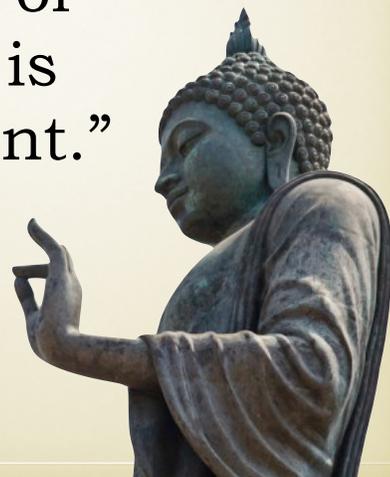
Matthew 6

¹⁹ Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ **for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**”

We feed fear when we attach ourselves to this world's stuff.



“The root of suffering is attachment.”

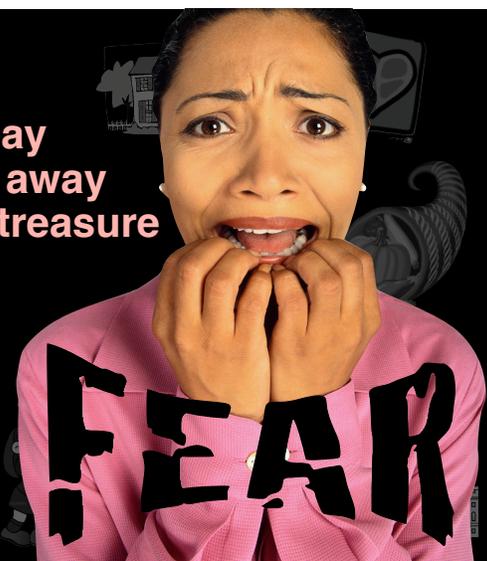


Buddha

If it can decay or be taken away it is a false treasure and a poor investment.



If it can decay or be taken away it is a false treasure that feeds -



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We feed love when we invest our lives in heavenly things the world cannot give or take away.



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How can I know where I have invested my life?

- **What makes me angry?**
- **What do I worry about?**

“²² The lamp of the body is the eye; **if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.** ²³ But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”

We feed fear when we let the world’s lens be our eye.



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We feed fear when we let the world’s lens be our eye.

- The lens of LACK*
- The lens of PERFECTION*
- The lens of BLAME / SHAME*
- The lens of VICTIMIZATION*
- The lens of JUSTICE*
- The lens of MATERIALISM*
- The lens of COMPARISON*

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We feed love when we discipline our eyes to see beyond the fear.



Our lives are not shaped so much by our circumstances as by our response to them.

Our inner peace comes not so much by our situation in life as by what we see beyond it.

**The problem is not
our lack of faith.**

**It is that our faith is
in something other than God
and / or
for something other than His
kingdom.**

“²⁴ **No one can serve two masters**; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. ²⁵ For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?”

*We feed fear when we
try to have it both
ways.*



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*If you want to be miserable try to
manipulate God to bring you the peace,
power, and prosperity you seek
THROUGH WORLDLY TREASURE.*

See Matthew 4:1-11

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*We feed love when we
keep the main
thing, the main
thing.*



“³¹ Do not be anxious then, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘With what shall we clothe ourselves?’ ³² For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for **your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.**”

*We feed fear when we
Convince ourselves
that we are left alone
with a half full glass.*



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*“things will never get better”
“I am a victim”
“God has rejected me”
bitterness, envy, jealousy
“I can’t trust God”
“I don’t fit in”*

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We feed love when we remind ourselves that Jesus is the only Messiah and faith is the only way.



Matthew 4:4

“Man shall not live by bread alone but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”

Love has a reformed view of what we really need to live.

Poverty is not just material deprivation, but also social isolation, political powerlessness, and spiritual emptiness.

Love does not obsess over nor neglect material needs.

2 Thessalonians 3:10

“For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order; if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.”

“³³ But **seek first His kingdom and His righteousness**; and all these things shall be added to you. “Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.””

We feed fear when we take on too many responsibilities with not enough boundaries.



Mary & Martha

“³³ But **seek first His kingdom and His righteousness**; and all these things shall be added to you. “Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.””

We feed love when we keep the world in its place, take one day at a time, know our role, do our part, & seek His purposes.



Take home

- ✓ Invest your life in things that can't decay or be taken away.
- ✓ See beyond the temporal, physical, circumstances of life.
- ✓ Take your baptism seriously.
- ✓ When angry or anxious, ask if you are trying to have it both ways.