

Published Guest Opinion Article in the Loveland Reporter-Herald 1/13/2025

By Don Overcash

An important binary choice.

What one fears says a great deal about one's priorities. What we fear and why forms life's two most important questions. While fear presents in a myriad forms, the most prominent ones are the fear of man and the fear of God. In 1979 Bob Dylan penned these lyrics in a song called "Gotta Serve Somebody" that presents these two choices.

"You may be an ambassador to England or France...
But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed
You're gonna have to serve somebody
Well, it may be the Devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody."

The fear of man refers to a sense of anxiety or apprehension about judgment and actions from others. In Proverbs 12:25 we read, "Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression..." Fearing man can lead to constant worry about judgment or acceptance, creating emotional distress. This pressure leads individuals to focus on pleasing others resulting in moral compromise, where principles are sacrificed for social approval. A resulting loss of integrity results when the fear of man suppresses authentic beliefs and hinder individuals from expressing their true selves, particularly in spiritual matters. "Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do" (James 1:8).

In contrast to the fear of man, we read in Proverbs 1:7 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." The fear of God encompasses reverence, awe, and respect for the Divine. Exodus 15:11 reads, "Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" The fear of the Lord acknowledges who God is and his attributes of holiness, power, knowledge, eternal presence and love. 1John 4:16 reads, "God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." This brings us to the two greatest commandments from Jesus recorded in Matthew 22:37-38. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment.³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself."

The fear of God is the acknowledgement and willing submission to the Holy One.

Yet, from human experience people are hesitant or unwilling to fear God. Humankind values personal autonomy and independence, leading them to reject authority, including divine authority.

Another reason is that modern culture promotes secular values and prioritizes human reasoning over spiritual beliefs. Given sufficient time, people believe humankind can figure things out without any outside help. Even since the dawn of the Age of Enlightenment humankind has made little if any progress other than the weapons of destruction are more advanced than Cain's rock.

Pain, suffering, or injustices can cause individuals to question the existence of a loving, just God. Add in lifestyles of sinful behavior providing a temporary sense of fulfillment or pleasure. In summary, humankind's reasons for not fearing God include a variety of personal, cultural, and philosophical

factors, including a quest for independence, misunderstandings about fear, firsthand experiences, and societal influences.

Before ending we must address the embarrassing reason legions raise objections to fearing the Lord. The lack of loving obedience by those who claim to be wise by fearing the Lord is tragic as shown by the willingness to ignore the two commandments given by Jesus to Love God, Love People. Instead, the practice of political idolatry replaces the fear of the Lord with the fear of man. Christians also stay silent on sin rather than risking disapproval of man. Cowardly compromise, instead of standing firmly with the Holy One, is an all-too-common practice out of the fear of offending man. Even though we claim to be salt and light, there is a lack of saltiness, and the light is dim.

A choice must be made as no one can serve two masters.

Luke 10:27 states "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."

Decide whom to fear as we will serve somebody.