

	<p><u>Sermon Based Study Guide</u> Series: Whom Shall I Fear? Message: People: Our Idol of Choice Scripture: Ps 27:1-2. Pro. 29:25 Date: 2/12/2012 Speaker: Neil Silverberg</p>
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➤ **Overview**

This week we will begin our new series entitled “Whom Shall I Fear: Dealing Biblically with Codependency, Rejection, and the Fear of Man.” This subject is very relevant to what many are dealing with in our culture today. Recent statistics from so-called Codependency experts suggest that up to 96% of the population is codependent. If that is true, we are facing something of an epidemic in our culture.

What exactly is codependency? The term was first coined in the 1970's and was used of spouses of alcoholics who entered into addictive behaviors of enablement with their partners. It eventually morphed into a term used to describe any compulsion to fix the wrongs of another or be controlled by another. One of the ways that experts justify their suggestion that 96% of the population is codependent is by labeling it a disease or personality disorder. The world's prescription for dealing with it is to encourage self-love; teaching people to accept themselves and love themselves so that they can properly love others.

There is no doubt that there is a problem with relationships both inside and outside the Church. But the biblical description of what is wrong could not be more different than that of the world's. The Bible deals honestly and forthrightly with what the real problem is: “idolatry.” The simple reality is, due to human depravity we gravitate towards idols, and people are usually our idol of choice. When we are young we called it peer-pressure; today it is called people-pleasing or codependency. But the Bible calls it simply the “fear of man” (see Proverbs 29:25) and indicates that when we fear man more than God, we live in bondage of man. But we should not despair: even Bible giants such as Aaron, Saul, and Peter had battles with it.

Understanding our propensity towards idolatry is necessary if we are to apply the Bible cure. It is a far cry from what the secular world (and some of the church) present as a remedy; that we need to love ourselves more and accept ourselves. We must always first repent of the fact that we have idolized people and learn the fear of God. By the fear of God, we mean we must learn the greatness of God so that He is center rather than people. And regarding people, we must learn to “need them less so we can love them more.” We must be free from fearing them so that we can love them properly. But that fear of the Lord is not only learned by studying passages that deal with God's greatness, it is learned through the Gospel—learning what God did in Christ for us and how it applies in our lives.

The goal of this series is to learn the Gospel way of being delivered from the fear of man so that we are able to need people less in order to love them more.

➤ **Discussion Questions**

1. Why is codependency seen as an epidemic in the culture today?
2. Discuss the ways that the world suggests people deal with it?
3. What is the Bible term for codependency? What does it reveal about God's way of deliverance from it?
4. How does much of the church today suggest we deal with it?
5. What is meant by the phrase regarding people that we need to “need them less so we can love them more”?

➤ **Prayer Time**

Ask people who are willing (without any coaxing) to talk about their battle with the fear of man. Ask them to share the ways that it manifested. Spend time praying over people who feel they are still suffering with it. Specifically ask the Father to give these people the grace of repentance for the idols they have erected. This is always the first step in being freed from the fear of man.