

1,437. That's how many participants there were in the largest game of hide-and-seek on record. It took place on January 1, 2014 in China (**picture**).

Did you know that the very first hide-and-seek took place in the Garden of Eden? Hiding from God has been around since the beginning. It was the first thing that Adam and Eve attempted to do after what we know as "the Fall." Thousands of years later mankind still attempts to hide from God.

Genesis 3:9-10: "*But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?' And he [Adam] said, 'I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was **afraid**, because I was naked, and I hid myself'.*" That's the first time we find the word *fear* in the Bible. **The Birth of Fear** happened in the Garden of Eden. We're beginning a new study: *Fear: The Invisible Enemy*. This several week series is intended to help us understand how we can live more and more in the reality of God's "*Fear not*."

If you Google the word, "fear," it brings up 231 million web pages that mention it. Type in "phobia" and you'll get another million pages. Fear is the topic of conversation at nearly every dinner table. It's the subject at the coffee pot and in the cubicles at work. It's the emotion expressed in our songs and movies. It's a motivator and a manipulator. It affects our politics, informs our decision-making and contaminates our relationships.

Fear is the most basic instinct of every living creature. An animal without fear will become some predator's dinner. Human fear infects all ends of the social spectrum. It strikes the weak and the powerful. It haunts the young and the old, the rich and the poor. Even those who seem to have it all, celebrities and heroes and "fearless" leaders, confess to a wide array of phobias.

Jennifer Aniston, John Madden, Cher and Whoopi Goldberg (**pictures**) are all aviophobes...terrified of flying. There's a reason Johnny Depp (**picture**) didn't star in *IT* (**picture**). It might have exacerbated his clown paranoia. MJ (**picture**) is terrified of the ocean (ever since he witnessed the death of a childhood friend). Ailurophobia, I understand. It's the fear of cats. Famous historical characters; Julius Caesar, Napoleon and Alexander the Great (**pictures**) were scared of felines. Woody Allen (**picture**) seems to be the celebrity with the most phobias. He's afraid of insects, dogs, heights, small rooms and crowds. George Washington (**picture**) was terrified of being buried alive and Richard Nixon (**picture**) was afraid of hospitals.

Some fears attack us only momentarily; others stay for a lifetime. Our fears of failure, loneliness, rejection, impending disaster or contracting a major disease never seem to go away.

"*What are you afraid of?*" What is it that steals your joy and destroys your hope? What is it that's robbing you of sleep, night after night? What keeps you from living by faith? What keeps you from having a close relationship with a loving God who wants the best for you? During this series, we'll work through many of those questions. Today we want to go back to where it all started. Everything has a beginning. Turn to Genesis 3:1-15.

1. Fear is not natural. Do you have a Bucket List? On it, are there some beautiful places to visit? Our family was able to visit the Grand Canyon (**picture**) some years ago? I'd love to see the Alps. We love natural beauty.

But fear is an invader. It's not natural to God's creation. Dealing with fear is not part of *Imago Dei*. When God created the world, the Bible says everything God created was good. Everything in Eden was perfect, beautiful, and wonderful. Then, God created man. Adam and Eve were created, crafted, and molded in the image of God. Man would be different; prized above all the rest of creation. He was created, not robotic in obedience to God as the animals. Man was able to reproduce "after their own" kind, unlike the angelic host. The biggest difference was that man was endowed with a free will by God. This was the divine risk. Man could choose to love God, but man could also choose to reject God, and sin against God.

In Genesis 3, we find something totally unnatural for us, yet totally natural for Eve – she has a conversation with a serpent. She wasn't afraid of the snake and it wasn't afraid of her. Fear wasn't part of her original design.

There's something in each of us that, from time to time, makes us want to go back to the way it used to be. We want to go back home. Home for Adam and Eve was where all of nature was in sync. Someday it will all be restored. Isaiah 65:25 promises, "*The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox...*" There's coming a marvelous new creation that will restore God's original but better. It will end the curse of sin. As someone said, paradise is "*a place where nothing had ever been broken, where there were no chips or dents or scars, a place where everything was still whole and holy and pleasing to God.*"

Periodically, someone is able to feed wild animals (**pictures**) that'd normally flee. In Eden there was no fear between the creatures and man. Adam and Eve didn't have any differences of opinion. Adam wasn't afraid of saying the wrong

thing and Eve wasn't afraid of making the wrong thing for dinner. There was no fear. Best of all, they weren't afraid of God.

2. Fear is a result of sin. God did not create our sense of fear. It's not part of our original design. God created a perfect world. Humans had no reason to fear. After their failure, Adam and Eve hid from God because they were afraid of how He'd respond to them. While our fight-or-flight instinct helps us survive, God didn't create our emotion of fear.

Someone said, "*The most pleasant of all sounds is the human voice.*" If that's true of the human voice, it's much more true when it's the voice of God. God's voice is the most wonderful of all sounds. Yet when God's voice was heard following the first couples' sin, they were terrified of God and hid.

How often have we seen children afraid, after they've misbehaved? Usually, they know they've done something wrong. Their little lips tremble, sorrowful eyes fill with tears. They duck their heads so as to not meet the adult's appraising look. They may hide from their Dad or Mom. But these traits are true for not-so-little people, too. No doubt you've seen folk who've acted like this. Embarrassment from guilt can be very strong.

Someone said that the saddest sentence God ever uttered was: "*Adam, where are you?*" Until this point the first pair had met the Lord with heavenly eagerness. They were happy and innocent. It was always a glad, glorious hour when God the Creator came to talk with them. They had no fear. But something horrible and sorrowful has happened. The man is afraid. Both are ashamed. And God calls with a sob in His voice, "O Adam, where are you? What have you done?" The answer to that heartbroken question is the whole story of sin, grace, and redemption.

A wise and experienced homiletics professor, teaching his class of young pastors the art of preaching, called upon each one to read this section of the Book of Genesis. As each student stood up to read the passage, the old professor was carefully observing. Some read it as though God were simply asking a question, "*Adam, where are you?*" Some read it as though God were angry. Some read it as though God was indifferent. But one young preacher read it with pathos, with a sob in his voice, "*But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?'*" The old professor looked at that young preacher and said, "Young man, you'll be a great preacher. God has given you a compassion for the souls of men. When God came into the garden in the cool of the day and called to the man He had made, God was broken-hearted as He asked where he was and what he had done."

What Adam felt at that moment wasn't awe or reverence. He was stone-cold afraid, exactly as he should have been. God had warned him that if he ate of the forbidden tree, he would die (Genesis 3:3). As Christian philosophy professor Peter Kreeft (**picture**) explains: "*Terror is a bond, however primitive, between us and God...It is supposed to be there because we were born original sinners, and the sinful self is naturally and rightly terrified of the goodness of God, which is sin's enemy.*" Creation went from peace to panic, and we've never been the same.

3. Fear breaks relationships. Adam's sin is a relationship problem. Write it in big letters: SIN ALWAYS SEPARATES. It separated us from God and from those close to us. We end up confused about who we are and uncertain about what we've done and how to get out of our mess.

But Adam blames God and Eve. Eve blames the serpent. It's always someone else's fault. It's my wife, my husband, my kids, my parents, my teacher, my boss, my neighbors, or the waiter who was rude when he took my order. It's his fault. Yeah, that's the ticket! I'll blame him.

And the human race is now divided. The Church is divided. Nations are divided. We all have our groups: Republicans vs. Democrats. Liberals vs. conservatives. Rich vs. poor. Men vs. women. Old vs. young. Married vs. single. Palestinians vs. Israelis. Muslims vs. Christians. Catholics vs. Protestants. Who started it? It can't be our fault. It must be the other guy!

Adam and Eve never felt anxious when they were spiritually alive and lived in perfect fellowship with God, each other and all of creation. With the invasion of sin, fear contaminates every relationship.

Fear contaminates our relationship with God. Adam and Eve heard the sound of God walking in the garden. It had been a time of refreshment and delight, now it's a time of fear. God's presence was what's known as a *theophany*, "an appearance of Christ in human form before the incarnation thousands of years later." But they didn't want to see Him and attempted to hide from God.

Have you ever come home from work and one of your kids is avoiding you? When you found him, he won't look you in the eye? You know he's done something wrong! Fear is the human response to guilt. It's to hide from the one in authority over you.

When the Lord finds Adam, Adam admits his fear. But notice what he says (3:10): "*I was afraid because I was naked.*" Not, "because I sinned," but, "because I was naked." Adam had been naked every other time the Lord had walked with him in the garden. The problem wasn't nakedness, but sin. It's a fearful thing to be exposed as a guilty sinner in the presence of God. Instead of coming to God, who can deal with our sin, we run, foolishly thinking that we can hide from

His omnipresent gaze. As famed atheist philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre (**picture**) said *“Inside every human heart, whether they believe God or not, is a voice that whispers ‘not acceptable’.”*

Fear contaminates our relationship with each other. There’s another effect of their sin: It changed their attitude toward each other. The awareness of their nakedness motivated them to cover up in the presence of each other. Before sin, they weren’t aware of their nakedness. With no sense of shame or embarrassment between them, why cover up? Yet, with sin, their attitudes toward each other changed. Each felt their nakedness needed to be hidden from the other. Humiliation is now part of their relationship.

Adam and Eve lost the open relationship they’d enjoyed with each other (*“naked and not ashamed”*). Fig leaves symbolize a barrier between them. That’s seen even more clearly when God confronts Adam and he blames Eve. He’s tries to save his own skin, even if God zaps his wife off the face of the earth. At least Eve was thoughtful enough to blame the snake!

Blame is the human way to deal with guilt. It never works. Our guilt is still there, but it shatters relationships. You don’t have to teach it to your kids. They have a built-in circuit that says, “When you do something wrong, blame someone else. Don’t ever admit, ‘I was wrong.’”

We’ve all done it. We know we’re guilty, but rationalize by thinking, “Yes, I was wrong; I shouldn’t have yelled at my wife. But she provoked me.” It’s like a scale, where I have a pile of guilt on one side, but rather than clearing it off the scale, I balance it by piling blame on the other side. It won’t remove the guilt, but makes me feel better...at least for a while. Rather than security in our relationships, we’re continually walking on eggshells.

Fear contaminates our relationship with all creation. Adam was given dominion over all of the created order. When Adam rebelled he took the world with him. Romans 8:20-22 says creation awaits its own deliverance.

When God created man and animals, the animals didn’t fear mankind. After the fall, a major change takes place. Post-fall even domesticated animals have a fear of human beings. That fear began in Genesis 3.

4. Fear carries a lot of baggage.

Fear carries a sense of shame. Samuel Johnson (**picture**) said, *“Shame rises from the fear of men, conscience rises from the fear of God.”* Man’s transgression came from a desire to be something other than what God created us to be. They wanted to be more than human. Shame was birthed out of this original sin.

The Oxford dictionary defines shame as, *“a painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behavior.”* In shame they hid from God. Shame eradicates self-respect. It prohibits intimacy with God because we feel unworthy of Him. Unlike guilt, which is resolved by repentance and confession, shame becomes an identity.

From a biblical perspective, shame isn’t the enemy—bad behavior is. Shame is our friend if it leads us to repent of sin. God was frustrated when His people felt nothing in the face of their sin: *“Were they ashamed because of the abomination they have done? They were not even ashamed at all. They did not even know how to blush”* (Jer. 6:15). Blaise Pascal (**picture**) said, *“The only shame is to have none.”*

Please understand, there’s a vast difference between feeling shame for who you are and feeling shame as your response to a particular action. Our culture has lost a healthy sense of shame. When was the last time you watched a news cast without seeing egregiously shameful actions and words—and the persons behind such behavior and words appeared to have dead consciences. We all have bad days, but feeling no shame for our bad deeds? It’s spiritually and socially unhealthy.

We need to distinguish between guilt and shame. When we fail to live up to God’s Law, we should feel guilty. Shame is different. Shame researcher, Brene Brown (**picture**) writes: *“Shame is the intense feeling of being worthless and not being worthy of love.”* We can put it in three words. Shame says to us, *“You don’t belong.”* But God wants us to belong.

There are different kinds of shame. There’s shame that’s real – the shame we ought to feel in front of God for violating His standards. But often, there’s shame that shouldn’t be there. The things that have been done to us – abuse, molestation, other things like that, are types of unhealthy shame.

Fear carries a sense of feeling unprotected. Adam was perfectly safe around God before sin. We all know the next chapter. The foolish doubt, the lustful gaze, the greedy consumption...and suddenly, they’re aware of their nakedness. They weren’t more naked than before, but their nakedness is now unsafe. They could no longer safely disclose everything about themselves to the watching world, to each other, or especially to God. It’s a sense of being unprotected and insecurity.

What is insecurity? Insecurity is a form of fear. Certain things should make us feel insecure. If we walk out on someone’s 2nd-story deck and notice the wood is rotting, we should feel insecure. If we live or work with someone who’s dishonest or abusive, we should feel insecure. When we come under conviction of sin and realize we’re facing God’s

judgement because we're not reconciled to Him through Christ, we should feel insecure. God designed insecurity as a warning that we're vulnerable to some kind of danger.

Fear carries a sense of guilt. Sin leads to guilt; guilt leads to alienation, between the sinner and God and between the sinner and other human beings. Suddenly they were self-conscious. Have you ever dreamed that you were in a public place and weren't properly clothed? It's a relief to wake up and find out you're home in bed! Adam and Eve woke up and found out they weren't dreaming. It's a nightmare. They're naked! For the first time, they had a sense it wasn't right, so they attempt to cover themselves with fig leaves.

When they sinned their conscience was activated. God's question zeroes in on this, "*Who told you that you were naked?*" The fact Adam now knew he was naked showed that he had a conscience, which he got from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Someone has defined the conscience as a *faults alarm*. It goes off to tell us our faults.

Of course it's possible, through repeated sin, to sear your conscience to the point where it no longer functions. But the first couple's conscience was operating as God intended. It warned them they'd sinned. When that alarm goes off, our tendency is to deal with it as Adam and Eve did: Cover it up as quickly as possible. But an inner voice keeps nagging, "Guilty! Guilty!"

5. The cure for fear begins with the Cross. Genesis 3:15, "*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.*" With the possible exception of John 3:16, no verse in the Bible is more crucial and definitive than Genesis 3:15. It establishes a principle that runs throughout the Old Testament, creating an expectation of a Redeemer who'd be a descendent (a "seed") of Adam and Eve. No one reading the Bible can miss the connecting threads: God is doing something that begins with the promise given post-fall.

Genesis 3:15 has been called the *protoevangelium* because it's the first note of God's redemptive plan following the fall. When Adam and Eve failed to obey, God didn't destroy them (which would have been just). Instead He revealed His covenant of grace to them by promising a Savior.

God's plan of grace is costly: the heel of the Savior will be bruised. It's a metaphor to be contrasted with the blow the serpent receives (the crushing of his head). It's apparent that this involves—the shedding of substitutionary blood. That seems to be what's behind the provision of animal skins as a covering for Adam and Eve. Blood must be shed for sin to be forgiven. The way is now clear: "*without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins*" (Heb. 9:22). Because of Jesus' cross...

We are free from fear and guilt. God deals with our guilt by punishing His own Son. He places every ounce of our guilt and sin on Jesus. The Son of God became our sin. He was cursed so that we didn't have to be and those who were not children of God could become children of God.

We are free from fear and shame. When Jesus died for our sin, He died for both guilt and shame. His experience on the Cross as He hung naked in full view of the world was disgraceful, despicable, and reprehensible. Artistic renderings of the Crucifixion portray Jesus with a towel wrapped around His waist. That wasn't the case. Romans didn't care about covering up male anatomy. Jesus was stripped and hung naked before the jeering crowd. This indignity was utterly shameful. Hebrews 2:10 tells us that one purpose of the sufferings of Jesus was to bring many to glory. We have the great exchange "*Jesus bore our shame that we might share His glory.*"

We are free from fear and feeling unprotected. When you go someplace like Six Flags with your kids, you know where they are. You don't leave the park and forget them. You protect those you love. And God never forgets those He loves. Writing to 1st century believers, Jude addressed his letter "*to all who are called to live in the love of God the Father, who loves you and keeps you safe in the care of Jesus Christ*" (Jude 1 NLT). In the original, the clear implication is, "*You are continually kept by Jesus Christ.*"

Continually kept—what could be more encouraging? Whatever your difficulties, you need to know you're protected in Christ. He'll protect His investment that He purchased at the cross at such great cost. He will protect you, preserve you, watch over you, and keep you. You're safe in Jesus!

Conclusion: Frederick Buechner (**picture**) said, "*Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid.*" Fear is an emotion common to all of us, but our Savior doesn't want us to fear.

I love the words of Luke 12:32 where Jesus says, "*So don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom.*" Here Christ speaks wonderful words about God Himself to encourage faith in His loved people and to quiet their fears. As we tie this up, notice a few things about the words of Jesus.

Jesus says, "fear not." Christ isn't scolding us with these words. He's not barking out an order, forbidding us to fear, shaking His finger and speaking in a stern tone of voice. He's speaking gently, calling us tenderly to "fear not." He's saying there's no reason to fear and then He tells us why.

Jesus numbers you among His “little flock.” You’re not a member of a huge numberless, nameless herd. Christ’s flock is a little flock. He knows His little flock intimately. He knows the name of each one of His sheep. He knows your quirks, your likes and dislikes. He knows your sins and fears. He knows you. You’re part of His cherished little flock. He bought you with His blood. There’s no reason to fear because He knows you and you are His.

Jesus says you have a “Father.” Your Father is a good Father who gives good gifts to His children. He cares for, protects, and provides for His children. He’s a Father who gives an eternal inheritance to His children. Our Heavenly Father is a big-hearted, open-handed, loving Father who only wants the very best for His children.

Jesus says that your Father is also the King. God the Father isn’t just well-intentioned. He’s a Father who is also a Sovereign and has infinite power to deliver on every one of His promises to us. Nothing in heaven or earth can stop Him. Our enemies are powerless before Him. He will keep us to the end and make certain that we enter into heaven and our eternal inheritance.

Fear was born in the garden when Adam and Eve sinned, but praise God, Jesus came to set us free from fear! Do you see how these big truths about God encourage us to trust the Lord and quiet our sinful fears? God is calling us to trust Christ as our Shepherd, who will care for us as His beloved sheep in His little flock, who He bought with His own blood.

Here’s the bottom line: *Will you trust Him? Will you begin to be free from fear today?*