

Fear is a Good Thing. Really.

I laughed when I first heard about arachibutyrophobia, which is the fear of peanut butter sticking to the roof of your mouth.



This interesting tidbit got me looking into other phobias.

- Octophobia - the fear of the number eight
- Metrophobia - the fear of poetry
- Linonophobia - the fear of string
- Omphalophobia - the fear of belly buttons
- Hippopotomonstrosesquipedaliophobia - the fear of long words (*How does the doctor even give the patient his diagnosis without causing a panic attack? "It appears that you are suffering from hippopotomonstrosesquipedalioph ..."* "AARGH!")

I should apologize for laughing, though. To those who suffer with these fears, it is a real fear to them, causing the same agitation and consternation that others of us feel about snakes, heights, or the Kardashians

Fear is a powerful emotion—which is why I think so many people enjoy scary movies. There are as many papers written about the psychology of horror movies as there are bad remakes of Dracula, but it seems to me that many people enjoy the emotional rush of fear in the safe environment of a movie theater.

Jesus talked about fear, too, but our cultural understanding of *fear* as fright or a phobia can skew our understanding of the type of fear we should have.

We *should* have fear? Yes, we should.

““I say to you, my friends, don’t fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more. But I will show you the one to fear: Fear him who has

authority to throw people into hell after death. Yes, I say to you, this is the one to fear!” (Luke 12:4-5).

We are told to fear God because of the ultimate authority He has over us. After all, He is God, and He has full right to throw us into hell. But check out the next two verses:

"Aren't five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. Indeed, the hairs of your head are all counted. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (vv. 6-7).

Now we're told *not* to be afraid, because we are greatly valued by God. So, are we to fear Him ... or are we not to be afraid? Which is it?

There is no contradiction here, but a wonderful picture of the all-powerful transcendent sovereign God who values us far more than we can imagine—and certainly more than we deserve. Our thinking becomes troubled and skewed when we go to one extreme or the other. We either totally forget His grace and cower in fear and dread or we treat His grace lightly and do whatever we please.

The place for us to live is in awe of an all-knowing, sovereign God who holds us in His love and grace. It's a great, secure place to be, but if I choose to abuse or tread on His grace, He will withdraw His hand from me. As Romans 1:24 says, "Therefore God delivered them over in the desires of their hearts ..." If I choose not to live under His grace, He will not force His grace on me. He lets go and leaves me to my own devices.

And "my own devices" have never been to my benefit. Life has taught me that God's ways are truly far more beneficial. I stand in great awe and reverence—yes, fear—of a great, holy, and righteous God who He loves me and values me.

I want to remain in His hands and swim in His grace. I would be afraid to be anywhere else.