

**Living in an Uncertain World
Coping with Our Fears
Some Reflections and Questions**

Reflections:

- Fear is not a Christian virtue. It arises from the failure to trust God’s power and love and from the tendency to place our trust in the wrong things.
- The antidote to fear is love (“Perfect love casts out fear”—1 John 4:18)—first for God (evidenced in praise, trusting obedience, contentment, and the determination to think his thoughts after him) and then for people (evidenced in counter-intuitive generosity towards them).
- Our model for facing uncertainty is God’s Son, who lived trustingly and obediently in a much less stable and secure world than ours—a world without much in the way of social safety nets—who had no place to lay his head, and who gave up all the riches and certainties of heaven in order to serve his Father’s glory and our good (Phil. 2:4-11, 2 Cor. 8:9).
- A beautiful model for facing financial uncertainty with financial generosity is that of the Macedonian believers (2 Cor. 8:1-5) who, “out of their extreme poverty begged for the privilege to give relief” to those fellow believers who were struggling in Judea.
- The Bible is full of promises attached to faith-generated and love-generated generosity:
 - “Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need” (Malachi 3:10).
 - Paul: “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Cor. 9:6); “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7)
 - Jesus: “Give and it will be given to you—pressed down, poured out into your lap” (Luke 6:38). [Note that the giving here is not necessarily financial; it is more likely the giving of forgiveness.]

Questions aimed at helping us express love and trust in the midst of uncertainty:

- Why does uncertainty make me afraid? What am I afraid of losing? Why is keeping that thing or person so important to me?
- Is there a particular person who makes me afraid? Why am I afraid of that person? In what concrete way can I fight against my fears by showing love to that person?
- Is there a particular type of situation that makes me fearful? Why does it make me fearful?
- How can I express tangible love for the city of New York, the city where God has placed me, and whose peace and prosperity God has called me to pray and work for (Jeremiah 29:7)?
- How can I build more thanksgiving and praise into my schedule—taking time to itemize in prayer the multiple kindnesses of God to me at every level—from food to forgiveness to the hope of glory?
- Questions related to finances and lifestyle:
 - How can I use the present reduction (or threat of reduction) in my income as the occasion to examine my own attitudes and habits?
 - Have I bought in to a sense of entitlement—that luxury items, fancy trips, nice apartments, jobs that give me “fulfillment”, a comfortable (early) retirement (or any retirement), etc. are mine, some how, by rights—just because more people around me have been enjoying them?
 - How might I have bought or consumed recklessly (i.e., “without reckoning”—just because I could)?
 - How might I have been hoarding my resources (including my time)?
 - How might I have been irresponsible— borrowing beyond my means (credit cards, student loans, mortgages) because credit was so easy?
 - How might I have been relying too much upon my financial assets for my sense of well being, security and identity?
 - How have I thought about how I invest my money? Just as a means to earn more money, or as a way to use the resources that God has given me as a stewardship to provide capital to “good” things.
 - Have I conveniently refused to live as a global citizen, ignoring the often vast discrepancy between the lifestyle that I take for granted and the lifestyle that most of the rest of the world can expect?
 - How might I downsize, or reduce expenses—not just as a way to get over the present crisis, but as a prelude to permanent change—to a more compassionate and global lifestyle?
 - How might I be a better steward of what I have by keeping it and taking better care of it—not just to save money, but to leave more for others, including those who will come after me?
 - Knowing that I am not alone in my financial need, how might I find ways to increase my giving for the sake of those whose need is greater than my own, and as an expression of my trust that God will supply my need?