

How do we survive in this crazy world? . . . Fear God.

Proverbs 1:7; 9:10

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Today as we wrap up our short study on Proverbs, I'm going to focus on two verses which are considered to be the main theme of the whole book. They kind of sum everything up for us. So I'll read these two verses and then we'll talk about what they mean.

Proverbs 1:7 – The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.



Proverbs 9:10 – The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Two similar verses.

Again, **wisdom means skill to live a godly life, obedient to God.** To take his word and apply it to your life, like a skilled craftsman makes useful things with his knowledge and experience.

Proverbs 1:7 – The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

For Christians, wisdom is taking all the tools we have from the Word of God, together with prayer, study and

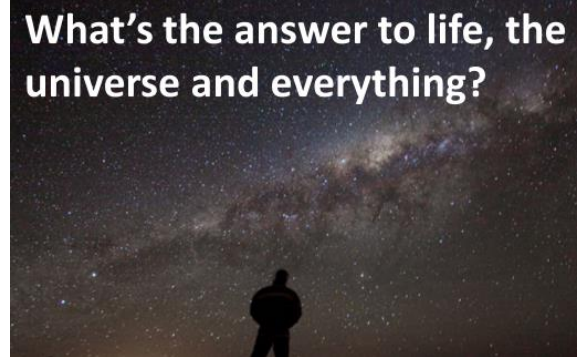
experience, and skillfully applying them to the way we live every day in order to produce something from our lives that has lasting, eternal value.

But we need to have something else before we can do all that. These two verses make it clear. **Today we're going to talk about the fear of the Lord.**

The book of Ecclesiastes, also probably written by Solomon, talks about wisdom. How everything in life is meaningless. The things of this world we

chase after have no eternal value. There is a time for everything under the sun, remember? We go along, we live our lives, things happen. Cast your bread upon the waters. Do your best. Enjoy your life . . . and then at the end of the last chapter he sums it all up.

Here's what really matters in this life. You've been wondering what the answer to life, the universe and everything is?



Ecclesiastes 12:13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

Fear God. What comes to mind?

Someone cowering in a corner in dread, trembling and scared of God?

Someone who never smiles?

Someone who carries around a huge Bible everywhere they go?

Someone who speaks in the King James in normal conversation?

“Thou hittest mine car with thine car. How darest thee!

Who dost thou thinkest thou art?”

None of these things are what it means to fear God.

The fear of the Lord is the thread that runs through the book of Proverbs. It runs through the whole Old Testament, and it runs through whole the New Testament.

Fear of God is the foundation of our Christian walk.

We have no knowledge of God if we don't first have the fear of God in our life.

We have no skill in taking the word of God and applying it to who we are in a practical way unless we first have this essential foundation of the Fear of the Lord.

Are you a God-fearing person? Do you want to be?

There are a lot of ideas out there about what it means to Fear the Lord. Today we're going to talk about what it really means.



We'll talk about why it is necessary that we fear God.

And how we have neglected fearing the Lord. The neglect of the fear of God is very serious. In **Proverbs 1:7, those who do not fear God are fools.**

Fools despise wisdom. We cannot know God without first fearing him. We can't have the skill we need for Christian living until we have fear of God. Those who have no fear of God, who say, "I'm going to do it my way, I'm going to do this whole Christianity thing on my own terms." People who treat God like he's their best bud; **"yeah, me and God, we're cool, we have an understanding"**

—They have this kind of laid-back attitude about their relationship with God and there's no fear of God, no respect for how awesome he really is. Proverbs says . **.. they are fools.**

What does it mean to fear God?

It sounds negative, but it's really not. It's very positive.

It means to be full of reverence for God. You're not silly or superficial toward God. You stand in awe of God. You are overwhelmed with the majesty, the glory, the awesomeness of God.

Fear here means you show profound respect toward the Great, Almighty Creator of the universe. You feel wonder, astonishment, amazement – that God is so Awesome and beyond us.

He is Holy and Sovereign. That this all-powerful, all-knowing, Holy, Perfect God has chosen to come down and dwell in us.

Fear God = to be full of reverence for God. You're not silly or superficial toward God. You stand in awe of God. You are overwhelmed with the majesty, the glory, the awesomeness of God.



And as you think about this, as you study the scriptures and learn more about the nature and character of God, as you pray and experience his goodness and power – you feel this healthy, holy fear of God within your soul.

It does not mean that we are trembling and paralyzed with dread, cowering under our chair and scared.

Instead it means that in our heart, we take God more seriously than anyone or anything else in this world, and that we realize that we are his children, living in his world, and we will leave this world at his appointed time. **We are breathing His air, we are drinking His water, eating His food. That our life is completely in His hands. He is in total control over every aspect of our lives.**

When we understand this – we are amazed. We stand in wonder in the presence of this God who made us, who knows us, who is loving and kind and just and powerful!

And we say, **“God, you are AWESOME!”**

“You are Holy! You are Mighty! You are Just! My life is yours, and I gladly surrender all to you, for you are completely trustworthy and able—and I am not. I am nothing without you!”

When I was a kid I took several trips to the Sears Tower in Chicago. I remember standing on the ground outside, looking up. The clouds were moving and sometimes the top of the tower was in the clouds, and I felt dizzy and excited. This thing is huge!

Then as we rode the elevator up, my ears popped and I got even more excited, my heart beat faster. I was getting a little afraid, but it was a good kind of afraid.



Then at the top when the doors opened, my heart raced, I was beside myself, slowly making my way to the window at the edge, looking out over the city, down at the street. All the tiny little cars that looked like toys. My stomach came up into my throat and I felt those butterflies.

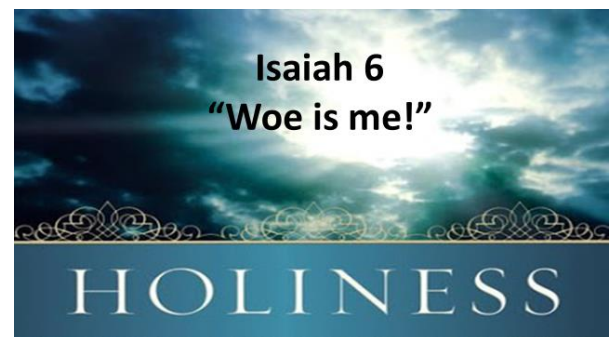
Nothing else was on my mind in that moment. I was completely focused, looking around, mesmerized, the view, the height. The excitement and wonder and fear of that moment. It was powerful!

That's a tiny taste of what it means to fear God. But it's so much greater than this.

When we are in awe at the nature of God. That's what happens when people throughout scripture came into the presence of God. They weren't casual, they weren't cool.

They weren't high-fiving God.

Isaiah 6 – Isaiah went into the temple and he saw the Lord, High and Lifted Up, and the angels were crying out “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty! Heaven and earth are filled with his Glory!” And the foundations of his throne began to shake like an earthquake. And Isaiah began to shake. And he said, “Woe is me!”

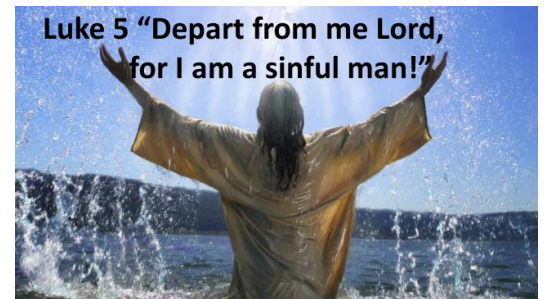


That's what happens when people get a glimpse of the holiness, perfection, the perfect beautiful glory of God.

Luke 5 – The disciples had been fishing all night and caught nothing. The next morning Jesus was on the shore and he told them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat. And Peter wanted to say something like, “You stick to preaching, we’ll stick to fishing.” But he said, “Well, if you say so.”

When they put their nets on the other side—immediately they were filled with so many fish, they were breaking the nets.

Then Peter realized, “I am in the presence of God – in human flesh!” And he said, “Depart from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!”



When we understand the awesome holiness of God and realize that we are in his presence, in light of our own unworthiness—our reaction is like that of Peter and Isaiah.

If Jesus Christ were to walk into this room right now in all his heavenly glory, every one of us would fall to the ground in worship. We wouldn’t go up to him and give him a little fist bump. We wouldn’t go up and ask him a bunch of questions. We would be speechless. Overwhelmed at the Awesomeness of God!

That’s how we need to live our Christian lives. Because we are always in the presence of God. We should constantly live in a state of healthy respect and reverence and awe for God Almighty.

That’s what it means to fear God.

Is that what you feel today? Are you like Isaiah and Peter? **Do you realize your own sinfulness and unworthiness in the face of our awesome and holy God who is here with us?**

Fearing God is not optional. It is essential. Necessary.

Proverbs 1:7 – The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

Proverbs 9:10 – The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Fear of the Lord is the **Beginning**. It's the first thing. Where it all begins.

In baseball, it's like first base. When you hit the ball, you don't run straight to second base, you'd be out. You have to go to first base.

Fearing God is first base—you can't go anywhere else in your Christian life without it.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, the beginning of wisdom, salvation, faith, growth, service . . . It is the foundation. Everything else is built up from it.

But, unlike first base, we can't just tag it on our way around and forget about it. It must stay with us.

Proverbs 23:17 – Live in the fear of the Lord always.

24 hrs a day, 7 days a week – we are to be living in the fear of the Lord.

It's not something we outgrow.



Now let's get practical. We don't always live our lives, every moment of every day, with this feeling of reverence and respect for the awesomeness of God, do we?

We don't wake up every morning with songs of praise and adoration on our lips. When we're driving to work, thinking about your busy schedule, maybe we

don't notice the beauty of the sun rising up from the clouds and the beams coming through, thinking about the awesomeness of God and we're filled with an overwhelming sense of his power and beauty.

It's not always easy, because we're human, we're sinful. We get distracted by things around us. By work and family and money and the worries of this life.



The majesty of God isn't always at the top of our mind.

But it is necessary. And you will find that when you consistently put God first in your life, when you honor him and respect him above all else –

Then everything else, worries, problems, distractions – they seem so small.

Live in the fear of the Lord always.

It's an all-or-nothing proposition. Fear of the Lord is necessary for salvation. No one giggles their way into the Kingdom. God is not to be taken lightly.

Fear of the Lord is also necessary for Christian growth. Do you ever feel like you're not going anywhere spiritually?

Maybe you're reading your Bible every day, trying really hard, praying and coming to church – but you just don't feel like you're growing closer to the Lord.

2 Corinthians 7:1 – Let us cleanse ourselves of everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.

How do we cleanse ourselves of everything that contaminates body and spirit? We live in a wicked world. Wherever I go, I hear and see things. Billboards on the highway. I turn on the TV and I never know what kind of filthy image will be there. It's all around us. The world is dirty and polluted.

Paul says, ***“Let us cleanse ourselves from these things”*** – listen – ***“in the fear of the Lord.”*** NIV says ***“out of reverence for God.”*** This is where it all begins.

1 Peter 1:17 – Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here on earth in reverent fear.

As long as you are breathing and alive in this world, you need to be fearing God – and taking God very seriously in your life.

Not only is there no growth without the fear of the Lord, but there is no worship without the fear of the Lord.

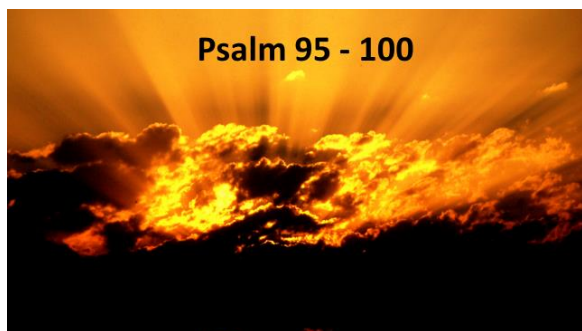
Ps. 99:1 – The Lord reigns, let the nations tremble. God is on his throne—let the earth shake.



When we sing his praises together, you’re not thinking about the wrong notes or “Man, I wonder how long the sermon’s going to be.” You’re thinking about the Awesomeness of God!

Need some help in this area?

Take out your Bible this week and read ***Psalm 95 through Psalm 100***. You can’t read through these six chapters in Psalms without feeling the Awesome Majesty of God.



“Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation!”

“Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise!”

“The Lord reigns! Let the earth be glad! Let the distant shores rejoice!”

“Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.”

Not only in worship, but there is no true service for God without fearing him.

Colossians 3:17 – And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Vs. 22 – Work obediently, not just when others are watching and to win their favor, but with a sincere heart and with reverence for the Lord.

There are those who have the fear of the Lord, in salvation, in worship, in service, in Christian growth – and then there are others who are . . . fools.

The second part of ***Proverbs 1:7*** says ***“fools despise wisdom and discipline.”*** They hear the word of the Lord and they make fun of it. They want nothing to do with it.

Or maybe they are ***a “Christian” without the fear of the Lord, coming to church, singing, teaching, serving – but without the fear of the Lord, it is phony.*** It is fake. They are fools.

Fools despise wisdom and discipline. ***Romans 3:18 says people like this have no fear of God.***

There are two kinds of people in the world, and in the church.

Those who fear God and seek wisdom, and those who have no fear of God –

Don’t take God seriously – they’re just kind of along for the ride. They are fools.

Maybe you’re sitting here thinking, “Ok, I understand now how important it is to fear God. I want to fear God. ***How can I be more of a God-fearing person?”***

Proverbs 2:1-5

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, 2

turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, 3 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, 4 and if you look for it

as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, 5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

How do I get wisdom? We talked about this a few weeks ago.

Ask God, then chase after it. Read, study, pray.

But first, you must climb down off of the throne in your heart and give God his rightful place there. Before anything else, we must have a healthy respect, an awe-struck reverence for the awesomeness of Almighty God!

The more we get to know God in our walk with him and understand his holiness, the more we grow to fear him as we should.

God is not on our level. He not our peer. He is not our buddy – He is infinitely majestic as he reigns over all the works of his hands. He is high and lifted up. This is the correct view of God as we look up to him and see how small we really are.

We can never reach up to God. He had to come down to us. And that's what he did in the flesh, in the person of Jesus.

Not only did he come down to us, but he loves us so much that he wants us to be with him forever.

The only way we can be with him, is if we are made clean. ***Forgiven of our sin.***

And so he died for us. It was the only way. Our sins had to be paid for and we couldn't do it. So he did it for us when Jesus hung on that cross.

That's how much God loves you.

That's how awesome and holy and righteous God is.

Fear God. It is the beginning of everything that really matters in your life.

