

Being Wrong About God

As a kid, I grew up with this living fear of my father. He exuded this stern powerful demeanor and personality that simply made me afraid, creating lots of anxiety in me, and my mother and my sister. It was his way, or the highway and I grew to fear him and his potential anger, which was never far from the surface.

Years later as a man in my forties with a wife and our two children, I was still afraid of my father. In fact, my fear of him only completely dissipated after he died. He could no longer get angry with me.

I realize my response to my dad was not a healthy response, but I could not for the life of me, get beyond it, even long after becoming a Christian. My dad simply induced fear in me.

When my wife and I visited him in the hospital after his cancer surgery, even though he was groggy in bed with tubes hooked up to him, I was still afraid of him.

A native American saying goes like this:

What I live with, I learn

What I learn, I practice

What I practice, I become

The job we have as Christians is to unlearn some of the things we've learned and ultimately mirror the character of Jesus within us.

You can probably figure out that this fear of my father translated to my fear of God after I became a Christian, right? Since I couldn't see God, but had an earthly father that I did see and hear, I associated God with the same personality that I saw in my dad.

I was very much like the **bad** servant in the **Parable of the Talents** found in **Matthew 25:14–30**, who unfortunately, was terribly wrong about the

master of the house. Notice in that section of Scripture, in verses **24-25**, see the servant's attitude toward his master.

*Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so **I was afraid**, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.*

The servant admits to the master that he lived in fear of him. He saw the master as a man who took what was not his to take. This wrong view of the master of the house created the way the servant responded to the master. Unfortunately, it was tragically wrong!

Notice the master's response in verses **26-27**.

But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.

The wrong view the servant held of his master was wrong and caused him to act out of that fear, falsely ascribing to the master what was not accurate.

That type of fear is not only wrong but creates within us absolutely terrible decisions.

But the Bible tells us throughout Scripture that we are to "fear" the Lord. We often define that fear by saying...

- Reverential awe
- Great respect for, etc.

In the English Standard Version of the Bible, the phrase "fear the Lord" appears **27 times**. Beyond that, dozens more passages tell us about fearing the Lord.

As a kid, I believed as long as I did the right things, my dad would not bring down the hammer on me. As a Christian, I tended to think the same thing about God.

Because of that, my “obedience” toward God was generally EXTERNAL and GRUDGINGLY done. It didn’t come from the heart. It was something I put on, out of fear, because I thought that’s how I was supposed to act toward God, so He would not get angry with me.

Over the years, the Lord eventually began to show me what He actually meant by the phrase “fear the Lord” and tonight I want to look at **three facets** of the fear of the Lord so that we are all on the same page at least as far as my understanding is considered.

1. *What is the Fear of the Lord?*
2. *What does Fear of the Lord Accomplish? and,*
3. *How is the Fear of the Lord Developed?*

To get there, we’re going to look at a variety of passages from God’s Word and we’ll start with **Isaiah 11:2-3**:

*And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge **and of the fear of the Lord**;*

*And shall make him of **quick understanding in the fear of the Lord**: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:*

One phrase appears twice in those two verses:

- “...the spirit of the knowledge and of **the fear of the Lord**”, and
- “...shall make him of quick understanding in **the fear of the Lord**”

These two phrases describe attributes that indwelt our Lord Jesus as He walked this earth 2,000 years ago in human form.

The phrase “*shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*” has the sense of Jesus actually *DELIGHTING* in or *REVELLING* in **the fear of the Lord**. It’s like a racehorse prior to the release of the starting gate. Our Lord LIVED for the purpose of fearing the Father. That was His motivation at every turn. He could not wait!

So let's look at three things related to the proper fear of the Lord:

I. What is Fear of the LORD?

So, we've seen what the fear of the Lord is **NOT**. Let's consider what the Bible means when it tells us to fear the Lord. There are generally two definitions, biblically speaking of fear that is related to God.

John Bunyan in his classic *The Fear of God* tells us that for every person, God is either SAVIOR or JUDGE. So there is a fear of God's judgment.

- **A) Fear of God's JUDGMENT**

"This type of fear is often experienced by the person who is **outside** of salvation, who has not yet received it. For that person, any fear they might experience where God is concerned is a fear of God's *judgment*."

That fear CAN ultimately lead them to Christ and salvation, but too often does not because they continually reject it (**Romans 1**)

Proverbs 1:7 states: *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

But there is another fear of the Lord that occurs AFTER we become saved that is supposed to grow within us and motivate us to live as He wants us to live, just like we learn from **Isaiah 11:2-3** (remember guys, from before?)

- **B) Fear AFTER Salvation**

Is this a biblical fear and if so, what is it supposed to look like in the life of the believer?

Clearly, the way I used to fear God was wrong. It did nothing to further my relationship with God and actually pushed me away from Him too often.

The best way I can describe this proper fear of the Lord is in having a constant, growing desire to live in a way that does not **OFFEND** our Lord.

My wife and I are going celebrate 37 years of marriage in a few months and

quite frankly, I cannot imagine being married to anyone else. Over the years, what I've noticed has grown within me is the desire to never OFFEND my wife by doing something really stupid – and guys you know what I mean here. That doesn't mean temptations don't come. It means at all costs, like Joseph, I ignore them and even flee from them!

It is because I LOVE my wife that I want to be sure to not OFFEND her by doing something that I would regret and that would GRIEVE or DISAPPOINT her.

It is NOT because I FEAR her because I *DON'T*. I love her, appreciate her, and try to live in a way that proves this to her. Am I perfect at it? No, not at all. However, when I do make asinine mistakes due to my own selfishness, she is so quick to forgive that it's remarkable. What man does not want a wife like that?

Now if I am able to do this with my wife, how much *more* should I be willing to do this with God? Our relationship with God should be based on a very healthy fear of **OFFENDING** God that will motivate us to do only those things that please Him and help stop us from doing those things that do not.

Some of you know we just rescued and adopted a pup named Scooby that was not living in the greatest of circumstances. We were a bit leery of getting another dog because we weren't sure how our older dog would react, who is very chill. He's not an alpha, but a beta. We weren't sure what this pup would turn out to be.

But we took him in and our older dog and the new pup are now good buds. One thing my wife and I have noticed is that the new pup is extremely intelligent. He's also become very, very loyal and protective of us and it shows in his actions. He literally revels in our praise of him.

His loyalty to us causes him to do the right thing nearly always and for that, he gets heaps of praise and treats. He understands "no," "yes," "here," "wait," "sit" and more. He wants to make us happy by doing the things he understands we want him to do.

The relationship we have with Scooby is built on his desire to not do things that will cause us concern and possible discipline for him. He is amply rewarded for doing the right things as well and we heap lots of love on him and our other dog.

Scooby does not want to OFFEND us so he tries to always do the right thing. He makes mistakes but we don't beat him when he does, even if he kills some of our chickens because he thinks they're squeak toys. In that case, we take pains to modify his behavior when it comes to our flock.

Jesus **DELIGHTED** in living in the fear of OFFENDING the Father, moment by moment. He looked forward to it in all opportunities that came His way.

Because Jesus properly feared the Father, Jesus was given tremendous wisdom, insight, discernment and HUMILITY as a result, something that is open to all of us who seek to learn and live the fear of (OFFENDING) the Lord.

Psalm 86:11 tells us: *Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: **unite my heart to fear thy name.***

Ecclesiastes 12:13 informs us: *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: **Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.***

Psalm 34:9 says: *O **fear the Lord**, you his saints: for there is no want to them that **fear him.***

Proverbs 14:26 says: ***In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.***

Proverbs 23:17 states: *Let not thine heart envy sinners: but **be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.***

Proverbs 9:10 tells us: ***The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.***

Clearly, God wants us to **FEAR offending** Him!

II. What does Fear of the Lord Accomplish?

So what does a proper fear of the Lord do for us? What does it accomplish?

First of all, a proper fear of the Lord creates an ability within us to RESIST temptation.

In **Genesis 39**, Joseph is faced with unwanted and untoward propositions from Potiphar's wife.

We know the story. Joseph did what he could to physically avoid her constant temptations to lie with her. But he wanted nothing to do with and would not yield.

Where did Joseph get the power and ability to resist Potiphar's wife? It had to stem from how he learned to fear OFFENDING the Lord all those years in prison. He had given himself over to God.

Joseph's fear of OFFENDING God created the ability within to NOT sin against God.

Joseph's retort to Potiphar's wife was direct and to the point, in v **9**:

...how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

Notice Joseph's concern was how GOD would react to Joseph's sin.

What was it that gave **Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego** the ability to not only resist Nebuchadnezzar but to essentially rebuke him in **Daniel 3:16-18**?

O Nebuchadnezzar, we are NOT careful to answer you in this matter.

If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.

But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.

Please notice they said, "...we are NOT careful to answer you in this matter."

In other words, they were not afraid of offending *Nebuchadnezzar* because their desire to not offend God was far greater.

There are many BIBLICAL examples of how people gained the victory over life's circumstances and the temptation to sin because they feared OFFENDING the LORD. Time does not permit us to list them all.

But here are a few examples of what happened when people **STOPPED** their fear of OFFENDING the Lord:

Remember *humble Moses* of [Numbers 12:3](#)?

Why did Moses, instead of simply *speaking* to the rock as God had commanded in [Numbers 20](#), *struck* the rock in disobedience to God? Because in that moment, Moses was not thinking of how his actions would OFFEND the Lord! His anger led him and he sinned, terribly.

Why did **King David**, who spent much of his life being a man after God's own heart, not only lust after Bathsheba, but committed adultery with her and THEN had her husband Uriah killed to cover his sin, [2 Samuel 11](#)?

It was because during that period of his life, he lacked the fear of OFFENDING the Lord, causing him to think about and give into sin. David had the exact opposite response to the temptation that Joseph had because Joseph *did* fear OFFENDING the Lord.

I believe that cultivating the proper fear of OFFENDING the Lord creates within believers the following attributes:

- the *ability* to RESIST temptations to sin ([Psalm 86:11](#))
- humility ([Proverbs 22:4](#))
- knowledge of the holy ([Proverbs 9:10](#))
- depth of understanding and wisdom (numerous Proverbs)

Isn't it amazing that Solomon is said to be the wisest man who ever lived except of course for Jesus?

Yet, we look at [Ecclesiastes](#) and we wonder what happened to Solomon?

Why didn't his wisdom keep him from doing what pagans did? Why did it allow him to do the things that God detested?

Though extremely wise, Solomon seemed to not fear the Lord in many instances, which proves that wisdom alone cannot do what the fear of OFFENDING the Lord can.

RECAP

So far, we've learned what the fear of the Lord **is**: a strong, growing desire to not OFFEND God.

We've also learned what the fear of OFFENDING the Lord **creates** within us.

III. How is the Fear of the Lord Developed?

But HOW is this fear of OFFENDING God established within us? How is it Developed *after* we've become Christians? Is it all God or do we have a hand in its development?

The New Covenant described in **Jeremiah 32** speaks directly to the nation of Israel. However, those saved through Jesus and baptized into His Body receive many of the same benefits, so ultimately, it speaks to the Church as well.

*And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may **fear me for ever**, for the good of them, and of their children after them:*

*And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me (**Jeremiah 32:39-40**)*

What God will one day do within the final remnant of the nation of Israel (**Romans 9-11**), He does within the lives of every person who receives salvation now. He starts the ball rolling in us. Ultimately, notice that people will fear God how long? It says "FOREVER" in verse **39**.

God places the fear of offending Him within us at the moment of our new birth and it is our job to **DEVELOP** it for the rest of our lives, causing it to grow and literally take over our lives and our walk with God.

But again, HOW do we develop that fear of the Lord? Five things quickly.

Psalm 119:11 says, *“Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You.”*

- Feed on it
- Memorize it
- Meditate on it
- Pray it
- Actively Focus on God’s Greatness
- Immerse Yourself in God’s Word

Revelation 15:4 says, *“Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? for You only are holy...”*

- Everyone will fear God – saved and unsaved.

Psalm 119:63 says, *“I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts.”*

- Enjoy fellowship of other Christians who also desire to fear the Lord
- Pray! Ask God to Grow the Fear of Him within You!

Matthew 7:7 tells us to ask and it will be given to you

James 4:2 tells us we don’t have because we don’t ask

1 John 5:14-15 reminds us that we should have confidence that if we ask Him anything according to His will, He hears us...

Is anything more appropriate than asking God to **grow** the fear He put within us when we were saved?

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it is interesting that in **Job 1**, we are told in **verses 1** and **8** that Job *feared* God. Job lived the way he did because he feared the Lord or feared OFFENDING the Lord.

Yet, when we get to **Job 40**, we see something very enlightening.

Then Job answered the LORD, and said,

*Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I will lay my hand upon my mouth.
(vv **3-4**)*

And in **Job 42:1-2**, we learn this: *Then Job answered the LORD, and said, I know that You can do everything and that no thought can be withheld from You.*

In **verses 5** and **6** Job confesses: *I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

Wait, didn't Job fear offending the LORD way back in **Job 1**? Absolutely! But Job did not fear offending the LORD **enough**! It is a process of growth – something we call “sanctification.”

We should strive to be like Jesus of whom Isaiah the prophet said that Jesus would literally *DELIGHT* in the fear of the Lord!

What is it you fear?

Do you fear the loss of a job?

Do you fear the loss of a loved one?

Do you fear your own death?

What do you fear and what do I fear?

May we choose to fear OFFENDING God in thought, word and deed so that He will be greatly glorified in our lives. May we grow in that fear daily.