

When Fear is a Good Thing

(Proverbs 1:7; 8:13; 9:10)

Yearly Theme: “Joy is...”

Series Title: “The Joy of Wisdom”

June 14th, 2020

Something to think about:

Words are powerful; and it’s because of this that that it’s important to understand the definition of words in order to make sure we’re speaking the same language in conversation together.

Today, as we continue our series entitled, *The Joy of Wisdom*, and as we focus this month on the two dominant types of fear we find in the Bible, I want to focus more on the terms and definitions of what it truly means to “fear God.” In order to do this, there are three different verses that I want to look at today that give us clues as to what the “fear of God” really is. Let’s take a look...

Proverbs 1:7 (NLT), Fear of the LORD is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

Proverbs 8:13 (NLT), All who fear the LORD will hate evil. Therefore, I hate pride and arrogance, corruption and perverse speech.

Proverbs 9:10 (NLT), Fear of the LORD is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment.

What I believe these three verses in the book of Proverbs illustrate today is that...

Key Point: “The wise person looks to God for understanding and truth.”

As we consider these three verses today, there are several words in these verses of Scripture that bear defining in order to clearly understand the importance of what is meant by the “fear of the LORD”:

- **Fear**

Fear translated as *awe* gives us greater insight into how we should approach God. The “awe of God” truly is the beginning of all knowledge.

- **Knowledge**

The only way to overcome ignorance is to have a foundation of knowledge that is rooted in Christ so that we will not be swayed by merely human thinking or high-sounding nonsense that comes from this world. To be rooted in Christ is not only to have knowledge, but also wisdom, in great supply.

- **Discipline**

The act of discipline and instruction is a lost art in our culture today, and is something that we desperately need to acquire again. This can only be done when we realize that all wisdom and truth come from God, and disciplining ourselves to stand in awe of Him and follow His lead is the remedy to our fallen and broken world.

Something to take home:

Abraham Heschel, in his book, *Between God and Man*, writes:

“God is a mystery, but the mystery is not God. He is a revealer of mysteries (Daniel 2:47). ‘He reveals deep and mysterious things; He knows what is in the darkness and the light dwells with Him.’ (Daniel 2:22)...

“We do not deify the mystery; we worship Him who in His wisdom surpasses all mysteries.”¹

Our culture has deified the mystery of life, of creation, of science, and the unknown, but the One who surpasses all mysteries is the true God of all wisdom and knowledge that defies human reason by taking on human flesh to overcome sin and death through the cross and desires to draw us to Him through that sacrificial act of love. Those who come to this realization, stand in awe of Him who is beyond human reasoning and fall in worship at His feet. This is truly the beginning of knowledge that sets men and women free.

Key Point: “The wise person looks to God for understanding and truth.”

¹ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism*, (Simon and Schuster: New York, New York, 1959), 49-50.

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KICK STARTERS:

- ⇒ When you hear the word “fear of God” what is the first thing that comes to mind?
- ⇒ How can the words we use be confusing to others?

SCRIPTURE: (Before studying this material, consider listening to the corresponding message online at: <http://www.northmaincog.org/media/sermon-media>)

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Proverbs 8:13 (NLT), All who fear the LORD will hate evil. Therefore, I hate pride and arrogance, corruption and perverse speech.

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GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. What does the “fear of the LORD” in the verses above cause or affect in a person’s life? What happens to the person who lacks this type of fear?

2. Words and their definitions are so significant in communication. There are so many times that things are miscommunicated or misunderstood because of the context or different meanings of the words we use. Explain a time when someone misunderstood what you were saying, or heard what you were saying differently than you intended for them to hear...

3. Why is it so difficult to communicate clearly?

4. Considering the difficulty of communication and the words we use to communicate, what are some words in these three verses that may be misunderstood/misinterpreted? How might they be misunderstood/misinterpreted?

5. The word for “fear” in Proverbs 1:7, 8:13, and 9:10 actually are better translated as “awe.” “Awe,” accurately defined means, “an overwhelming feeling of reverence, admiration, etc., produced by that which is grand, sublime, extremely powerful, or the like” (www.dictionary.com). How does this change how we read these verses?

6. The word for “knowledge” used in Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10 comes from the root Hebrew word “yada” which, more than mere information, actually indicates an intimate understanding of something learned? With this in mind, how is the “awe” of the LORD foundational for true knowledge and good judgment?

7. The word for “discipline” in Proverbs 1:7 can also be translated as “instruction” or “correction.” When considered this way, what is the broader understanding of discipline that is rejected by fools? Why do fools despise, or reject, wisdom and discipline?

8. These three words are significant for a better understanding of what it means to fear God, or, rather, stand in awe of Him. What do you think happens to a culture where the fear of the LORD is diminished? What do you think happens to a culture where the fear of the LORD is held in high regard? Where do you see our culture in this context?

SELF-EVALUATION/APPLICATION:

- ⇒ **THE WESTERN CULTURE** has deified the mystery of life, of creation, of science, and the unknown, but the One who surpasses all mysteries is the true God of all wisdom and knowledge that defies human reason by taking on human flesh to overcome sin and death through the cross and desires to draw us to Him through that sacrificial act of love. Those who come to this realization, stand in awe of Him who is beyond human reasoning and fall in worship at His feet. This is truly the beginning of knowledge that sets men and women free.
- ⇒ **WHERE ARE YOU** with regard to the fear of the LORD? Do you stand in awe and wonder and worship of Him? Or, do you regard Him with a mere friendly acquaintance indicative of a passerby? Do you revere GOD as your All-in-All, or do you consider Him just a part of your life? What words do you use to describe your relationship with GOD (if you have one)? What importance do you place on truth and understanding of the world around you, and where do you seek to find it?
- ⇒ **MEMORY VERSES:** *Proverbs 1:7; 8:13; 9:10.*