

The Proverbs: Choosing Wisdom in a Foolish World
The Foundation of Wisdom – Fear God!
Proverbs

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / June 3, 2018

The book of Proverbs encourages ‘fear of the Lord.’ The word for ‘fear’ in Proverbs is the Hebrew word ‘yare’ which means to shiver, tremble, or to stand in awe of someone out of profound reverence and respect for them.

I. The Fear of God Puts Everything in Its Proper Place

The Bible says ‘fear of the Lord’ puts everything in its proper place, because ‘fear of the Lord’ is the beginning of wisdom.

Proverbs 1:7 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

If you had to distill Proverbs down into one drop it would be **v. 7** because the Hebrew word for ‘beginning’ doesn’t just mean the start of something, but means the head, top, or summit that stands out above all the rest.

A. You Start Seeing God for Who He Really Is: Holy

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

The word ‘holy’ captures the transcendence of God as well as the perfections of God because all of His attributes, even those that we share with Him, He owns in a continual state of perfection.

B. You Start Seeing Yourself for Who You Really Are: Sinful

If a healthy ‘fear of the Lord’ is rooted in seeing God as Holy, then you can’t help but see yourself as sinful.

According to John Calvin in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, “It is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God’s face.” Read **Isaiah 6:1-5**.

C. You Start Seeing Creation for What It Is: A Reflection of God’s Glory

You can have all the knowledge in the world, but without ‘fear of God,’ you’ll misunderstand everything you know. You’ll have information, but you’ll never have wisdom.

Romans 1:20-23 is a diagnosis of the foolishness of man’s heart as he refuses to acknowledge God.

‘Fear of God’ changes what we think about God, think about ourselves, and how we see all of creation around us – including other people.

D. You Stop Needing the Approval of Other People Around You

Throughout the book of Proverbs security and boldness are associated with the fear of God while needing the approval of other people is called a snare.

Proverbs 14:26 “In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge.”

Proverbs 28:1 “The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.”

Proverbs 29:25 “The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.”

One of the greatest gifts of salvation is that your sense of worth and identity are now wrapped up in Christ and who He is. The Father loves you, forgives you, and sings over you based on Christ.

The fear of other people is at the heart of foolishness. It’s sinful, exhausting, and keeps you from loving God and loving others as yourself because love is giving for the needs of another expecting nothing in return.

E. You Stop Being Overwhelmed by the Crushing Circumstances of Life

Psalm 112:1, 7-8 “Praise the LORD. Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in His commands... He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD. His heart is secure, he will have no fear; in the end he will look in triumph on his foes.”

‘Fear of God’ doesn’t mean we never struggle with sinful fear, but it does mean that sinful fear gets enveloped and overshadowed by something bigger and sweeter.

II. So How Do You Cultivate this Fear of God in Your Life?

A. The Seed for ‘fear of God’ is Planted in You When You Receive a New Heart

That’s what Jeremiah was talking about when he talks about a new covenant that produces a new heart that fears God in **Jeremiah 32:38-41**.

B. The Spirit of Christ Who Lives in You Wants to Fan this New Spark

The same Spirit that lived in Jesus now lives in us and wants to do the same kind of transforming work in us to make us more like Jesus. Part of that is delighting in the ‘fear of the Lord.’ See **Isaiah 11:1-3**.

C. The Very Thought of Forgiveness Will Keep Fanning this Flame

Psalm 130:3-4 “If You, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.”

When the Psalmist saw how gracious the Lord was and that He forgave him and wiped his record clear of sin, that it made him tremble in reverential fear and awe for who God is and what He did for him.

As you see your own sinfulness, the only way to move from the dread of fearing God's judgment and wrath to resting in reverential awe of God's love and mercy towards you as a forgiven child of God, is to make a life-changing move to believe that Jesus absorbed your punishment on the cross for you. See **I John 4:9-10, 14-18**.