

THE TEACHING

LEGACY

OF DEREK PRINCE

Understanding the Fear of the Lord

Benefits factor into many of the decisions we make—and certainly most of the big decisions. When you are considering job offers, you compare the benefit packages of two or more potential employers. When you shop for a home, you look for an area that offers the benefits you value—a family-friendly neighborhood, proximity to work or school, etc. And, of course, there are countless benefits to healthy eating and proper exercise that apply to everyone.

Nonetheless, I have found that the most valuable benefits of all are experienced when we apply the truths of Scripture in practical ways to our lives. And this applies in no small part to the fear of the Lord. One of the best words to describe the fear of the Lord is reverence. Reverence is a response to a revelation of God. When God reveals Himself, I believe the only appropriate response is reverence. And with it goes submissiveness. A submissive attitude toward God is an expression of the fear of the Lord in our lives.

I want to share with you some of the benefits of the fear of the Lord. This is one of the most exciting aspects of serving God. I can never read these verses without getting excited. I hope you will get excited as well when you learn what the fear of the Lord will do for you. Let's look first at what God said to man in Job 28:28.

*And to man He said,
“Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom,
And to depart from evil is understanding.”*

True wisdom is inseparable from the fear of the Lord. Many people think of wisdom as something intellectual, like cleverness. But wisdom is not cleverness—because cleverness can be compatible with evil. The fear of the Lord is incompatible with evil.

Psalms 25:12 offers another wonderful benefit of the fear of the Lord:

*Who is the man that fears the LORD?
Him shall He teach in the way He chooses.*

This verse indicates that God doesn't teach everybody—and God doesn't choose His students on the basis of examinations. He chooses His students on the basis of character. And He does not commit Himself to teach those who have no fear of the Lord. You can go to a Bible school. You can go to the best training center. But without the fear of the Lord you are not a pupil of God. You can be a pupil of human teachers, but not of the Lord.

And then two verses later—in Psalm 25:14—we find another wonderful thought:

*The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him,
And He will show them His covenant.*

Isn't that marvelous? If you fear the Lord He will share His secrets with you. You only share your secrets with somebody who is intimate with you—a person whom you trust.

Proverbs 10:27 tells us if we have the fear of the Lord in our lives we will live longer than we would have without it.

*The fear of the LORD prolongs days,
But the years of the wicked will be shortened.*

This doesn't tell you precisely how long you will live, only that you will live longer than you would have lived without the fear of the Lord in your life. Who would turn that down? You cannot afford to live without the fear of the Lord.

Proverbs 14:26 is one of the most amazing verses in the Bible. It's a very short verse, but it says so much about the fear of the Lord.

In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence.

The fear of the Lord doesn't make you timid. It doesn't make you weak. The fear of the Lord gives you strength. When you fear the Lord you don't have to fear anything else. It's the remedy for all other ungodly forms of fear.

Proverbs 19:23 is my favorite promise about the fear of the Lord.

*The fear of the LORD leads to life,
And he who has it will abide in satisfaction;*

He will not be visited with evil.

How can anyone turn down an offer like that? As far as I'm concerned, that's the promise I want for myself. I can hardly believe that God would make an offer like that. This same promise is echoed in Proverbs 14:27 ("The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death") and Proverbs 22:4 ("By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches and honor and life").

Looking at Pictures

Psalms 2:11 presents us with a picture of the fear of the Lord that seems rather challenging on the surface.

*Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.*

That doesn't make sense to the carnal mind. "Rejoice with trembling"? This is what I call a spiritual combination. God puts together two elements that seem incompatible, and asks us to trust in His wisdom to reconcile them.

In Acts 9:31 we see a similar spiritual combination in Luke's description of the early church.

Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

"The fear of the Lord" and "the comfort of the Holy Spirit"? How can they go together? All I know is that from God's perspective, they do—and they should never be separated. As a result, the people of the early church were edified and they multiplied. Perhaps that's the key to church growth: the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

I've actually encountered people who don't believe you need the fear of the Lord after you're saved. I believe that's when you need it most. In 1 Peter 1:15–19 we see a message written to people who've been redeemed by the blood of Jesus.

...but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Peter says to be holy in *all* your conduct. Not some. Not most. But *all*. The very fact that God paid our redemption with the blood of Jesus—the most precious thing in the universe—is a reason why we should always walk in fear. We must be very careful that we don't somehow betray our Redeemer, that somehow we don't lower the price of our redemption to something cheap and insignificant.

The How-to

I don't want to present you with the importance of the fear of the Lord but not tell you how to get it—because there is an answer. In Proverbs 2:1–5 we see an *if-then* statement that shows us step-by-step how to receive the fear of the Lord.

*My son, if you receive my words,
And treasure my commands within you,
So that you incline your ear to wisdom,
And apply your heart to understanding;
Yes, if you cry out for discernment,
And lift up your voice for understanding,
If you seek her as silver,
And search for her as for hidden treasures;
Then you will understand the fear of the LORD,
And find the knowledge of God.*

Let's look at the conditions—the "IFs"—for receiving the fear of the Lord.

If you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you. Receive God's Word with respect, with an attitude of submission and obedience. Receive it as the most valuable element of your life. Treasure it. The Hebrew word means to store something up in the secret place, because it is of the most value to you.

So that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding. When someone is speaking to you and you really want to listen intently, you lean in—even bow your head. That's what it means to incline your ear. It also demonstrates a submissive attitude. You become teachable.

Yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding. This indicates a heart committed to prayer—impassioned prayer. This doesn't mean making a public scene when you pray. In fact, impassioned prayer between just you and God often can be more productive than public prayer.

If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures. God doesn't put everything out in the open. God doesn't put His jewels out on the pavement for anybody to pick up. He puts them in places where you have to

grasp for them. This is how we need to approach wisdom. Search for it wherever it may be found.

Now—after all the “IFs”—we come to the “THEN”—the promise.

Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. I don't believe the knowledge of God can ever be separated from the fear of the Lord. Isaiah 11:2–3 says of Jesus:

*The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD—
and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.*

NIV

You cannot separate the knowledge of the Lord from the fear of the Lord. You don't have more knowledge of the Lord in your life than you have fear of the Lord—a fear that only the Holy Spirit can teach. Psalm 34:11 says, “Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.”

Think over what you've read here. Will you ask God to impart to you the fear of the Lord? He won't do it against your will, and He won't threaten you. He offers, but you have to receive. You may be a sincere Christian, but as you've been reading you have realized that there's very little of the fear of the Lord in your life.

If that's the way you feel—and I want you to be very careful because it's easy to respond out of emotion and later forget what you've done—I want you to say these words to the Lord:

“Oh, God my Father. I come to you through Jesus Christ, my Savior. You have put in my heart a desire for the fear of the Lord. I'm asking You from now on to lead me, to teach me and to impart to me this wonderful treasure of Yours—the fear of the Lord. In the name of Jesus, Amen.”

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For Further Study

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Being a Servant #190, \$8.00 (including Post and Handling)

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