

Proverbs: the Pocket Guide to Simply Living

January 27, 2008

Topic: Fear of the Lord

Text: Proverbs 1:7

Meaning

Imagine that you are singing to the tune of "I Love You Lord" by Laurie Klein with the following lyrics:

"I fear you, Lord ...and I lift my voice ...to worship You ... Oh, my soul rejoice!

Take joy my King ...in what You hear ... Let it be a sweet, sweet sound in Your ear."

How do you feel? Do you feel awkward? Difficult? Or do you find that it is alright?

We are often commanded to love God. This is even embedded in our vision statement. However, it is seldom that we are told to fear God. The concept of "fear" in connection with God is not a popular concept today. People prefer to hear about God's love, grace and mercy. Sometimes, when we point out God's disciplinary action, righteous anger, holiness, and justice, people reply "My God is not like that!" The embrace of "loving God" to the total rejection of "fearing God" could be an over-reaction to a time in history when Christians had only emphasized the damnation of hell to call people back to God. As a result, we are standing at a time when "fear God" is a topic to be avoided in the fear of turning people away from God even more.

The phrase, "fear of the Lord", appears at least 8 times in the book of Proverbs. It is said as the foundational attitude and step to knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, it is imperative for Christ followers to understand and reflective on this phrase.

Walter C. Kaiser Jr. wrote, "*The term to fear can describe everything from dread (Deut. 1:29) or being terrified (Jon 1:10) to standing in awe (1 Kings 3:28) and having reverence (Lev. 19:3). When used of the Lord, it encapsulates both aspects of the term, a shrinking back in recognition of the holiness of God and the drawing close in awe and worship. To fear the Lord is not to experience a dread that paralyzes all action, but neither it is just a polite respect. It is an attitude of both reluctance and adoration that results in a willingness to do what God says. The fear of the Lord, then, is absolutely necessary if we are even to begin on the right foot in learning, living, or worshipping.*"

Meditate

- Repeat the verse(s) over and over and thinking about its meaning and applications.
- Ask yourself questions as you are thinking about these verses.

Proverbs 2:1-5

- 1 My child, listen to what I say,
and treasure my commands.
- 2 Tune your ears to wisdom,
and concentrate on understanding.
- 3 Cry out for insight,
and ask for understanding.
- 4 Search for them as you would for silver;
seek them like hidden treasures.
- 5 Then you will understand what it means to fear the Lord,
and you will gain knowledge of God.

Make conversation

Share your answer to one or more of the following questions as you begin your life group gathering or make them as the main topic of your life group meet.

1. What or who do you fear the most in life?
2. What is your understanding to the phrase “fear of the Lord”?
3. Can “loving God” be the same as “fearing God”? Or are they paradoxical?
4. Do I have a healthy fear of God? Does the concept of the “love of God” motivate you to obey God more than that of the concept of the “fear of the Lord”?
5. How does understanding “the fear of the Lord” help you to worship and live the Christ-following life?
6. Will you be more interested in studying the book of Proverbs? If so, how will you study it?

Memorize

- You can aid memorization by putting the verse on your screen saver (if possible) or simply put it into your agenda book or palm pilot.
- It is best to work on the verse daily for at least three times a day.

Proverbs 1:7

Fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge. Only fools despise wisdom and discipline.