

# Understanding the Fear of God

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The fall Holy Days are just days away from the time you are hearing this sermon. and the Bible mentions several times, one of the purposes God states as to why we are to keep the Holy Days. It is so we may learn to fear Him. He tells us it is a requirement that we learn to fear Him. He specifically mentions that our keeping of the Holy Days—one of the fundamental purposes of it—is that we may learn to fear Him always.

So, with the fall Holy Days coming up around the corner, I would like to focus on this particular subject. Then we can go into these with an understanding of what the fear of God is all about, understand what this means and how we should go about learning to fear Him in the upcoming Holy Days.

If you would like a title for this sermon, it's:

## Understanding the Fear of God

As I mentioned, this subject is very intimately tied to the Holy Days. In to Deuteronomy 14, we can see this relationship. We're going to cover just a few verses in this section which are specifically in the context of second tithe. One of the main reasons that we diligently save our second tithe all year is specially for the purposes of funding our attending the festivals and God's Holy Days. Notice what He mentions within this command.

**Deuteronomy 14:22** *You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year.*

*23) And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, [notice the purpose] that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. (NKJV)*

In other words, one of the fundamental reasons why we save second tithe and go to keep the Holy Days is so that we may learn to fear God. Going into the fall Holy Days there is something we need to focus on to understand, so that we can fulfill one of these purposes of exactly why we are keeping the Holy Days. We need to be keeping them with a focus on learning to fear God. I want to focus on that subject so we can have an understanding of what this means.

Notice another verse in Deuteronomy 31 that ties this subject to the keeping of the Holy Days and in this case, specifically in the context of the Feast of Tabernacles which we will be keeping in just a couple weeks from the time you're hearing this sermon.

**Deuteronomy 31:9** *So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel.*

*10) And Moses commanded them, saying: At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles,*

*11) when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.*

*12) Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law,*

*13) and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess.” (NKJV)*

He commanded them to do this at the end of every seven years at the Feast of Tabernacles. To understand the context, realize at the time he's giving this instruction, everybody doesn't have a Bible. They aren't all walking around with their own printed copies or multiple copies of it and a phone in their pocket that has an online Bible program and a laptop with multiple translations. They didn't have all that available. They had to rely on scrolls and because of the lack of technology at the time, everybody didn't have their own scroll and their own ability to read the Bible whenever they wanted to. It's one of the reasons why he commanded that every seven years this was to be read, so the people would hear this. The process playing out is not only keeping the festivals but hearing His Word expounded. What was one of the purposes that they were do this? To learn to fear God and to have that healthy respect for Him through learning to fear Him.

We also need to realize that this isn't just a good idea. "Fearing God" isn't just something that is advisable and something that is helpful in our lives, it is something He absolutely requires of us. Let's go to Deuteronomy 10 and start reading in verse 12.

**Deuteronomy 10:12** *And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you [in other words, this is required], but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,*

*13) and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good? (NKJV)*

It's not something advisable and something helpful for us to learn to fear Him. It's an absolute requirement. It's something He demands of us that we learn to fear Him. To be in obedience to Him and to keep the Holy Days as He has instructed us, we need to do so with a focus on learning to fear Him. Realize, not only is it something He will require of us, it is something He will test us on. He will orchestrate trials in our lives to see that we absolutely fear Him. A good example of this can be found in Genesis 22—it's a famous story and I think we are all familiar with. It describes a major trial that Abraham was put through. He was given the promise that he would be the father of many nations

and a lot of people would descend from Him. That Christ would be one of His descendants and offer salvation to all of mankind. All of this required him to have a son so he could carry on his lineage to fulfill all these promises. He waited for many years to be able to have a son and for God to finally fulfill His promise. He finally gave him Isaac and after Isaac is born and grows up, God gave him the ultimate test.

“You know that son you waited for all these years,  
take him to the mountain and kill him for Me.”

You know this had to be a gut-wrenching trial for Abraham to go through. It’s easy for us when we read these stories and we know how the story ends; we know who the hero is—it becomes academic for us. We can look at it and lose the reality of what this felt like for somebody like him to actually go through this. This had to be an absolutely gut-wrenching trial to go through.

As we know from the story, before he actually has to kill Isaac—God has to stopped him and he doesn’t do this—just notice the comments that are made here that tells us what this whole trial was about. Genesis 22:11.

**Genesis 22:11** *But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham!” So he said, Here I am.”*

*12) And He said, Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” (NKJV)*

After he successfully passed this trial, what did They say?

“Now They know you fear God.”

Obviously, that’s what this was about; it was a test to see how well he feared Him. He put him through the ultimate gut-wrenching test to show that he would put God first, even over his own son, even over suffering great loss. This was the evidence that he feared God. We need to understand how important this subject is.

To gain a little more understanding what the Bible is getting at when it’s talking about fearing God, let me share with you the definition of the Hebrew word that is most often used when this particular subject is talked about. It’s not 100% always this Hebrew word but the Hebrew word translated for *fear* that is most often used in the context is *yare* and is [Strong’s #3372](#). and according to [The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter](#), it’s defined as a verb meaning “to fear; to respect, to reverence, to be afraid, to be awesome, to be feared, to make afraid, to frighten.” The most common translations are “to be afraid, to fear, to fear God”.

One of the reasons I read this is because I think that sometimes when we think of the *fear of God*, we automatically think in terms of reverence, respect and awe in understanding who God is. But oftentimes we think of it not including being afraid of bad

things happening to you. We kind of eliminate that concept and think that it couldn't mean that. Well, actually it does include that concept. Just to show you some ways in which this word is used and then I'll frame this how to properly apply this to the fear of God. I'll give you a couple examples of how this exact same Hebrew word is used beginning with Genesis 26:7. To summarize the context, this is where Isaac is dealing with Abimelech and makes the same mistake his father did in denying that his wife is his wife because he's afraid and acting like a coward.

**Genesis 26:7** *And the men of the place asked about his wife. And he said, She is my sister"; for he was afraid to say, She is my wife, [that is yare, the same Hebrew word]" because he thought, lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she is beautiful to behold." (NKJV)*

What is he afraid of? He doesn't have an awe, respect and a love for these guys, he's just afraid they are going to kill him. He's afraid they are going to be evil and bring calamity upon his life and kill and hurt him and he's terrified of it. He's acting like a coward, denying that his wife is his wife. We need to understand that this concept can be included in the use of this word.

In Genesis 32 and we see another example of this. Just to summarize the context, we are going to read an account of a story involving Jacob and Esau and I'm sure you are familiar with the context that leads up to this. Esau is actually the firstborn but Jacob winds up conning Esau out of his birthright and receiving the blessings. This created some friction in the family and between the siblings.

**Genesis 32:6** *Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him."*

7) *So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies.*

8) *And he said, If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company which is left will escape."*

9) *Then Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you :*

10) *I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies.*

11) *Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children. (NKJV)*

Notice in both the references to *fear* and *being afraid*, it's the same Hebrew word. This isn't an *awe and a respect* for His brother that's being expressed here, it's a terror of, "I think he's going to come and try to kill me". So, he's afraid of calamity coming upon him. It's the same concept, when we think of fear in our day to day lives. We think of a scenario of say, hiking in the woods at a national park and you come across a grizzly

bear. It's a momma grizzly bear and she has cubs with her—the sight of that typically strikes fear and terror.

“The bear is there, I think I'm going to go in the other direction, I'm not going to hang around because I'm afraid she is going to kill me.”

That's how we think in terms of fear. The two examples that we just read, are exactly what Isaac and Jacob were experiencing. They were experiencing a fear of “this evil thing is about to kill me” and they were in terror.

Even though the word *yare* can include this kind of a concept, we also need to understand in terms of applying this to God. It is certainly not the same thing as,

“Here is someone who is going to try and bring evil upon me, and who is going to try to evilly hurt me”

That would certainly never apply to God. The way to understand in reference to God is more the concept of being afraid of consequences of our actions. To realize He has every right to bring the natural consequences of our sins and to punish us for those and bring His wrath upon us. It's only because of His mercy that He doesn't. One of the aspects that we need to understand in terms of the fear of God is a healthy fear of potentially receiving His wrath through the consequences of our actions which He can justly bring upon us because we deserve it. This is part of the concept of fearing God—a healthy respect for this. To understand this, we are going to look at the story where Miriam and Aaron are questioning Moses.

**Numbers 12:1** *Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman.*  
2) *So they said, Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?” And the LORD heard it.*  
3) *(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)*  
4) *Suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!” So the three came out.*  
5) *Then the LORD came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward.*  
6) *Then He said, Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream.*  
7) *Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house.*  
8) *I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?” (NKJV)*

He is basically asking them, why did the consequences of overstepping your boundaries not scare you? That should have installed some fear in you, simply by knowing you are overstepping your bounds and there can be some nasty consequences to this. To

realize that is exactly what He is getting at, all we have to do is read the next two verses.

*9) So the anger of the LORD was aroused against them, and He departed.  
10) And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow. Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper. (NKJV)*

She's facing nasty consequences for her actions. He's saying this whole concept of overstepping your bounds like that, should have scared you. You should have thought, this could end very badly, I don't want to do this; this is the concept of what He's getting across.

To cover a little tangent point here—if you are like me, for much of my life I would read this story and wonder, Miriam and Aaron are both guilty of questioning Him, why is it that Miriam gets the leprosy and not Aaron? Here's some food for thought in that regard.

One, I would speculate that Miriam may have been the ring leader in this but I also think of this in terms of, who is overstepping their bounds more severely. Think about the role that Moses and Aaron played in leading Israel. Yes, they are in the limelight, they are giving out instructions and leading people and have the authority and spot light role. There was a negative side to that as well. Notice, whenever Israel got upset with what is happening, what did they do? Let's pick up stones and stone Moses. You'll find times when they want to stone Aaron and all their anger and upset about what's happening gets vented at them.

What you see is Miriam saying, "God works through me too, I want my say, I want to tell them how to do stuff." If you look back at the situations where the rest of the congregation is ready to stone Moses and Aaron, never do you see Miriam saying, "God works through me too, you should want to throw stones at me too." What she wanted was having her say, she didn't want the accountability that came with it—that's a package deal. I would suspect that's another of the reasons why she received the leprosy; she was overstepping her bounds more severely. It's not just about having a say, it's about having the accountability, it's a package deal that comes together.

To get back on track in terms of the fear of God, we will go to Deuteronomy 9 and see another example. This is actually a different Hebrew word. I want you to see again, that "the fear of God" can include a healthy fear of God's wrath and negative consequences coming to us. It's not like God is some tyrant Who is going to mistreat us; it's simply that He has the right and is very justified, in bringing upon us, the consequences of our sins. We should have a healthy fear of that. Here Moses is recounting the story of the golden calf incident that happened in Exodus.

**Deuteronomy 9:15** *So I turned and came down from the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire; and the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands.*

16) *And I looked, and behold, you had sinned against the LORD your God—had made for yourselves a molded calf! You had turned aside quickly from the way which the LORD had commanded you.*

17) *Then I took the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes.*

18) *And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.*

19) *For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was angry with you, to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me at that time also.*

20) *And the LORD was very angry with Aaron and would have destroyed him; so I prayed for Aaron also at the same time. (NKJV)*

What Moses is referring to—what he fears here—is God destroying Israel. It’s not that God was some evil tyrant who was going to mistreat them, it was that they had totally disobeyed and abandoned everything they had agreed to and He had every right to punish them for that. To share with you the definition of the word here because this Hebrew word used in Deuteronomy 9. is a little different. This is transliterated as *yagor* and is Strong’s #3025 and defined by The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter as:

“A verb meaning *to fear, to be afraid*, in comparison to the more common verb for *yare* (the verb we just talked about a minute ago) which often refers to a general sense of vulnerability, *yagor* refers to *fear of specific occurrences* such as catching a disease, being reproached or scorned or being delivered into the power of specific people. It describes *the fear of God* in Deuteronomy 9:19, which focuses on the specific possibility of God destroying Israel.

So, we can see this is exactly something we should understand in regards to the fear of God. It’s not just this healthy respect, awe and reverence for God—which it certainly includes—but I emphasize this point because we often miss the idea that it also means a healthy fear for the negative consequences in God’s wrath that can come upon us because of our disobedience.

We also need to realize that, as I mentioned, God is not a tyrant. He is not someone who is going to be evil or mistreat us. However, we do need to be concerned about the consequences of sin if we disobey Him. Part of understanding *the fear of God* and fearing Him is also understanding His mercy and love.

**Psalms 118:1** *Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.*

2) *Let Israel now say, His mercy endures forever.”*

3) *Let the house of Aaron now say, His mercy endures forever.”*

4) *Let those who fear the LORD now say, His mercy endures forever.*” (NKJV)

Notice those who fear Him are not trembling under the rule of a tyrant, thinking He’s going to mistreat us—they appreciate His mercy and love.

5) *I called on the LORD in distress; The LORD answered me and set me in a broad place.*

6) *The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?* (NKJV)

We’ll cover this a little later in the sermon. One of the things we need to realize in our day to day lives is that the greatest thing we have to really fear is not having God on our side. If He is for us, then we don’t need to fear evil from others.

7) *The LORD is for me among those who help me; Therefore, I shall see my desire on those who hate me.*

8) *It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in man.*

9) *It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in princes.* (NKJV)

This similar concept is illustrated in another place, in Psalms 34. We will see this emphasis on His loving kindness and mercy which fearing God brings. We are to have, not only an awe and a respect for Who He is, but also a reverence for Him. We must also have a healthy fear of His wrath and of disobeying Him. It doesn’t mean that we need to tremble like He’s going to be evil and mistreat us like a tyrant because He is a very loving Father.

**Psalms 34:1** *I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.*

2) *My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; The humble shall hear of it and be glad.*

3) *Oh, magnify the LORD with me, And let us exalt His name together.*

4) *I sought the LORD, and He heard me, And delivered me from all my fears.*

5) *They looked to Him and were radiant, And their faces were not ashamed.*

6) *This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles.*

7) *The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them.* (NKJV)

Those who fear Him, He takes care of. He delivers them, He will protect them. We therefore need to have a healthy fear and respect of Him. If we are diligently obeying Him and rely upon Him, we don’t need to fear others. We don’t need to fear evil coming upon us because He will be our Protector.

We also need to realize that the fear of God is something we need to choose. It’s something we need to actively pursue and choose. The first thing we need to understand is that the fear of God motivates us to faithfully obey Him and to flee away from evil.



**Proverbs 16:6** *In mercy and truth Atonement is provided for iniquity; And by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil. (NKJV)*

We have to have this healthy respect for God—not only a reverence and an honor for Him, but for Who He is. We will want to submit to Him. We will also have a healthy fear of the consequences of disobeying Him and facing His wrath. That will naturally motivate us to go away from evil; to turn away from evil. We'll look at that and realize that's not going to go well. That's a painful path which I think I want to avoid. I think I want to go the righteous way because that just turns out better. That is naturally going to want to motivate us. Not only is it going to want to steer us away from fear, away from disobedience, if we have a health respect for God that is going to cause us to want to trust Him and be obedient, even when doing so is difficult and painful in our lives.

We see an example of this in Hebrews 11. We'll look at the example of Noah.

**Hebrews 11:7** *By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear [Godly fear was motivating his actions], prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (NKJV)*

As I mentioned earlier, it can be easy for us today in our comfortable 21st century lives to be reading some of these stories in the Bible but we look at them very academically. We know how the story ends and who the heroes are and everything turns out well. We don't often put ourselves in the shoes of those who are going through it. Imagine what it was like for Noah, going through his day to day life. This is a guy who for decades—year after year—building this huge boat. Imagine how the neighbors would have perceived him.

*“That crazy guy down the street—Noah—is building a huge boat here. There's not any water around here to float that thing in. He's always talking about this big calamity; this big flood is going to come and we're all going to drown. This guy thinks all these animals are just magically going to show up and volunteer on his boat. That nut job Noah, that crazy conspiracy theorist. Can you believe that guy?”*

I recently heard someone who made a joke about this and it made me laugh. He said, “Noah was a conspiracy theorist up until the day it started raining.” As you can imagine, after all the years he has been doing this, word got out far and wide—this crazy guy Noah building this big boat and talking about this big flood that's going to come. The day it started raining, he wasn't so crazy anymore. He had to faithfully endure and faithfully obey God through all of this. Not only just with his own human nature to keep steady with the course through all this, but the ridicule that he would have faced from those around him. What motivated him to do this was Godly fear. Not only his awe and respect for God, but he trusted God. He knew there was going to be a flood coming and it was going to happen and if he didn't take action, he would drown like everyone else.

So it was that combination of a respect for God and also a healthy fear of negative consequences.

If we have that same thing in our lives, it should motivate our day to day walk with God as well. In Hebrews 12 we will see a comment geared towards us.

**Hebrews 12:28** *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (NKJV)*

We should serve Him with Godly fear.

*29) For our God is a consuming fire. (NKJV)*

Notice it includes both concepts here. It's not just the healthy respect and honor of God, it's also a healthy fear of His consequences. Just like He puts before all of us. When we are called into salvation, He sets before us "life and death", "blessing and cursing". He urges us to choose life, tries to do everything possible to help us to choose life and to endure to the end. If we insist on neglecting our salvation and not diligently doing what we should or just turn our back on Him, He will let us choose death and kill us. He will throw us into the lake of fire. He makes it a promise and that is something we should have a healthy respect for as a part of our fear.

Also realize, if we have a healthy fear of Him, not only will it motivate us to want to obey God, it will also motivate us to hate evil. We think as Christians that we shouldn't hate anything—we should be loving. It's not true when it comes to evil. That doesn't mean hating people who commit evil, it just means we should have an absolute hatred of evil. The Bible tells us that directly in Proverbs 8:13.

**Proverbs 8:13** *The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate. (NKJV)*

It defines the fear of Yehovah as hating evil. If we want to have a proper relationship with Him, He absolutely requires of us that we fear Him. Then one of the things that we need to do is not just love God, we need to hate evil and actually be disgusted by it. In Psalms 36 we will see another verse that speaks to this concept.

**Psalms 36:1** *An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes. (NKJV)*

We are going to see that they don't have fear of God, they don't abhor evil and they don't have wisdom; we're going to see that connection with wisdom as well.

*2) For he flatters himself in his own eyes, When he finds out his iniquity and when he hates.*

*3) The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit; He has ceased to be wise and to do good. (NKJV)*

There is a strong connection between the fear of God and wisdom.

*4) He devises wickedness on his bed; He sets himself in a way that is not good; He does not abhor evil. (NKJV)*

Notice that those who don't fear God, don't abhor evil. If we fear God, we're going to hate evil; it's going to be something that disgusts us and we're going to be repelled from it and we will want to turn away from it. That's part of understanding the fear of God. Realize that this is something we have to choose. In Prov 1 we see that the fear of God is literally something we have to choose and pursue.

**Proverbs 1:25** *Because you despised all my counsel, And would have none of my rebuke,*

*26) I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes,*

*27) When your terror comes like a storm, And your destruction comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you.*

*28) Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me.*

*29) Because they hated knowledge [and notice this] And did not choose the fear of the LORD ... (NKJV)*

In other words, it's something we have to choose; we have to wilfully pursue this.

*30) They would have none of my counsel And despised my every rebuke.*

*31) Therefore, they shall eat the fruit of their own way, And be filled to the full with their own fancies.*

*32) For the turning away of the simple will slay them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them;*

*33) But whoever listens to me will dwell safely, And will be secure, without fear of evil." (NKJV)*

If we are sincerely following Him and diligently seeking Him in our lives then we don't need to fear evil from others or other situations in our lives or negative consequences that come from disobeying Him, because we can trust in Him to be our protector. I think a great example of this can be found in Daniel 3. It's a famous story that I'm sure we are all familiar with. The context is, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream earlier and saw an image and Daniel interprets it for him and tells him that he's this head of gold. He reveals to him the successive empires that will be reigning part of the world for years to come and as you can imagine, after this, Nebuchadnezzar decides to put up an image. Whenever the music plays, everyone needs to bow down and worship it. You can connect the dots to see the thought process of how he got here. If he has this dream and sees this big image and is told he's connected with this, then later his ego likes this and he thinks,

“I’m a big shot with this. I’ll build this big image and tell everyone to bow down to it”

This is essentially what he does. Nebuchadnezzar is an egotistical tyrant in how he handles this. He makes an edict that whenever the music plays, everyone needs to bow down and worship the image. It’s not just a suggestion; it’s a demand, it’s a threat. Everyone who doesn’t bow down are told that if they don’t bow down and serve this image, they are going to get thrown into a fire and brutally killed.

You can imagine anyone living in this time, knowing his track record, realizes that it’s not an empty threat—He will really do this. He will really kill us if we don’t go along with it. You can imagine the fear that people would feel with the idea of, “if I don’t go along with this, this guy is going to have me killed, I’ll burn to death”. You can imagine how that would frighten people. As you know, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego were some of the individuals who were forced into this situation. They are faced with the decision of, “What are we going to do?” “If we obey God, we’re likely to get killed. He’s going to throw us into a furnace and we’re going to burn alive”. They are facing this decision and what do they do? They set a very great example for us in how they handled it. Because they feared God, they understood that the greatest thing they had to fear in life was not having God on their side. As long as they were faithfully obeying Him, God would protect them one way or another. It would still end well if they faithfully obeyed Him and didn’t give in and compromise to serve Nebuchadnezzar. It all culminates in Daniel 3:16.

**Daniel 3:16** *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.  
17) If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.  
18) But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.” (NKJV)*

In other words, they were saying,

“My God is able to protect me but even if He lets me burn in the furnace; put it on the record that I will won’t bow down to you.”

The greatest thing they had to fear was not obeying God. Not having God on their side was the greatest thing that could go wrong and they clearly understood this. As a result, I’m sure you know how the story ends. They do end up getting thrown in a furnace but God protects them. They later wind up coming out, not even smelling of smoke or being singed by the fire at all, but the guys who threw them in there get killed because the heat was so great. God protected them through it all. That is one of the things we have to realize in our lives, especially in the years ahead as things get worse and worse in our nation. We need to realize as long as we are putting our faith in God and we are diligently following Him, we don’t need to fear the evil of the people around us. The greatest fear we need to have is that God is not on our side. That’s the thing we need to fear. That’s when calamity will come upon us. As long as we are faithfully obeying Him,

God will take care of us. Even if Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego had been burned up in the furnace, they would still come up in the resurrection and they would still win. As long as they feared God, the greatest thing they had to fear was God not being on their side. As long as He's got your back, He's going to protect you through everything else.

The next thing we need to look at is the connection that I mentioned earlier. There is a very strong correlations between wisdom and the fear of God. I think we sometimes underestimate this concept. Psalm 111 is probably a memory scripture; I know it has been for me for most of my life.

**Psalm 111:10** *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever. (NKJV)*

If you're like me, that's a scripture you've been familiar with for many, many years and you're familiar with that concept. I think sometimes we underestimate this concept and how much this can affect day to day lives by just having practical good sense in how we live our lives in the world around us. To illustrate this principle, I would like to read an article to you from Dennis Prager who has a radio program which he has had for years. If you have a Facebook account you have probably, at one time or another, seen a short video on various topics posted there. It would be advertisements from Prager U; oftentimes like a five or a six-minute video briefly covering various subjects. Dennis Prager is the person behind Prager U or Prager University. He's Jewish—he's not part of the church of God or anything—but he's a very big believer as what is called Judeo Christian values. Just trying to live your life by the Ten Commandments and by the basic principles laid out by the Bible. Dennis is a very big believer in that and everything I've seen about his life suggests he is very sincere about it. He has an article on his website which I think really speaks to this. It's not very long—I'm going to read you the whole article but it really speaks to the meaning of this verse. It's titled. "How I Found God at Columbia". This is from [DennisPrager.com](http://DennisPrager.com) and posted on December 2, 2003.

*Very few people can say that they found God or religion at college or graduate school. The university, after all, is a radically secular institution that either ignores or disparages religious belief in God.*

*Yet, one day, when I was a graduate student in international affairs at Columbia University, I had what can honestly be called an epiphany.*

*I remember it very clearly. Since entering graduate school, I was preoccupied with this question: Why did so many learned and intelligent professors believe so many foolish things?*

*Why did so many people at my university believe nonsense such as Marxism? I was a fellow at the Russian Institute where I specialized in Soviet affairs and Marxism, and so I encountered professor after professor and student after student who truly believed in some variation on Marxism.*

*Why did so many professors believe and teach the even more foolish notion that men and women are basically the same? At college, it was a given that the*

*differing conduct of boys and girls and of men and women is a result of different, i.e., sexist, upbringings. The feminist absurdity that girls do girl things because they are given dolls and tea sets, and boys do boy things because they are given trucks and toy guns, was actually believed in the mind-numbing world of academic intellectuals.*

*And why were so many professors morally confused? How could people so learned in contemporary history morally equate the Soviet Union and the United States, regard America as responsible for the Cold War, or regard Israel as the Middle East's villain?*

*One day, I received an answer to these questions. Seemingly out of nowhere, a biblical verse — one that I had recited every day in kindergarten at the Jewish religious school I attended as a child — entered my mind. It was a verse from Psalm 111: Wisdom begins with fear of God.”*

*The verse meant almost nothing to me as a child — both because I recited it in the original Hebrew, which at the time I barely understood, and because the concept was way beyond a child's mind to comprehend. But 15 years later, a verse I had rarely thought about answered my puzzle about my university and put me on a philosophical course from which I have never wavered.*

*It could not be a coincidence that the most morally confused of society's mainstream institutions and the one possessing the least wisdom — the university — was also society's most secular institution. The Psalmist was right — no God, no wisdom.*

*Most people come to believe in God through what I call the front door of faith. Something leads them to believe in God. Since that day at Columbia, however, I regularly renew my faith through the back door — I see the confusion and nihilism that godless ideas produce and my faith is restored. The consequences of secularism have been at least as powerful a force for faith in my life as religion.*

*If our universities produced wise men and women, curricula of moral clarity, and professors who loved liberty and truth, not to mention loved America — there is no question that my religious faith would be challenged. I would look at the temple of secularism, the university, and see so much goodness and wisdom that I would have to wonder just how important God and religion were.*

*But I look at the university and see truth deconstructed, beauty reviled, America loathed, good and evil inverted, elementary truths about life denied, and I realize that one very powerful argument for God is that society cannot function successfully without reference to Him.*

*So as much as I shudder almost every time I read of another academic taking an absurd position, I also feel my faith renewed.*

*Ironically, the worse the universities get, the greater their tribute to God.*

Every time I think of something like this, this article comes to mind. About thirty years ago I was in graduate school myself and I can't say I had the same epiphany as Dennis but I made a similar observation. Sitting through classes, watching people that had very high IQ's, obviously very educated and learning and hearing absolute nonsense coming out of their mouths. Ideas that you could easily prove through documentable history and

facts and statistics to show this is just nonsense. Seeing that they have clearly believed it, I would just scratch my head and wonder, why is it that people fall for this? Dennis' article comes to mind; "no God, no wisdom". I even look at how our country is going now in the last few years and looking at this thinking, how can so many educated, intelligent people not see something is wrong. I come back to, "no God, no wisdom". There is a huge correlation between the fear of God and wisdom.

The fear of God is actually the instruction in wisdom. Proverbs 15:31.

**Proverbs 15:31** *The ear that hears the rebukes of life Will abide among the wise.*  
32) *He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, but he who heeds rebuke gets understanding.*  
33) *The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, And before honor is humility.* (NKJV)

Having just a basic fear of God, gives people wisdom—even those not called, like Dennis who is Jewish and doesn't believe in Jesus Christ. If you see much of his stuff just in terms of practical values, practical wisdom of life (I'm not endorsing his theology) but just a lot of good common sense—the reason being there is a respect there for God and for the Bible and that is the source of wisdom. The basic biblical principles are things on which we should structure our lives and live our lives. In those who reject that, you just see massive foolishness because the fear of God is not only the beginning of wisdom but it is the instruction of wisdom. His Word is what we should turn to in how to live our lives.

We, as His called-out people, need to be focusing on how to develop the fear of God in our lives. Particularly as we are moving into the fall Holy Days. As I mentioned the Holy Days are one of the specific reasons why God commands us to keep them is so we can learn to fear Him. So, what do we need to do to learn to fear God? How do we put that into action in our lives? The answer is Proverbs 2:1

**Proverbs 2:1** *My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you*  
2) *So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding;*  
3) *Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding,*  
4) *If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures;*  
5) *Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God.* (NKJV)

In other words, it's something we need to seek. It's something we have to choose. We have to make a conscious decision that we want to learn to fear God and we want to incorporate that into our day to day lives. We need to search it out, we need to cry out for it, we need to put effort and energy into studying it. That's one of the reasons we need to have our face in this book, regularly studying it so we can receive the instruction and wisdom. We can receive His instructions in how we can live our lives and as we do that—especially as we yield to those instructions—and take correction from it and apply

it in our lives, then we are learning to fear Him. Two things are happening with that; it's naturally going to make us want to repel away from evil and hate evil and have nothing to do with it. It is also going to make us want to lean to do His way faithfully obeying Him, even if that is painful and difficult in our lives.

As we face difficult trials, and I'm sure as the years go forward we are going to face more and more, we need to learn from examples like Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, when our lives are on the line, when our job is on the line, when our security is on the line. Remember that the greatest things we have to fear is not following God, not having Him on your side. If He is on your side, then He can deliver you through whatever trial you face. We can look at those trials and say,

“Nebuchadnezzar, I have no need to answer you on this matter. My God is able to save me and even if He doesn't, for the record, I still won't bow down to you.”

We need to realize that that's something we can play out in our own lives if we learn to fear God.

To summarize the definition of that, it's not just the awe and respect. It certainly includes that—we oftentimes think of it in terms of the awe, respect and reverence for God and that is absolutely part of the definition. But it's also a healthy respect for disobeying Him and the consequences of the wrath that can come from that. If we have that healthy appreciation, we will want to obey Him. We will want to get away from evil and we will want to trust in Him and follow Him.

As we know, in just a matter of days, the fall Holy Days will be upon us and one of the reasons we keep these days is specifically so we can learn to fear God. As we keep them, let's keep a focus on this so we can learn to fear Yehovah our God, always.