

Study Through the Bible

A House of Wisdom – Study 1

LEADER'S GUIDE

Lay the Foundation for Peace

The fear of the Lord is a foundation you can build on.

The fear of the Lord is an immense and crucial theological concept in the Bible, especially in the book of Proverbs. Without that concept, Proverbs could easily be reduced to self-help literature that canonizes the American Dream. This fear is the beginning, or foundation, of wisdom (applied knowledge). The purpose of this study is to help us understand what it means to fear the Lord.

Scripture:

Proverbs 1:7, 9:10

Based on:

"A House of Wisdom," Series Builder by Jeffrey Arthurs, PREACHING TODAY SERMONS



PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

In this course, we will construct a house called wisdom, which we define as the knowledge of God that leads to living godly in conformity with the divine character. This house will be built in the valley of *shalom*, which means a state of peace that is found through the blessing of God. Each proverb we read will be a brick, but before we start laying bricks we need to pour the foundation.

In 1958 in Upper St. Clair, Pennsylvania, a town south of Pittsburgh, the town council built a new civic center. It had a post office, fire station, and offices. The townspeople were proud! But within a few months, cracks in the mortar appeared. Windows were hard to shut, and doors stuck. They called in the builders and engineers, who determined that nothing was wrong with the building, but mining explosions miles away were sending vibrations and shock waves through the earth's strata. These had shifted the foundation. The engineers said, "It's no use fixing cracks if the foundation isn't sure."

It's no use handing out wisdom if the bricks rest on sand. Jesus said that a house with no foundation will not withstand the storms of life. So we want to lay a strong foundation to build on.

The fear of God is the beginning, the foundation, of wisdom. Read Proverbs 1:7, 9:10.

Discussion starters:

- [Q] Have you ever experienced an actual foundation that crumbled? What happened to the structure?
- [Q] Define *wisdom* in your own words. How is it the same as knowledge? How is it different?
- [Q] What is the wisest thing you've ever done? How did you determine it was wise? What kind of good things did that wise thing produce?

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: The fear of the Lord demands our respect, awe, desire to please, and dread of judgment.

The fear of the Lord demands that we respect God. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines *respect* as having a "high or special regard" for another. Our regard for God should be incomparable to our regard for anyone or anything else. If we hold any other person or principle in higher esteem than God, we are not respecting him.

However, fear of the Lord goes beyond respect. We are also to experience awe at his power and holiness. The same dictionary defines *awe* as "an emotion variously combining dread,



eneration, and wonder that is inspired by authority or by the sacred or sublime.” To experience awe is to be overwhelmed by God’s absolute authority over our lives.

This attitude of awe creates in us an anxiety to please God. We are so aware of his power and authority over us that we are careful to do what will honor him, rather than what will bring him sorrow.

Finally, the fear of the Lord brings dread of his judgment. We know that we are full of sin and deserve punishment, so we are afraid to face him, just as Adam and Eve hid from him when they disobeyed (Gen. 3:8).

This attitude of fear would overwhelm us if it were not tempered by God’s perfect love for us. Sometimes we have a warped fear of God because our earthly parents were unreasonable, but the fear of God is the kind of fear we’d have for the perfect parent, who loves us unselfishly and always has our best in mind. This love would cause us to respect, feel awe, want to please, and dread judgment for our poor behavior.

Read Psalm 19:7–14.

[Q] What makes the writer of this psalm (David) fear the Lord? How does he describe *fear* in verse 9? What does it mean that it is pure and endures forever?

[Q] How does David compare the fear of the Lord to the biblical law?

Leader’s Note: *The Quest Study Bible says, “Studying God’s law, with its specific requirements for human behavior and its inevitable consequences for disobedience, leads us to a greater respect for God and increases our desire to serve him.”*

[Q] How does this fear of God highlight David’s sin (v.12–13)?

[Q] How does it motivate his behavior (v.14)?

Optional Activity

Purpose: *To help us understand what it means to fear God.*

Activity: *Ask each person to pick one of these aspects of the fear of God: respect, awe, desire to please, fear of judgment. Ask them to think of a scenario that would demonstrate what this should look like. For example, to respect God may manifest itself in a desire to set up a family devotion time to instill a respect for his Word in our children. Or to fear his judgment may be to share Christ with a family member who doesn’t know him.*

Teaching point two: We should fear God, not our enemies.

The Puritan Pastor William Gurnall said, “We fear men so much because we fear God so little. One fear cures the other.”

In 1717, Louis XIV of France died. Louis, who called himself “the Great,” was the monarch who declared, “I am the State!” His court was the most magnificent in Europe and his funeral the most spectacular. His body lay in a golden coffin. To dramatize his greatness, orders had been given that the cathedral would be very dimly lighted with only a special candle set above the



coffin. Thousands waited in silence. Then Bishop Massillon began to speak. Slowly reaching down, he snuffed out the candle, saying, “Only God is great.”

Read Matthew 10:24–31 and Romans 11:20–22.

[Q] According to Jesus’ words in Matthew, what kind of treatment should we expect from others? Knowing we face this kind of treatment, whom should we fear, according to these verses? Why?

[Q] According to the Romans passage, what should we fear? What is the antidote to that fear (v.20)?

Leader’s Note: *What are these verses in Romans referring to? The Quest Study Bible says, “Some say that continuing to sin can result in one’s being cut off from God in the end. Others believe that once people are genuinely saved, they cannot be lost. They say that those who are cut off only had appeared to be saved...We remain in God’s grace not by doing good works, but by seeing our salvation solely as the result of God’s kindness.”*

[Q] With which statement do you find yourself agreeing most:

- 1) I shouldn’t have to fear God, since he has accepted me.
- 2) I fear God because I know I don’t deserve salvation.
- 3) I fear God because he’s unpredictable.
- 4) I fear God because I don’t understand him.

Why did you choose the statement you did? Do you find yourself agreeing with more than one statement? What is the difference between the four positions? What is at stake in each position?

Teaching point three: We should express this fear by walking humbly with God and being kind to others.

Pride and arrogance are always in opposition to God. The first sin was rooted in the pride that Eve could “be like God.” Satan’s rebellion was that same pride with which he tempted Eve. Read Proverbs 8:13.

The other way the fear of God is manifested is in our treatment of others. Only as we treat others better than ourselves can we truly show that we fear God. Otherwise, we are thumbing our noses at him. Read Deuteronomy 10:17–21.

[Q] How does pride show that we do not fear God? How can we know if we are walking humbly with God?

[Q] Name the things in our Deuteronomy passage that show we fear God. How does reaching out to others in kindness demonstrate the fear of God?

[Q] Since God shows no partiality, how should that affect our behavior? How can we avoid showing partiality?

