

CROSS-CENTERED RELATIONSHIPS

Week #6

“The Fear of the LORD”

An unassumed part of Biblical Excellence is a proper view of God. The reason I say “unassumed” is because often we arrive at spots in life where we think we know enough about God that we don’t need to learn any more. However, this literally puts a separation between the believer and their Heavenly Father. The One we are to be walking with in an intimate relationship gets shoved to the side by the teenage-type of Christian mentality that we know enough and no longer need the One that can show us the way. While we have probably all be there at some point, we can all attest that this mentality and lifestyle do not end well.

For this reason, Solomon wrote in Proverbs 1:7 that “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...” This phrase has two unique characteristics in it to put special attention on. First, the word ‘fear’ is said in this phrase as a noun. To be a noun we find this use of the word ‘fear’ as a place or position before God. The second unique item is in this phrase is the word “LORD”. It is the word “Jehovah God”. It is all capitalized in our English versions to help us recognize that this is the CREATOR & SUSTAINER God. 1 Peter 5:5 reminds us that “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble...” Then in verse 6 we see Peter telling us what position we ought to have before God... He says, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, SO THAT He may exalt you at the proper time...” In other words, by having a proper view and position of God, we find ourselves in a place of provision and blessing.

As Christians, we often don’t take time to realize the position of God with a healthy form of fear. But consider that God is the one who gives you an ability to work for a paycheck (Romans 12:6-8). It is God who makes sure you have food on the table (Matthew 6:19-34). It is God who causes you to breath (1 Corinthians 8:6 & Isaiah 42:5). There is nothing that you have of benefit that you didn’t receive from the hand of God (James 1:17). The one that you and I call “Father”, and still have the gall to not revere, is the One who controls each breathe, ability, and provision. When we think about this statement, a familiar metaphor comes to mind for me. “Don’t bite the hand that feeds you...”

As we take a look at this final quality of a Biblically Excellent person from the views of men, women, and young people, please consider the fact that a healthy fear of God puts us in humility before the One that can and will fully provide for any and all of our daily needs. For those who honor Him as He is to be seen and held, God gives: Riches in place of wrath, blessings instead of bereavement, and hope instead of helplessness. We are here for His glory. And when we honor Him for what He is due, He promises that for the purpose of His glory He will also provide benefit to His own people (Rom. 8:28 & Jeremiah 29:13).

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MEN:

At first glance, “the fear of the LORD” is a statement that takes a hit on our “Man-Pride”. But really, it is a statement that reminds us to recall just how transient we really are. Just this past summer the Lord allowed me to experience a major physical set-back. No one saw it coming, yet here I was unable to do what I was doing just one day prior. Over 130,000 people pass away each day irrespective of age. This life of ours is fragile.

It is when we recall this that we can then see the benefit in recognizing God properly for the power, justice, and mercy that He has. Two of my favorite reminder passages in Scripture are Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 and Romans 11:33-36. In both cases I am reminded that God is the only one who is fully self-sufficient. I may want to act like it, but I (like many of you) know that I am anything but self-sufficient.

Men, take for a moment this thought and put it in the context of our marriages and workplace. We often try to show a certain dominance or resilience that presents a self-sufficient attitude. Trying to stay out of the ditch of a bum husband or dad, we drift to the other ditch of over self-confidence. Because of this, we shut out the advice of a helpmate (our wives), because we don't see the need. Rather, potentially it is viewed in our lives as a form of weakness that is unacceptable. Now, the reverse is also true. A man that is self-deflated. He doesn't run the house but is quick to turn the reins over to his spouse. No ownership of responsibility is his pursuit for the thought of failure.

In considering those two positions that are obviously not what God desires, do you see where God is a constant and perfect solution? For the proud man, we see the sure trip up coming just like Paul mentions in (1 Cor. 10:12). For the weak and beaten man, we anticipate another trip up because the total victory of Christ is not in view. The answer to both is a healthy view of the power and provision that only comes from God. This is why a Biblically Excellent man finds himself daily at the feet of God, who provides to His glory and for our benefit.

READ Jonah 4...

Sometimes we think we deserve something, or our opposition to God's work in our lives causes us to not see things well in life. What does this text remind us of as we see God's ability and dealings with Jonah through the plant/tree that gives Jonah shade? What was God teaching Jonah? As you are writing the answer to this, consider that most likely Jonah wrote his own account of God's work.

READ 2 Timothy 1:7...

Men, when we are humble enough to go to the Lord, we must recognize that what God gives is fully sufficient for any situation or season in life. What is stopping you from turning to the Lord in the day-to-day? Are you willing to turn it over to God so you can tap into His sufficient power?

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WOMEN:

“The fear of the LORD” is a statement we often look at, recognize, and even repeat. However, it is not often lived out in our daily practices. Yet, I still recall a night when my own mother displayed the fear of the LORD. She had no idea I was listening, but there I was at the base of the stairs. I listened to a woman crying and struggling with only one hope. That hope was in the LORD. The situation of that night is not important to this conversation, but I hope you hear well the value of a woman who fears the LORD.

That night, which I recall very well, was a tough night. Things hadn’t been going well in and around our family. While my parents always wanted to serve God, it often came with great pains. This night was uniquely hard. It was then that I recall my mother praying to the LORD through tears to do what only He could do to cause a greatly needed change. She was surrendered to whatever He would want. But she knew something very special. The same power that God used to create the universe with a word, to hold the universe in His palm, and to bring perfect wrath is the same power of God to supply perfectly for any need. My mother’s prayer and life that followed reflected that trust in God, and it did cause a change in our home. Matter of fact, I still reflect on that today as an adult.

See, the fear of the LORD isn’t just shaking in our boots, it is the humility to observe God correctly. The word LORD, as we saw earlier in this week’s study, describes God’s infinite character and supply. When a woman acknowledges God as Jehovah, she is viewing the One that every provision in life comes from. As James tells us, “every good thing is from above (GOD)” (Js. 1:17). If there is to be a Godly change in the household, it must flow through God. Because of this, the Biblically Excellent woman (who is vital to every home) takes herself to the LORD, who alone can make her the woman she is to be. Out of His infinite supply, He supplies to those that call upon Him (Matt. 7:7-8 & Romans 8:32), and He strengthens them for the task ahead. This is why for any of the excellent qualities to be lived out, a woman must start and end with a holy and reverent fear of the LORD. It is only here that she will have what it takes to be part of leading a Godly home.

READ 2 Timothy 1:5, Titus 2:3-5, & Proverbs 14:1...

Paul was writing to Timothy as a charge to continue carrying forward the Word of God. Similar to this is a strong encouragement to Titus who served in another area. It is interesting to me that both of these men had women (Godly mothers and grandmothers) mentioned in their upbringing. Both of these texts reflect on women that saw correctly the One they called LORD. What do these three passages show about a woman who fears the LORD and her impact in the home? What are some of the things these women are known for?

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YOUNG PEOPLE:

This study is coming to a quick end young people, but there is still a discussion around this last quality. "The fear of the LORD"...

When you are looking for relationships in this life, there is none that sticks out as more desirable than noticing a person who fears the LORD. This is because a person who fears the LORD will have a tendency of taking their decisions to the LORD, so as to make sure they are going the right way. In other words, because they want to honor God with their life, they seek Godly direction and change in their life.

You can be trained on how to make wise decisions, you can be trained to give to the poor, you can be trained to accept whatever it is that you have, you can be trained to like your work, and you can even be trained to tell the truth... But you cannot be trained to fear the LORD. No one can give you the fear of the LORD. No parent, teacher, grandparent or friend can say, "here you go", and put it in your lap. The fear of the LORD is a relational aspect where a person sees God in His perfect character and humbles themselves out of respect and awe. This is an item of the heart that motivates the other Biblical qualities of excellence.

Young person, take a moment to read Job 38-41 at some point. In those chapters you will see the mighty power of God describing things around you every day. 1 Corinthians 8:6 reminds us that He holds these things perfectly in His hands. If at any moment He doesn't want something anymore, it ceases to be immediately! Yet, the same God that created and sustains all that we see is asking you to come to Him. And if you are willing to be humble and know that He is God, then all of that power to create and sustain is then used to change and perfect you.

If someone is wise, they would befriend you, date you, or potentially marry you ONLY if they see a true fear of the LORD in you. Why?! Because we all need to be changed. Unlike the movies, there is no perfect prince charming or princess snow white. But it is for this reason that Solomon writes of the third strand giving a strong aid to any relationship (Ecc. 4:12). If God is in it, then there is the power of victory to carry it. This is why God tells young people to not be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14), but to pursue those that are also pursuing Him. Life has many forks in the road. The person who fears the LORD will be prompted to take the narrow (Godly) trail at those forks because of they have a right view of their God.

READ Proverbs 14:26-27 & Proverbs 23:15-18...

To stand in this life you will need something to lean on. To not go down a wrong path you will need someone who knows the right path. The LORD is eternal in time past, present, and future. He is also infinite in power and provision. This is part of Him being Jehovah God. What do these verses above say about a young person who fears the LORD? After answering that question, take a moment to write (or talk) out what you believe about God.