

"Fearing the Lord"

Many people no longer care whether there is a God, but is this wise? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're exploring our need to fear the Lord. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. Ignoring or denying the will of God is as absurd as ignoring or denying the sun and moon exist. The Lord has given us His words in the Holy Scriptures, so that we might know His will and His ways. The Scriptures are clear and will one day judge our souls. If we ignore His teaching in this life, we'll have to face the harsh consequences in the life to come. It doesn't pay to ignore what God says. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

When we hear the word "fear," we generally think of being terribly frightened or scared, but there is a different idea behind the godly person who fears the Lord. To him, the fear of God refers to the awe, reverence, and respect shown toward the Divine person. This fear exalts God and it humbles self. Fearing God means taking Him seriously and responding with respect and awe. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 12 and verse 13, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

While the Lord wants us to love Him and to draw close to Him, He also wants us to recognize His power and authority over us. We belong to Him. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 12:4 to 5, "I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!" I tell you, the Lord matters!

Now we offer this study on fearing the Lord free! And if you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have many free programs and materials on our website, www.searchtv.org. You can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, read from Proverbs 3:5 to 8, and explore our need not only to trust in the Lord but also to fear Him.

Our scripture reading today comes from the book of Proverbs chapter 3 verses 5 to 8. And there we are encourage to really turn our hearts toward God and to trust in the Lord.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart
And do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight.
Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.
It will be healing to your body
And refreshment to your bones.

Yes fearing the Lord actually is healing and it helps us. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that You give us the things that we most need to help ourselves and to draw close to You. And Father we're thankful for the love that You give to us and how often You care for our needs. Help us always to do Your will. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

We live in an age that wants to hear about God's mercy and grace but rarely wants to hear about sin and repentance. Many forget about the change that God wants in our lives. 1 Corinthians 6 and verse 9 says, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived." He says that because many people deceive themselves. You see sin will cause a person to lose his inheritance in the kingdom of God. And the pleasures of sin often dull our senses and harden our hearts to the consequences of sin. Sin can keep us from taking the Lord seriously. Sin keeps us from fearing the Lord.

Some might think fearing the Lord is a negative thing, but the Scriptures speak of the value of fearing the Lord. People often forget the Lord Himself makes a distinction between those who fear Him and those who don't fear Him. Psalm 31:19 says, "How great is Your goodness, Which You have stored up for those who fear You, Which You have wrought for those who take refuge in You, Before the sons of men!"

When the apostle Peter visited the household of Cornelius, he had learned a valuable lesson. Prior to that time, the church spread widely among the Jews but not among the Gentiles. And God showed Peter that Gentiles could become Christians too. And Peter said to Cornelius in Acts 10 verses 34 and 5, "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him." God will bless those who love Him, fear Him, and obey His will.

The Lord's compassion is great for those who love and fear Him. David wrote in Psalm 103:11 to 13, "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him." Again in Psalm 103:17 to 18 David says, "But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children, To those who keep His covenant And remember His precepts to do them."

Now the person who fears the Lord will live an upright life and forsake sin. Proverbs 14:2 says that, "He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD, But he who is devious in his ways despises Him." When a person lives for God, God blesses him. Solomon declared in Proverbs 10 and verse 27 that, "The fear of the LORD prolongs life, But the years of the wicked will be shortened." Again Proverbs 14:26 and 7 explains, "In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And his children will have refuge. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, That one may avoid the snares of death." When we have confidence in God, we know that He will help us avoid the sinful snares of death.

Psalm 19 verse 9 David says, "The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether." Fearing the Lord helps a person stay free from sin, because it keeps him thinking straight. Proverbs 8 verse 13 says, "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, (he says) I hate." Christians hate evil but not people. Christians are often misunderstood and called hateful, because they do not approve of sinful behavior. Now Christians don't hate people; they hate the sinful behaviors that hurt and destroy people. Why, I would hate for anything to cause harm to the people I love. When people adopt sinful behaviors that ruin lives and ruin their homes, I will stand opposed to that behavior. Kind people oppose harmful evil behavior, apathetic people don't care how evil corrupts, and malicious people wish evil on others people.

It might surprise you that true Christians hate their own sins just like they hate the sins of others. They hate their own sins, because they know their sin offends God and can separate them from God.

Paul wrote in Romans 7:14 to 15, "For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate." He continues in Romans 12 and verse 9 and he says, "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; (but) cling to what is good."

Proverbs 1 verse 7 says that, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction." Proverbs 15:33 expands on this and says that, "The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom, And before honor comes humility." Again Proverbs 16 verses 5 to 6 explains that, "Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished. By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, And by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil." Now you may think that you can do whatever your heart pleases, but an arrogant person who doesn't take God seriously will not go unpunished.

Ecclesiastes 8:12 to 13 simply says, "Although a sinner does evil a hundred times and may lengthen his life, still I know that it will be well for those who fear God, who fear Him openly. But it will not be well for the evil man and he will not lengthen his days like a shadow, because he does not fear God." Again in Ecclesiastes 11 verse 9 reminds those who are young, "Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things."

Whether you're young or old, "do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes (that is worldliness and sinfulness makes) himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: this comes from James chapter 4. Yes the bible says that, "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us?" Where is the Lord in your life? Does He matter to you? We want Him as Savior, but we must also respect Him as our Lord. When we put the world first in our lives we'll made ourselves an enemy of God. We show that we don't care; and there is no fear of God in our hearts. The Lord yearns to maintain a relationship with us and to be our father in heaven.

Now if we're far away from God, it's because we have moved away from Him. He loves us and desires to remain close to us. When we let sin in this world, when we let it into our lives, what happens is that it crowds God out. Yes it moves Him away and soon we have no place for God at all. Hebrews 3:12 to 13 says, "Take care, brethren, (now he's talking to members of the church) that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." You see, sin will push God out and it harden your heart, so that you may not let Him come back in.

Some people hear the word fear and confuse the right kind of Christian fear that is respect, from the trembling fear of the lost. James 2:19 talks about here James is speaking about the demons, "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and (they tremble they) shudder." They fear God not because they respect Him but because they know that they will be punished for their wickedness. Revelation 6:15 to 17 refers to the response of kings and great men who recognize that they will be punished for their sins. It says: Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

My friend if you're living in sin and opposing God, then you should be afraid. Galatians 6:7 to 8 reminds us, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." Oh, some people mock God by ignoring what He says and continuing to sin and acting like sin doesn't matter. But God knows my friend; God always knows. You can't mock God and act like He doesn't know what you're doing.

When people practice sin and they get hardened into doing it over and over, their love and respect for God begins to vanish. They won't listen to God any more. Proverbs 1:24 to 29 speaks of this problem. There God is speaking to them and He says, "Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention; And you neglected all my counsel And did not want my reproof; I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes, When your dread comes like a storm And your calamity comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently but they will not find me, (why?) Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD." By refusing to listen to God, they lost their relationship with Him.

Hebrews 10:26 and 27 is even more specific: it says, "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries." Sadly many Christians turn away from the Lord back into sin and lose their salvation. And it doesn't have to be that way. If you find that you're continuing in sin, repent and turn to the Lord.

If you've come to the Lord in love, repenting of your ways and obeying the gospel, the blood of Jesus will cleanse you of sin. You do have hope! 1 John 1 and verse 7 says that, "if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." Yes, walking in the light leads to our being cleansed from sin by the blood of Jesus Christ! 1 John 1:9 also says that, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I tell ya, God is able to save His own from all sin, from all unrighteousness.

Now when you have Christ in your heart and you have Christ in your life, you can overcome the fear of God's wrath at Judgment. Yes Judgment Day will be wrathful for those who don't believe. And for those who will not obey. 1 John 4:17 to 19 says, "By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the Day of Judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us." Oh I tell ya, we can find confidence in Christ's blood, when we turn our hearts in love and respect for Him. When we're right with God, we don't have to be afraid. Proverbs 3:7 and 8 reminds us, "Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones." Oh turn to the Lord and do it today!

Let's pray together. Oh Heavenly Father help us to take what You teach us, seriously. To believe strongly in what You've taught and to take sin seriously. To put it out of our lives and to draw close to You in every way. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

The one who fears, loves, and obeys God has the promise of being able to live with God eternally. 2 Corinthians 7 and verse 1 says, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The Lord wants us to take Him and His teaching seriously. He wants us to grow more holy as time passes in the fear of God. People who continue in wickedness show they have no fear or respect for God. Many today don't

believe in God, don't think you can know whether there is a God, or even care whether God exists. Do you fear God?

We must cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit. It's not merely changing how we act but also how we think and what we value. James 4:7 to 8 says, "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded." Let's discipline ourselves and strive once again to be God's holy people and turn from sin.

To become a Christian, place your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He died to free you from sin and rose again to prove that He was indeed the Son of God. Because you love Him, turn from wickedness and strive for holiness. Confess your faith in Him as the Christ, the Son of God; and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, just as Acts 2:38 teaches. Now baptism into Christ is an immersion in water of someone old enough to believe and needing to repent. We have no record of infant sprinkling for baptism in the New Testament. Why not obey the gospel of Christ today? Oh yes.

We hope today's study about fearing the Lord has opened your eyes and made you consider your soul. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, send your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now there's a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. And you can watch SEARCH on YouTube! Just subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and be sure to like the programs as you watch. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

We do ask that you show God your love by worshiping at church. You need a church family. And if you can attend, don't neglect worshiping at church. There's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll help you find one. Well, we'll be back next week. And as always God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.