



PROVERBS

Proverbs 1:7 The fear factor

The problem with Proverbs is that on their own, they can't actually make a person wise. After all, even a parrot can be trained to recite a proverb. There's more to wisdom than simply mouthing clever statements. So where does real wisdom begin? What's its foundation? What's it built on? Proverbs – along with the rest of the Bible – is absolutely clear about this. *

Preparation

Read Proverbs 1:7. What do you think it means to have a 'fear of the Lord'?

According to Proverbs 2:5-6, what kind of knowledge is it that we need most?

Proverbs 9:10 makes the same point very clearly. It's really the 'theme verse' of the book, so write it out in full:

In what ways (if any) is a 'fear of the Lord' different to 'being scared of the Lord'?

What is there about God to be fearful of?

How does Proverbs describe those who refuse to 'fear God' and what sort of behaviour and attitudes will flow from fearing Him? See the following verses:

1:7
1:29
3:7
8:13
10:27
14:2
14:16
15:33

The call to 'fear God' is nothing new for the Israelites. Take a look back at the commands God gives in Leviticus 19:14 and 25:17. What sort of immediate outcomes should there be from 'fearing God'?

According to Deuteronomy 6:24, what will the ongoing result be of 'fearing the Lord'?





WISDOM

The fear factor cont...

For the people of Israel, living under the protection of God's promises in the promised land, their whole destiny depended on living in the 'fear of the Lord'. More than that, the people of Israel longed for the day when all the nations would bow down in fear of the Lord, under the rule of Israel's Messiah – a King who would himself "delight in the fear of the Lord." (See Isaiah 11:1-3) What will it mean for this king to fear the Lord?

Perhaps the 'fear of the Lord' seems more appropriate in the Old Testament than the New, but look at what Jesus teaches on this idea in Luke 12:4-7. Can you explain the interplay between 'fearing' and 'not fearing' in these verses?

Why is the early church described as "living in the fear of the Lord?" (Acts 9:31)

Application

Are you uncomfortable with the idea that we're meant to 'fear God'? Why, or why not?

Why do you think the 'fear of the Lord' is the starting point for wisdom?

How would you go about explaining what it means to 'fear the Lord' to an interested person who is not yet Christian?

What is the alternative to 'fearing the Lord'? What does this look like? And what are its outcomes?

What will the 'fear of the Lord' look like for the Christian? Explore what this might mean for different areas of life.

Consider Luke 12:4-7. Are there people, things, situations, or circumstances that you are tempted to fear more than the Lord? If so, how can the 'fear of the Lord' keep you from fearing them?

Prayer

Spend time asking God to fill you with reverent fear for Him and his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Consider areas of your life where this will have specific and practical implications, and pray about these areas.