

# The Missing Key

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## INTRO:

I made a public confession of my faith in Jesus at the age of 13, 51 years ago. I vividly recall the day I walked down the aisle of the church we were attending in Fresno, CA.

I believe I actually received the Lord prior to that public confession, but walking down that aisle in front of all those people seemed to cement the deal for me, making it even more real.

A few months ago I turned 64, so I have spent 5 decades of my life as a Christian. Not long ago I began asking myself some very important questions. First and foremost was *what have I to show for being a Christian that long?*

In other words, I was asking in effect, *do I know God any better now than I did five decades ago?*

The answer to that was a tepid, “Yes, a bit better.”

But that question and answer did not satisfy me at all because it didn’t really get to the heart of the matter. So, I began asking a *different* question, which has actually opened up the fuller meaning of God’s Word and my relationship to Him as I’ve never really understood it before.

## CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

Several years after I became a Christian, because of my lack of biblical knowledge, I was drawn into the Charismatic Movement, much the way Dr. Harry Ironsides was drawn into the holiness movement as he so eloquently explains in his book, *Holiness, the False and the True*.

Because of my involvement in the Charismatic Movement, I was taught that all I needed was to pursue a “second blessing,” which would empower me to live a holy life! That was it! I needed a “pouring” out of the Holy Spirit that often was said to come with great signs including tongues and once I had that, I would be forever increased with power from on high to live the holy life that God wants us to live.

I spent several years pursuing that and was often frustrated. Even when I thought I had received this so-called second blessing, I was left empty when all was said and done.

Eventually, through the study of His Word, I realized that there is no second blessing and that the Charismatic Movement itself was nothing more than recycled false spirituality of the signs and wonders movement. All of it was predicated on *feelings* used as arbiters of truth, as opposed to releasing them to a victorious Christian life.

### FEELINGS

Satan has always tried to lead us by our feelings as we see in the Garden of Eden and how he was able to use Eve's **feelings** against her to taint her view of God and the garden itself.

So, in recent months, I've concluded that there is something I have been missing almost completely over the years.

### THE KEY

Unfortunately, it turns out to be **THE** key if you will to just about everything related to living the Christian life in a way that fully honors God and brings about the creation of the character of Jesus within us. I don't believe I am oversimplifying by saying that either.

Without this *KEY*, there is very little to no growth and sin will prevail.

### This key CREATES:

- true humility
- an innate or more natural ability to resist temptation to sin
- a greater ability to love others as He loves us and,
- lives that resemble the life of Jesus
  - in the way He interacted with people
  - the way He loved them, and
  - the way He reached out to them with His Gospel.

We're going to look at a variety of passages from God's Word this morning and we'll start with **Isaiah 11:2-3:**

*And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge **and of the fear of the Lord**;*

*And shall make him of **quick understanding in the fear of the Lord**: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:*

Let me draw your attention to several phrases from that text:

- “...the spirit of the knowledge and of the fear of the Lord”, and
- “...shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord”

These two phrases describe attributes that indwelt our Lord Jesus as He walked this earth 2,000 years ago in human form.

The phrase “*shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*” has the sense of actually *DELIGHTING* in or *REVELLING* in the fear of the Lord.

In fact, the fear of the Lord is so important to God that it is the very foundation upon which everything in His life comes together.

This was lived by Jesus every *day*, every *moment* – all the time. Jesus so loved the fear of the LORD, that He literally delighted in fearing the Father.

We are going to spend the remainder of the time going over three points:

- 1. What is the Fear of the Lord?**
- 2. What does Fear of the Lord Accomplish? and,**
- 3. How is the Fear of the Lord Developed?**

Understand that we will not exhaust this topic. In fact, we will simply be introducing it. We could easily spend weeks on the subject.

I want to be clear in stating that I have – to my chagrin – just recently discovered the truth related to fearing the Lord and it pains me to admit that, but there it is.

I admit that I have not feared the Lord and certainly have not *delighted* in fearing Him the way that Jesus did. This is to my shame and maybe you can relate to that for yourself.

I'd also like to state that at times, I have been AFRAID of God but that is different than having the proper FEAR of the Lord. I wish we had time to go into that.

## **I. What is Fear of the LORD?**

So, let's look first at what the fear of the Lord is. There are generally two definitions, biblically speaking of fear related to God.

John Bunyan in his classic *The Fear of God* tells us that God is either SAVIOR or JUDGE. So there is a fear of God's judgment.

- **A) FEAR OF GOD'S JUDGMENT**

This type of fear is often experienced by the person who is outside of salvation, who has not yet received it. For that person, any fear they might experience where God is concerned is a fear of God's *judgment*.

However, the record of Scripture proves to us that most of those outside the Body of Christ never experience that type of fear until they are actually standing before Him.

Paul tells us quite clearly that with respect to the unsaved, "*There is no fear of God before their eyes*" (**Romans 3:18**).

**Hebrews 10:31** points out how dreadful it is to fall into the hands of the Living God.

Most outside Christianity have no fear of the Lord as they live their lives and unfortunately for them, they will fully experience the terror of never having known God in this life, as they stand before Him after their deaths.

In the meantime, they live their lives without concern, doing whatever they want to do because they are a law unto themselves, answering to no one.

For the person who is being drawn to God irresistibly by grace unmerited, that person often begins to sense an impending judgment. Because of that, they rightly wish to escape from it but don't know how.

They often become desperate to understand the dilemma within and God will often send one of His children to help them realize their need for Him that will cancel judgment and put them in a right relationship with the Creator of the Universe.

This is one type of fear, *the fear of judgment* by a righteous Judge who has the power to send to hell.

- **B) FEAR OF THE LORD AFTER SALVATION**

After people become Christians, we are repeatedly told by God's Word to FEAR Him, which translates to this:

- Having a tremendous desire from within to *never* **OFFEND** God!

Once a person becomes saved, they'll hopefully learn they will never be condemned by God for sin (**Romans 8**).

So then usually, fear stops being part of the Christian's life, replaced with joy or happiness, even though the Bible tells us repeatedly to fear the Lord.

Over the past few months, I've begun to wonder how much different my life would have been had I become occupied with the fear of the Lord in the same way that Jesus is said to have "delighted" in the *fear of the Lord*?

Fear of the Lord is an oft-repeated concept in Scripture. If it is not directly stated, it is often **implied**.

**Psalm 86:11** tells us

*Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: **unite my heart to fear thy name.** (every fiber of my being should unite to fear the Lord)*

**Ecclesiastes 12:13** informs us:

*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: **Fear God**, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.*

**Psalm 34:9** says:

*O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.*

**Proverbs 14:26** says:

*In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.*

**Proverbs 23:17** states:

*Let not thine heart envy sinners: but **be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.***

**Proverbs 9:10** tells us:

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.*

**Proverbs 1:7** states

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

Clearly, God wants us to **FEAR** Him! And we must learn to fear Him properly! We can actually entertain an UNGODLY fear that displeases the LORD, but we do not have time to get into that today.

The fear of the Lord from a biblical perspective is to have a growing, deep, abiding, reverential awe (fear) of God that literally can take our breath away. **It is a strong overriding desire to NOT ever do, think or say anything that would OFFEND God!**

To my shame and chagrin, I've not had that consistently for the 51 years I've lived as a Christian, except maybe here and there. I can look back and see times when I did fear Him, though I did not understand that's what I was doing at the time.

This fear of the Lord is something that can and should overwhelm us causing us to see nothing but God. He becomes the ALL in our life as we become the NOTHING. We will come to live only for God, to please Him, to bring Him glory.

It only comes as a healthy, honest, fear of the Lord is developed in our lives.

It is a growing desire to NEVER do anything that offends God, that would cause Him to break off fellowship with us until we get it straightened out and seek His forgiveness. It is a strong understanding that above all things, we would grow in our desire to fear ever offending Him! Nothing else matters.

The proper fear of the LORD in the Christian draws us to Him as opposed to pushing us away. If we rightly fear offending the Lord with our thoughts, actions or words, that fear of Him will overtake our lives, directing our thoughts, words, and actions.

So fear of the Lord is really a deep-seated fear of ever OFFENDING God, something we wish in growing measure to NEVER do.

## **II. What does Fear of the Lord Accomplish?**

Fear is important. It is necessary. We are commanded to fear OFFENDING the Lord!

But what exactly does fear of the Lord accomplish or create within us?

In **Genesis 39**, Joseph is faced with the unwanted and untoward propositions from Potiphar's wife. Joseph was likely a good-looking young man. I'm sure he was physically fit and in any case, Potiphar's wife – I'll call her Mrs. Potiphar since we don't know her name – saw Joseph as someone to conquer.

We know the story. Joseph did what he could to physically avoid her. He wanted nothing to do with her temptation to sin and would not yield.

**Why?** Where did Joseph get the power and ability to resist Mrs. Potiphar?

It is clear that because Joseph feared OFFENDING God, that very fear of the Lord that provided the ability to NOT sin against God.

Joseph's retort to Mrs. Potiphar was simple in v **9**:

*...how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*

Notice Joseph's concern was with GOD and in NO WAY did Joseph want to OFFEND God. He had grown to realize that he wanted to avoid offending God in any way.

What was it that created within **Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego** the ability to not only resist Nebuchadnezzar but to essentially rebuke him in **Daniel 3:16-18**?

*O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.*

*If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.*

*But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*

Please notice they said, “...we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.”

In other words, they didn't have to think carefully about how to couch their words so that they would not offend Nebuchadnezzar. Please notice also, they did not at first address him with the customary “O King” but “O Nebuchadnezzar”! The insolence of addressing the king by his name only without the royal title!

I submit to you that it was the fear of OFFENDING God that brought these three men to the point of not caring about their own lives one bit and were willing to burn to a cinder if that was the Lord's will for them, so much did they fear OFFENDING the Lord!

How is it with US?

There are many BIBLICAL examples of how people gained the victory over life's circumstances because they feared OFFENDING the LORD! Time does not permit us to list them all.

But let me provide a few examples of what happened when people did **NOT** fear OFFENDING the Lord.

Remember *humble* **Moses** of **Numbers 12:3**?

Why did Moses, instead of simply speaking to the rock as God had commanded in **Numbers 20**, struck the rock in disobedience to God? Because in that particular moment, Moses was not thinking of whether or not he would OFFEND the Lord! Because of that, he allowed his anger to deal with it.



Why did **King David**, who spent much of his life being a man after God's own heart, not only lust after Bathsheba, but committed adultery with her and THEN had her husband Uriah killed to cover his sin, **2 Samuel 11**?

It was because his lack of fear of OFFENDING the Lord caused him to think nothing of sin. David had the exact opposite response to the temptation that Joseph had because Joseph *did* fear OFFENDING the Lord.

We could go on and on, but suffice it to say that the proper fear of OFFENDING the Lord creates within believers the following:

- the *ability* to RESIST temptations to sin (**Psalm 86:11**)
- humility (**Proverbs 22:4**)
- knowledge of the holy (**Proverbs 9:10**)
- depth of understanding and wisdom (numerous Proverbs)

Isn't it amazing that Solomon is said to be the wisest man who ever lived except of course for Jesus?

Yet, we look at **Ecclesiastes** and we wonder what happened to his wisdom! Why didn't it keep him from doing what pagans did? Why did his wisdom allow him or even cause him to do the things that God detested?

It is because Solomon did not fear the Lord.

This is proof that wisdom alone is not good enough! Wisdom alone cannot *create* within anyone the ability to fear the Lord, though wisdom CAN lead us to that conclusion as it did with Solomon. You don't need to be the wisest man on earth to come to that conclusion though. God expects ALL of His children to realize it.

### RECAP

So we've learned what the fear of the Lord is: a strong, growing desire to not OFFEND God.

We've also learned that the fear of OFFENDING God grows within us the ability to resist temptation, an increase in humility, knowledge, and a depth of understanding and wisdom.

But HOW is this fear of OFFENDING God established within us?

### **III. How is the Fear of the Lord Developed?**

It starts by God giving this fear to us in the new birth.

The New Covenant described in **Jeremiah 32** speaks directly to the nation of Israel. However, those saved through Jesus and baptized into His Body receive many of the same benefits.

*And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may **fear me for ever**, for the good of them, and of their children after them:*

*And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me (Jeremiah 32:39-40)*

What God will one day do within the final remnant of the nation of Israel (Romans 9-11), He does within the lives of every person who receives salvation now. Notice that people will fear God how long? FOREVER!

God places that fear within us at the moment of our new birth and it is our job to DEVELOP it; to cause it to grow. But HOW do we develop that fear of the Lord? Five things quickly.

1. Immerse Yourself in God's Word
  - a. **Psalm 119:11** says, "*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*"
  - b. Feed on it
  - c. Memorize it
  - d. Meditate on it
  - e. Pray it
2. Actively Focus on God's Greatness
  - a. **Revelation 15:4** says, "*Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy...*"
3. Become Aware of God's Presence
  - a. I'm not talking about something ethereal like I was taught in the Charismatic Movement

- b. I'm speaking of the fact that God is within us, He sees us, and we cannot hide from Him
- 4. Associate with People Who also Fear God
  - a. **Psalm 119:63** says, "I am a companion of all who fear Thee, and of those who keep Thy precepts."
- 5. Pray! Ask God to Grow the Fear of Him within You!
  - a. **Matthew 7:7** tells us to ask and it will be given to you
  - b. **James 4:2** tells us we don't have because we don't ask
  - c. **1 John 5:14-15** reminds us that we should have confidence that if we ask Him anything according to His will, He hears us...
  - d. Is anything more appropriate than asking God to grow the fear He put within us when we were saved?

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, it is interesting that in **Job 1**, we learn in **verses 1** and **8** that Job *feared* God. Job lived the way he did because he feared the Lord or feared OFFENDING the Lord.

Yet, when we get to **Job 40**, we see something very enlightening.

*Then Job answered the LORD, and said,*

*Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.  
(vv 3-4)*

And in **Job 42:1-2**, we learn this:

*Then Job answered the LORD, and said, I know that thou canst do every thing and that no thought can be withholden from thee.*

In **verses 5** and **6** Job confesses:

*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.*

*Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

Wait, didn't Job fear offending the LORD in **Job 1**? Absolutely! But Job did not fear offending the LORD enough! It is a process of growth.

We should strive to be like Jesus of whom Isaiah the prophet said that Jesus would literally *DELIGHT* in the fear of the Lord!

What is it you fear?

Do you fear the loss of a job?

Do you fear the loss of a loved one?

Do you fear your own death?

What do you fear?

You cannot fear God *and* people or life itself. It is one or the other?

May we endeavor to fear OFFENDING God in thought, word and deed so that He will be greatly glorified in our lives. May we grow in that fear daily.

Let's pray.