

TO EVERY THING THERE IS A SEASON, AND A  
TIME TO EVERY PURPOSE UNDER THE HEAVEN: A  
TIME TO BE BORN, AND A TIME TO DIE; A TIME  
TO PLANT, AND A TIME TO PLUCK UP THAT  
WHICH IS PLANTED; A TIME TO KILL, AND A  
TIME TO HEAL; A TIME TO BREAK DOWN, AND

# Life Under the Sun

## The Fear of the Lord

A TIME TO BUILD UP; A TIME TO WEEP, AND A TIME  
TO LAUGH; TIME TO MOURN, AND A TIME TO  
DANCE; A TIME TO CAST AWAY STONES, AND A  
TIME TO GATHER STONES TOGETHER; A TIME TO  
EMBRACE, AND A TIME TO REFRAIN FROM  
EMBRACING; A TIME TO GET, AND A TIME TO LOSE;



**CORE SEMINARS**

*Studies on the Basics of the Christian Faith & Life*



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*"A profound sense of awe towards God is undoubtedly the dominant element in the attitude or set of emotions that the Bible calls 'the fear of God.'" - Jerry Bridges*

# THE RISE OF FEAR IN MODERN CULTURE

Modern society is increasingly marked by anxiety. Despite advances in medicine, security, and prosperity, fear levels continue to rise. People worry about terrorism, climate change, political instability, and personal safety. Parenting has become more cautious due to exaggerated fears of child abduction and other dangers. This paradox highlights a deeper issue: "We live more safely than ever before, yet we are skittish and panicky like never before."



**The Absence of the Fear of God** Fear of God once controlled other fears, providing stability and trust in a sovereign Creator. As Michael Reeves notes: "That fear of God was a happy and healthy fear that controlled our other fears, reining in anxiety." With society losing its reverence for God, people search for security in uncertain things. The atheistic promise of freedom from fear has instead led to greater fear and uncertainty. Fear is now treated as a psychological disease rather than a spiritual reality.

*Christians are not immune to this cultural shift. Many shy away from speaking about the fear of God, despite its prominence in Scripture. It is crucial to reclaim a biblical understanding of fear—distinguishing between sinful fear and the fear of the Lord.*



# WHAT IS THE FEAR OF THE LORD?

The fear of the Lord is a central theme in Scripture, yet it is often misunderstood. It is not a terror that drives us away from God, but an affectionate reverence that draws us closer.

## The Nature of the Fear of the Lord

- Proverbs 1:7 – "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."
- Exodus 20:18–20 – The Israelites trembled at God's presence, yet Moses urged them not to be afraid but to cultivate a right fear that would lead them away from sin.

## I. The Fear of the Lord We Dread

A. Sinful fear is driven by sin and rebellion. It leads people to flee from God rather than toward Him.

Examples include:

- The demons' fear (James 2:19)
- Adam's fear after the fall (Genesis 3:10)
- The unfaithful servant's distorted view of his master (Luke 19:21)



*"Not a groveling, shrinking fear but an affectionate reverence by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to the Father's will."*

Sinful fear distorts our perception of God, making Him seem harsh and unapproachable. This fear drives people either into religious performance or into outright rejection of God.

### B. Sinful Fear in Christians

Even believers can struggle with sinful fear, often due to poor teaching, trials, or Satan's accusations. The cure is found in the Spirit's work—replacing sinful fear with holy fear.

## II. The Fear of the Lord as Delight

The right fear of the Lord brings joy and spiritual vitality:

- Psalm 130:4 – "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."
- Proverbs 9:10 – "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."

The paradox of fear and love is central to the Christian life. True love and reverence are inseparable. Proper fear leads to wisdom, stability, and a deep awareness of God's majesty.

### Key Scripture:

"Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him." - Psalm 33:8



*"The fear of the Lord is not the fear that makes you run from Him; it is the fear that makes you run to Him."*

# LIVING IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD

## I. Fear is a Matter of the Heart

The fear of the Lord is not merely an external practice but an internal transformation. True fear reshapes our affections and leads to deeper worship. Ecclesiastes highlights the stabilizing effect of fearing God:

- Ecclesiastes 3:14 – "Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever... that men should fear before Him."
- Ecclesiastes 12:13 – "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

## II. The Cross Resets Our Fear

The cross transforms sinful fear into holy fear. The woman who anointed Jesus's feet (Luke 7:46–47) displayed reverent love because she understood the depth of God's forgiveness. The gospel increases both our joy and our trembling.

## III. Fear of the Lord as the Distinctive Mark of Our Lives

Our fears reveal what we love most. The right fear of God:

- Matures believers in wisdom and obedience.
- Strengthens us against sin and suffering.
- Replaces the fear of man with boldness in Christ.



*"Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Isaiah 8:13*

## IV. Trembling Before God Prepares Us for Eternity

All who encounter God in Scripture—Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, John—fall before Him in awe. Even creation trembles at His presence (Isaiah 6:4, Hebrews 12:26).

### Eternity: A World of Fear

- Hell is eternal dread of holiness (Job 18:14, James 2:19).
- Heaven is the joy-filled fear of God's majesty (Psalm 89:7).

Now, our experience of this fear is partial; in eternity, it will be complete.

## V. The Spirit's work in our lives

The Holy Spirit moves believers from apathy to vibrancy, replacing worldly fear with godly reverence. The more we tremble before God in awe and delight, the more heavenly we become.

### *The Spirit accomplishes this by:*

- Reviving our affections for Christ (Psalm 34:8–9).
- Increasing our longing for holiness (Ephesians 4:30).
- Expelling sinful affections through the power of greater love (Philippians 3:8).



*"The fear of the Lord is not the opposite of love for God; it is what love for God looks like."*



# SUGGESTED RESOURCES

1. Reeves, Michael. What Does It Mean to Fear the Lord?  
Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2023.
2. Bridges, Jerry. The Joy of Fearing God. Colorado Springs, CO:  
WaterBrook Press, 1997.
3. Welch, Edward T. When People Are Big and God Is Small:  
Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and the Fear of  
Man. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1997.



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