

Lesson 2: The Fear of the Lord

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”
—Proverbs 1:7—

The first hurdle in any project is knowing where to begin. Parenting is no different. *Where should a parent begin?*

The book of Proverbs is the Bible’s book on parenting. According to the theme verse of this book, the “beginning” of education is “the fear of the LORD.”

The beginning of true education is an *attitude*.

Did you catch that? *Knowledge* begins with an *attitude* of fear.

Fear - a proper attitude towards authority.

I say “attitude” rather than “emotion,” because the fear of the Lord is not so much a reaction as it is a settled conviction of the heart. Yes, this fear has an emotional side (Ps. 119:120), but it is much deeper than just that.

This fear is not directed towards punishment, but towards a person:

The wicked fear punishment (Pr. 28:1), but not God (Ps. 36:1).
The righteous fear God, and thus fear no punishment (Pr. 14:26).

In fact, the fear of the Lord leads to obedience (e.g. Eccl. 12:13).

The beginning of true education is an attitude towards *God*.

According to the Bible, a child should fear his parents (Lev. 19:3). After all, he owes his origin to them, and they are God’s servants over him in his childhood.

Again, this is an attitude more than an emotion. Please understand me. This is not child abuse. Woe to the parent who is making a little one cower in fright like a dog! That said, it is true that when a child is young, controlled discipline must lay a foundation that makes the parent’s authority count. (For how to administer such discipline, see lessons four and five.) Even with a healthy fear of parents, the fear of the Lord is needed for true wisdom. Consider these examples:

The Life of Joash

As an infant, Joash was saved from death by the priest Jehoiada, who raised Joash as his very own son. When Joash became king, he “did what was right in the sight of the LORD *all the days of Jehoiada the priest*” (2 Chr. 24:2). However, when Jehoiada died, other men caught the king’s ear, and he turned away from the Lord. Significantly, when God warned Joash through Jehoiada’s own son, the king “did not remember the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but killed his son” (24:22). In the end, Jehoiada was buried with the kings, but Joash was not (24:16, 25).

Beware! What good is it to raise a child who obeys only because of me? Should we not train our children to fear God? In other words, is our aim to raise “good kids” or *godly kids*?

The Life of Joseph

As a teenager, Joseph was sold into slavery by his own brothers. In Egypt, Joseph served his master well by God’s blessing, and so was put in charge of all his master’s possessions. His master’s wife, however, tried to seduce Joseph into bed with her. Joseph refused, telling her, “Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:8-9).

Did you catch it? Joseph could have sinned, being a long way from home. More significantly, he did right, not merely because he would have done wickedness to his master, but because he would have sinned against *God*. Now that is our goal. We want our children to leave our sight and do what is right out of a fear of *God*.

Again, this is the difference between raising “good kids” and *godly* kids.

Application

1. Do your children have an attitude of fear towards authority, or are they wise in their own eyes? Conversely, do your children accept instruction and correction, or do they “despise” learning and training? In other words, are you raising wise children or fools?

2. If your children do fear authority, do they fear you only, or do they also fear God? Are you trying to raise good kids or godly kids? Are you teaching your children to do what is right “because I say so” or “because God says so”?