

A Simple Way to Understand Fear of the Lord

I've concluded that there is a simple way to understand mentally what it means to *fear the Lord*. I want to be clear here though in saying that this is simply an easier way to mentally *understand it*. This does not mean it is an easier way to *live* it, although understanding it better does help provide a more clear goal.

I've talked a great deal about the need in my life to learn to fear the Lord more. I did a search of this blog and the results that came up are found here: [Fear the Lord](#). It is an extremely important topic and one that I personally believe needs to take precedence in my own life and one that should be firmly established in the life of every authentic Christian. Without it, we will flounder and be tossed here and there by our emotions. With it, a stability will be created; one that allows us to live in a way that glorifies God.

I've tried to define the fear of the Lord in various terms previously; usually by saying something like it is a deep, profound, reverential awe (fear) of God. This is certainly one way to put it and it seems that many Bible scholars tend to define it that way. That's fine in one sense because it separates it from a fear of judgment by God, which does not ever apply to the Christian, so the Christian should never have an expectation of God's impending judgment or pouring out of His wrath on our life.

However, I think there might be an easier definition that may provide a greater understanding of what the fear of the Lord truly is so that it causes us to see and understand the natural consequences of that fear of the Lord.

I've come to understand that a true fear of the Lord is really a *fear of OFFENDING the Lord* or of NOT wanting to OFFEND the Lord. To me at least, this is an important distinction because when we talk about the fear of the Lord, we need to qualify it so that we separate it from the tendency of people to automatically think of God's impending judgment or wrath. This is why, I believe, most Bible scholars define the fear of the Lord by using words like reverential, profound, deep, growing awe. Certainly, it *is* an awe of God, isn't it? But that actually does not occur by itself or on its own. It occurs as Christians seek to develop that fear of the Lord through the reading, meditating, memorizing and praying of His Word. As we "hide" His Word in our hearts, the fear of the Lord that is placed within us by God Himself at our new birth (**Jeremiah 32**), grows or is fanned into a flame.

But for me at least, looking at the fear of the Lord in terms of not wanting to ever OFFEND God through a wrong thought, word or deed, helps create a better mental picture and directs my soul quickly to the reality of what the fear of the Lord actually is trying to produce within me.

The goal of every Christian - I believe - should be to have such a desire to *never* OFFEND God that this desire produces within us the necessary ability to not offend Him. It simply makes more sense to me to understand the fear of the Lord in terms of desiring not to offend God rather than simply the more general "fear of the LORD."

I continue to go back to Joseph of **Genesis 39**. His strong desire was NOT to offend God and he even implies as much in his response to Mrs. Potiphar:

how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? (v 9)

The question Joseph is asking Potiphar's wife has to do with wanting her to understand that under no circumstances can Joseph do what she wants him to do because Joseph knows if he gave into her demands, Joseph would be OFFENDING God to a tremendous degree. He could not bring himself to do that. It was anathema to him. He even calls it a "great wickedness."

So inclined to God's heart and desires was Joseph that the thought of OFFENDING God in that sin was horrifying to Joseph! He could not justify adultery with any excuse! His concern was that he would OFFEND God mightily. He was actually trying to reason with her but unfortunately, she was not concerned at all about offending God. She simply wanted some afternoon delight and when she could not get her way, decided to accuse him of attempted rape.

There is no reason to think that Christians who remain true to God and do all to keep from offending Him will not suffer for it in this life. The Bible is filled with examples of it. But God does not consider this life the end, does He? All will be dealt with and God Himself will avenge.

But the point I'm making is that the fear of the Lord is best seen and understood (at least for me), in living in a way that seeks to never offend God in thought, word or deed. If I look at it this way, it makes so much more sense to me that trying to approach it from seeing the fear of the Lord as a deeply, profound, reverential awe. While that is the *result* of it, the actual impetus in my mind should be a strong, growing desire to never offend God at all.

I hope this makes sense to you and may be beneficial as you seek to serve Him throughout each day He gives you. If we will only develop a strong desire to never offend God, I believe the fear of the Lord will be developed within us.

Look at Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego of **Daniel 3**. They were called on the carpet before the mightiest king alive at that time; Nebuchadnezzar. He had set up an image that he demanded everyone worship when they heard music. These three men refused and for that, they had to explain things to Nebuchadnezzar.

O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up. (Daniel 3:16-18 NKJV)

"*We have no need to answer you in this matter.*" They were so concerned about offending God that they didn't really care if they offended Nebuchadnezzar! They also assured the king that though God *could* save them from the fiery furnace, if He chose *not* to do so, He would *still* save them from Nebuchadnezzar through death anyway! What faith! What trust! All because they were more concerned about not offending God than Nebuchadnezzar.

Yet here we have one Christian leader after another kowtowing and compromising with the world. It seems clear they have no concern about whether or not they are offending God. None at all.

Fear does strange things. It can cause us to worry about offending some high-ranking official. It can make us worry about offending someone who we think has power over us. But the fear of the Lord should actually cause us to live in a way that makes us never want to offend God in any way, shape or form. When faced with temptation, our first response to it should be "*NO! I don't want to offend God! Get behind me, Satan!*"

Have a good day in the Lord, folks. Seek His face and let's learn as His children that there is great reward in seeking to never offend our God; the God of the universe!