

The Way of Wisdom...

The Fear of the Lord

April 14, 2026

2 Bookends:

Proverbs 1:7

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

Proverbs 31: 29, 30

“Many daughters have done nobly,
But you excel them all. Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.”

Somewhere along the way, we turned “the fear of the Lord” into something that sounds like a jump scare at a haunted house. Like God is hiding behind a corner with a fog machine and a thunder sound effect, just waiting to yell “BOO” and watch us scatter in panic. That is how it feels in modern English. But that is not what the Hebrews meant when they used those words. Not even close.

The Hebrew word is *yirah*, and it does not mean terror, panic, or dread. It means awe. It means reverence. It means holy trembling when you suddenly realize you are standing in the presence of something that is real, powerful, and far bigger than you. It is not the kind of fear that makes you run away. It is the kind that makes you stop, breathe, and recognize that you are not the center of the universe. It is the feeling you get at the edge of the ocean or under a sky full of stars when your soul whispers, this is bigger than me.

Scripture says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10). Not the beginning of anxiety. Not the beginning of religious performance. The beginning of wisdom. Because once you truly see God for who He is, everything else finally falls into its proper place. You stop trying

to carry what was never meant to be yours to hold. You stop pretending you are in control of things you were never meant to manage. You begin to live differently, not because you are scared of God, but because you are deeply aware of Him.

The fear of the Lord is what Moses felt at the burning bush. He did not run. He did not argue. He did not try to explain himself. He took off his shoes. God said, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5). That moment was not about terror. It was about recognition. Moses understood that he was standing on ground that had been touched by the presence of God, and it changed how he stood, how he listened, and how he moved forward.

The fear of the Lord is not about shrinking away from God. It is about refusing to shrink God down. It keeps us from turning Him into something small enough to manage, adjust, and fit neatly into our schedules and expectations. It reminds us that He is not casual, not tame, and not something we can control. And yet, somehow, He is still gentle, still near, still good. That is the holy tension of who He is.

Proverbs says, “The fear of the Lord leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied” (Proverbs 19:23). Fear that leads to life is not destructive. It is grounding. It is the kind of reverence that brings peace, because you finally understand that you are not carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders. You are held by the One who already carries it.

And the most beautiful part is that, in Scripture, fear and love are never opposites. “What does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 10:12). Fear and love live together. The fear of the Lord is loving God so deeply that you do not treat Him lightly. It is reverence that softens you, awe that steadies you, and wonder that slowly changes the way you walk through the world.

The fear of the Lord is the quiet, holy moment when your soul finally says, He is God. I am not.
And that is very, very good.