

# Counseling Rooted in the Fear of God

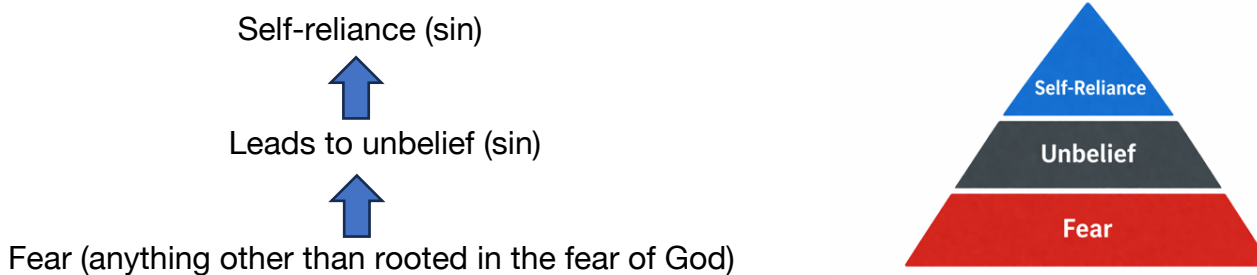
## Pastor Aaron

### The controlling nature of fear

- “Our culture has lost God as the \_\_\_\_\_ of fear”- Michael Reeves.
- Fear motivates our counselees either toward \_\_\_\_\_, or toward \_\_\_\_\_.
- Fear is a matter of the heart, but our hearts cannot be trusted (Jeremiah 17:8)
- As counselors, we must be prepared to discern and cultivate a biblical fear of God in the lives of our counselees.

### Biblical theme in Scripture

- Fear of God is a thread connecting Genesis to Revelation
- Most frequent command in Scripture is: \_\_\_\_\_
- More than 150 references to the fear of God in the Bible.<sup>1</sup>
- God stores up his goodness for those who fear him (Psalm 31:19)
- The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil (Proverbs 8:13)



### Biblical Counseling begins in having a holy and biblical fear in the Lord!

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of 1. \_\_\_\_\_ (Proverbs 1:7)  
 2. \_\_\_\_\_ (Proverbs 9:10)

The fear of the God is the beginning of biblical counseling!

If counseling is not \_\_\_\_\_ in the fear of God, we and our counselees are susceptible to being motivated by anything and everything else other than pleasing God.

What is the fear of God?

***Fear of God is experiencing reverential awe in knowing who God is as our Father, as we taste and see His goodness in relationship with Jesus Christ.***

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to Fear of the Lord/Fear of God Scripture list in the Appendix

## Two different kinds of fear:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ -- (*Servile Fear*) – fear that a slave would feel toward a harsh or intimidating master, or a lieutenant receiving intense orders from his sergeant.

- Rooted in fear of punishment with condemnation- 1 John 4:18; Romans 8:1
- Skewed view of the grace and kindness of God (Romans 2:4), leaving counselees vulnerable.
- Drives us away from God, not to Him.
- Encourages works-based salvation tendencies, without heart change.

Some examples of unbiblical fear in Scripture:

- Abram and Sarai in Genesis 12:10-20
- King Saul in Samuel 15
- Sarai in Genesis 16

2. \_\_\_\_\_ -- (*Filial Fear*)— fear that of a child toward their father. “...an indefinable mixture of reverence, fear, pleasure, joy and awe which fills our hearts when we realize who God is and what he has done for us.” -Sinclair Ferguson

- Rooted in receiving discipline from God, more than a distant Creator, but our heavenly Father.
- Biblical view of God both as Holy (Isaiah 6:3) and yet, merciful, gracious, and slow to anger (Psalm 103:8).
- Captivates our hearts and brings glory to God in word and deed (James 1:23-24).
- Cultivates godly character in alignment with Hebrews 12:11
- David’s response to personal sin with Bathsheba in Psalm 51

## Key Biblical references to biblical fear in God:

- Neh. 1:11 – “and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name.”
- Psalm 2:11 – “serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.”
- Prov. 28:14 – “Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always...”

Hope for the fear-filled!

- Psalm 112:1
- Jeremiah 17:5-8
- Look to Jesus! Isaiah 11:1-3

**Punishment vs. Discipline?** Hebrews 12:7-11

## Proper and Improper Responses

The nature of the flesh does not naturally fear God (Jeremiah 17:9-10; Exodus 20:20; 1 Corinthians 10:6-14) but we do naturally fear everything else.

*Counsel toward a proper view of the fear of God!*

	NON-CHRISTIAN	CHRISTIAN
PROPER	<b>Scenario A</b> Accurately recognizing that you justly stand under God's wrath and deserve His righteous condemnation.	<b>Scenario B</b> Reverential awe when you behold God's glorious, majestic holiness, yet confident of His faithful love for you and that Christ has absorbed God's wrath in your place.
IMPROPER	<b>Scenario C</b> Inaccurately and blasphemously viewing God as a capricious, tyrannical ogre.	<b>Scenario D</b> Questioning God's faithful love for you, doubting His saving promises, fearing final condemnation, etc.

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## Justification is the fuel for sanctification

### 1. What is justification?

*“Justification is the legal act whereby God declares a sinner righteous based on empty-handed faith in the all sufficient death and resurrection of his Son.”<sup>3</sup>*

### 2. Misunderstood justification causes:

- a. Struggle in personal growth away from enslaving sin
- b. Creates an unbiblical view of the fear of God
- c. Feelings of condemnation through punishment
- d. Produces self-reliance

“Christ died to justify us and condemn sin, while our flesh fights to condemn us and justify sin.” -Counselee

## What do our counselees need to know about justification?

- Romans 5:1-5
  - Justified by faith
  - Peace with God
  - Access limitless grace
  - Rejoice in hope of the glory of God in our suffering

<sup>2</sup> Jones, Robert. Everyone, Including You, Should Fear God. 2025. <https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2025/11/05/everyone-including-you-should-fear-god/>

<sup>3</sup> Tautges, Paul. You are Justified by God and Before God 2022. [www.counselingoneanother.com/2022/02/17/you-are-justified-by-god-and-before-god/](http://www.counselingoneanother.com/2022/02/17/you-are-justified-by-god-and-before-god/)

- Justification is not experiential. *“Legal is an important word in this definition because it emphasizes the fact that justification is not experiential. It is an announcement in the ‘courtroom of heaven.’ Justification is not the act whereby God makes us holy; that is sanctification, which is the lifelong process. In contrast, justification is a one-time event that forever changes the sinner’s standing before God based on imputed righteousness alone.”<sup>4</sup>*
- Sanctification is experiential. Justification and sanctification are significantly different doctrines. Sanctification begins upon wholly accepting the doctrine of justification in our life.
- Justification becomes the fuel for sanctification—not a hurdle in personal growth

### 3. Case Study

Carson struggles with homosexual temptation, in part, because the biblical fear of God is misunderstood. He fears punishment from God, and he fears getting caught and the fear of man. This leads him to question the doctrine of justification in his life. He exchanges truth for a lie. He wrestles with, “Am I really justified by faith alone in Christ?” and “I feel super unworthy because I continue to struggle with my sin.” The focus of his self-reliance now seeks perfection as the goal. He must earn the gift of salvation. Perfectionism is the motivation, not faithfulness to Christ and His glory. Because Carson struggles to be perfect, continuous sexual sin remains a pattern in his life. This misunderstanding of justification doctrinally, along with the lure of fleshly sexual pleasure, only cultivates enslavement to personal sin—not freedom in Christ from it. Because Carson struggles to be perfect, he continues hiding his sexual sin pattern from others.

Questions from the case study:

1. What are the controlling fears for Carson?
2. What seeds of unbelief began to take root in Carson’s faith?
3. How is self-reliance evident in his life and testimony?



### **Counseling Rooted in the Fear of God-** what do our counselees need to know?

Biblical fear of God results:

1. Humility begins
  - a. Romans 11:20
  - b. Proverbs 15:33
2. Heart change happens
  - a. Psalm 31:19
  - b. Psalm 55:19
3. Protection from personal sin and heart idols

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<sup>4</sup> Tautges, Paul. You are Justified by God and Before God 2022. [www.counselingoneanother.com/2022/02/17/you-are-justified-by-god-and-before-god/](http://www.counselingoneanother.com/2022/02/17/you-are-justified-by-god-and-before-god/)

- a. Exodus 20:20
  - b. Jeremiah 32:38-40
  - c. Psalm 34:4
4. God-glorifying motivation
- a. 2 Corinthians 5:10
  - b. 2 Corinthians 5:11
  - c. 2 Corinthians 5:14
  - d. Psalm 96:4

### **Encouragement for you, as counselors:**

We must first experience this biblical fear of God in our own lives, as counselors, overflowing into the lives of our counselees because our aim is to glorify him in life and death (2 Corinthians 5:9)

1. The Lord is glorified to be feared with reverential awe in worship (Psalm 147:7-11).  
He delights in this!
  - a. Biblical fear of God is discerned
  - b. Biblical fear of God is cultivated
  - c. Biblical fear of God is experienced
2. The fear of the Lord is a gift of grace for protection of our sin-prone hearts—not a curse. “Fear of the Lord is the soul of godliness.” (2 Peter 1:3-4).
3. Counsel from a clear understanding of the doctrine of justification- (Hebrews 4:12; Romans 5:1-5).

*“The fear of the Lord is a pleasure to believers, for it is about enjoying his fearfully lovely glory.” - Michael Reeves*

**“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!” Psalm 34:8-9**

Counseling rooted in the Fear of God seeks to cultivate a biblical fear which reigns as primary in our \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Recommended Resources:**

Jerry Bridges, *The Joy of Fearing God* (Waterbrook, 2004)

Michael Reeves, *What Does It Mean to Fear the Lord* (Crossway, 2021)

Michael Reeves, *Rejoice & Tremble: The Surprising Good News of the Fear of the Lord* (Crossway, 2021)

John Street, *Passions of the Heart: Biblical Counsel for Stubborn Sexual Sins* (P&R Publishing Company, 2019)

## Appendix: Fear of God Passages in Scripture

1. **Genesis 20:11** – “There is no fear of God at all in this place...”
2. **Genesis 22:12** – “Now I know that you fear God...”
3. **Genesis 31:42** – “the Fear of Isaac”
4. **Genesis 42:18** – “for I fear God”
5. **Exodus 1:17** – “the midwives feared God”
6. **Exodus 1:21** – “because the midwives feared God”
7. **Exodus 9:20** – “whoever feared the word of the LORD”
8. **Exodus 14:31** – “the people feared the LORD”
9. **Exodus 18:21** – “men who fear God”
10. **Exodus 20:20** – “that the fear of him may be before you”
11. **Leviticus 19:14** – “you shall fear your God”
12. **Leviticus 19:32** – “you shall fear your God”
13. **Leviticus 25:17** – “you shall fear your God”
14. **Leviticus 25:36** – “fear your God”
15. **Leviticus 25:43** – “but shall fear your God”
16. **Leviticus 25:17** – “fear your God”
17. **Deuteronomy 4:10** – “that they may learn to fear me”
18. **Deuteronomy 5:29** – “that they had such a heart as this always, to fear me”
19. **Deuteronomy 6:2** – “that you may fear the LORD your God”
20. **Deuteronomy 6:13** – “It is the LORD your God you shall fear”
21. **Deuteronomy 6:24** – “the LORD commanded us... to fear the LORD our God”
22. **Deuteronomy 8:6** – “fear the LORD your God”
23. **Deuteronomy 10:12** – “to fear the LORD your God”
24. **Deuteronomy 10:20** – “You shall fear the LORD your God”
25. **Deuteronomy 13:4** – “You shall walk after the LORD... and fear him”
26. **Deuteronomy 14:23** – “that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always”
27. **Deuteronomy 17:13** – “shall hear and fear”
28. **Deuteronomy 17:19** – “that he may learn to fear the LORD his God”
29. **Deuteronomy 21:21** – “all Israel shall hear, and fear”
30. **Deuteronomy 25:18** – “he did not fear God”
31. **Deuteronomy 28:58** – “that you may fear this glorious and awesome name”
32. **Deuteronomy 31:12** – “that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD”
33. **Deuteronomy 31:13** – “that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God”
34. **Joshua 4:24** – “that all the peoples... may fear the LORD”
35. **Joshua 24:14** – “Now therefore fear the LORD”
36. **1 Samuel 12:14** – “If you will fear the LORD and serve him”
37. **1 Samuel 12:24** – “Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully”
38. **2 Samuel 23:3** – “one who rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God”
39. **1 Kings 8:40** – “that they may fear you all the days”
40. **1 Kings 18:3** – “Obadiah feared the LORD greatly”
41. **2 Kings 4:1** – “your servant feared the LORD”
42. **2 Kings 17:7** – “because the people... had feared other gods”
43. **2 Kings 17:25** – “they did not fear the LORD”
44. **2 Kings 17:28** – “taught them how they should fear the LORD”
45. **2 Kings 17:32** – “So they also feared the LORD”
46. **2 Kings 17:33** – “They feared the LORD but also served their own gods”
47. **2 Kings 17:34** – “To this day they do not fear the LORD”

48. **2 Kings 17:35** – “You shall not fear other gods”
49. **2 Kings 17:36** – “but you shall fear the LORD”
50. **2 Kings 17:39** – “but you shall fear the LORD your God”
51. **1 Chronicles 16:25** – “he is to be feared above all gods”
52. **2 Chronicles 6:31** – “that they may fear you”
53. **2 Chronicles 19:7** – “Now then, let the fear of the LORD be upon you”
54. **2 Chronicles 19:9** – “in the fear of the LORD”
55. **Nehemiah 1:11** – “your servants who delight to fear your name”
56. **Nehemiah 5:9** – “ought you not to walk in the fear of our God?”
57. **Nehemiah 5:15** – “I did not do so, because of the fear of God”
58. **Nehemiah 7:2** – “a more faithful and God-fearing man”
59. **Esther 3:2** – Mordecai would not bow (*often tied thematically to fearing God above man*)
60. **Job 1:1** – “one who feared God”
61. **Job 1:8** – “a blameless and upright man, who fears God”
62. **Job 2:3** – “still he holds fast... who fears God”
63. **Job 4:6** – “Is not your fear of God your confidence?”
64. **Job 6:14** – “forsakes the fear of the Almighty”
65. **Job 15:4** – “you are doing away with the fear of God”
66. **Job 22:4** – “Is it for your fear of him that he reproves you?”
67. **Job 28:28** – “the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom”
68. **Psalms 2:11** – “Serve the LORD with fear”
69. **Psalms 5:7** – “I will bow down... in the fear of you”
70. **Psalms 15:4** – “who honors those who fear the LORD”
71. **Psalms 19:9** – “the fear of the LORD is clean”
72. **Psalms 22:23** – “You who fear the LORD, praise him!”
73. **Psalms 25:12** – “Who is the man who fears the LORD?”
74. **Psalms 25:14** – “The friendship/secret counsel of the LORD is for those who fear him”
75. **Psalms 31:19** – “how abundant is your goodness... for those who fear you”
76. **Psalms 33:8** – “Let all the earth fear the LORD”
77. **Psalms 33:18** – “the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him”
78. **Psalms 34:7** – “around those who fear him”
79. **Psalms 34:9** – “Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints”
80. **Psalms 40:3** – “many will see and fear”
81. **Psalms 55:19** – “because they do not fear God”
82. **Psalms 60:4** – “You have set up a banner for those who fear you”
83. **Psalms 61:5** – “the heritage of those who fear your name”
84. **Psalms 66:16** – “Come and hear, all you who fear God”
85. **Psalms 67:7** – “let all the ends of the earth fear him”
86. **Psalms 76:7** – “you, you are to be feared”
87. **Psalms 76:11** – “let all around him bring gifts to him who is to be feared”
88. **Psalms 85:9** – “his salvation is near to those who fear him”
89. **Psalms 86:11** – “that I may fear your name”
90. **Psalms 96:4** – “he is to be feared above all gods”
91. **Psalms 99:3** – “Let them praise your great and awesome name”
92. **Psalms 102:15** – “the nations will fear the name of the LORD”
93. **Psalms 103:11** – “toward those who fear him”
94. **Psalms 103:13** – “for those who fear him”
95. **Psalms 103:17** – “from everlasting... on those who fear him”
96. **Psalms 111:10** – “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom”
97. **Psalms 112:1** – “Blessed is the man who fears the LORD”

98. **Psalm 115:11** – “You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD”
99. **Psalm 115:13** – “He will bless those who fear the LORD”
100. **Psalm 118:4** – “Let those who fear the LORD say...”
101. **Psalm 119:38** – “for those who fear you”
102. **Psalm 119:63** – “I am a companion of all who fear you”
103. **Psalm 128:1** – “Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD”
104. **Psalm 128:4** – “the man be blessed who fears the LORD”
105. **Psalm 130:4** – “that you may be feared”
106. **Psalm 135:20** – “O house of Levi, bless the LORD... you who fear the LORD”
107. **Psalm 145:19** – “He fulfills the desire of those who fear him”
108. **Psalm 147:11** – “the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him”
109. **Proverbs 1:7** – “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge”
110. **Proverbs 1:29** – “did not choose the fear of the LORD”
111. **Proverbs 2:5** – “you will understand the fear of the LORD”
112. **Proverbs 3:7** – “fear the LORD, and turn away from evil”
113. **Proverbs 8:13** – “The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil”
114. **Proverbs 9:10** – “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom”
115. **Proverbs 10:27** – “The fear of the LORD prolongs life”
116. **Proverbs 14:2** – “Whoever walks in uprightness fears the LORD”
117. **Proverbs 14:26** – “In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence”
118. **Proverbs 14:27** – “The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life”
119. **Proverbs 15:16** – “Better is a little with the fear of the LORD”
120. **Proverbs 15:33** – “The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom”
121. **Proverbs 16:6** – “by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil”
122. **Proverbs 19:23** – “The fear of the LORD leads to life”
123. **Proverbs 22:4** – “The reward for humility and fear of the LORD”
124. **Proverbs 23:17** – “continue in the fear of the LORD all the day”
125. **Proverbs 24:21** – “My son, fear the LORD and the king”
126. **Proverbs 28:14** – “Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always”
127. **Proverbs 31:30** – “a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised”
128. **Ecclesiastes 3:14** – “God has done it, so that people fear before him”
129. **Ecclesiastes 5:7** – “But God is the one you must fear”
130. **Ecclesiastes 8:12** – “it will be well with those who fear God”
131. **Ecclesiastes 8:13** – “it will not be well with the wicked... because he does not fear before God”
132. **Ecclesiastes 12:13** – “Fear God and keep his commandments”
133. **Isaiah 8:13** – “let him be your fear”
134. **Isaiah 11:2** – “the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD”
135. **Isaiah 11:3** – “his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD”
136. **Isaiah 25:3** – “the city of ruthless nations will fear you”
137. **Isaiah 29:13** – “their fear of me is a commandment taught by men”
138. **Isaiah 33:6** – “the fear of the LORD is Zion’s treasure”
139. **Isaiah 50:10** – “Who among you fears the LORD?”
140. **Isaiah 59:19** – “they shall fear the name of the LORD”
141. **Jeremiah 5:22** – “Do you not fear me? declares the LORD”
142. **Jeremiah 10:7** – “Who would not fear you, O King of the nations?”
143. **Jeremiah 26:19** – “Did he not fear the LORD?”
144. **Jeremiah 32:39** – “that they may fear me forever”
145. **Jeremiah 32:40** – “I will put the fear of me in their hearts”
146. **Jeremiah 33:9** – “they shall fear and tremble”

147. **Daniel 6:26** – “men are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel”
148. **Hosea 3:5** – “they shall come in fear to the LORD”
149. **Jonah 1:9** – “I fear the LORD”
150. **Malachi 1:6** – “If I am a master, where is my fear?”
151. **Malachi 3:5** – “those who do not fear me”
152. **Malachi 3:16** – “those who feared the LORD”
153. **Malachi 4:2** – “for you who fear my name”
154. **Luke 1:50** – “his mercy is for those who fear him”
155. **Luke 1:74** – “that we... might serve him without fear” (*important contrast text*)
156. **Luke 12:4-5** – “fear him who... has authority to cast into hell”
157. **Luke 18:2** – “neither feared God nor respected man”
158. **Luke 18:4** – “Though I neither fear God nor respect man”
159. **Luke 23:40** – “Do you not fear God?”
160. **Acts 9:31** – “walking in the fear of the Lord”
161. **Acts 10:2** – Cornelius “feared God”
162. **Acts 10:22** – Cornelius “an upright and God-fearing man”
163. **Acts 10:35** – “in every nation anyone who fears him”
164. **Acts 13:16** – “you who fear God, listen”
165. **Acts 13:26** – “those among you who fear God”
166. **Romans 3:18** – “There is no fear of God before their eyes”
167. **2 Corinthians 5:11** – “Knowing the fear of the Lord”
168. **2 Corinthians 7:1** – “bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God”
169. **Ephesians 5:21** – “submitting to one another out of reverence/fear for Christ”
170. **Philippians 2:12** – “work out your salvation with fear and trembling”
171. **Colossians 3:22** – “fearing the Lord”
172. **Hebrews 4:1** – “let us fear lest any... should seem to have failed”
173. **Hebrews 5:7** – Jesus “was heard because of his reverence”
174. **Hebrews 10:31** – “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”
175. **Hebrews 11:7** – Noah “in reverent fear”
176. **Hebrews 12:28** – “offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe”
177. **Hebrews 13:6** – “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear”
178. **1 Peter 1:17** – “conduct yourselves with fear”
179. **1 Peter 2:17** – “Fear God”
180. **1 Peter 3:2** – “respectful and pure conduct”
181. **Revelation 11:18** – “those who fear your name”
182. **Revelation 14:7** – “Fear God and give him glory”
183. **Revelation 15:4** – “Who will not fear, O Lord?”
184. **Revelation 19:5** – “you who fear him, small and great”