

FEAR!

Rediscovering the Fear of God...

The Foundation of Worship and the Beginning of Wisdom

The Way to a Right Heart and Right Relationships

The **Fear of the LORD** is the foundation of worship and the beginning of wisdom.¹ It is the way to a right heart with God and others and the way to right relationships—what we choose, do, and say. This booklet, **FEAR!** is focused on helping rediscover, restore, and strengthen the fear of the Lord in each believer’s life. Too many in our day have failed to build on the right foundation of honestly fearing God. Therefore, many do not see clearly; many have lost the Vision of God, not seeing **Him** clearly for Who He is and not knowing His received life, gifts, and ministry in their lives. The need is for a **CLEAR** heart, a cleansed and clear conscience—that starts and is strengthened with the fear of God. In his last letter, Paul testified of his worshipful service of the Lord “*with a clear conscience*” and unashamed belief, fearing God not men (2 Timothy 1:3, 8, 12; 4:1).

Others do not **HEAR** what needs to be heard; too many have become “*dull of hearing*” or deaf to the Voice of God, not hearing **Him** (Hebrews 5:11). The need is for a Hearing heart, knowing how to hear and respond to God—that, too, starts and is made clearer through the fear of God.

Still others are walking seemingly alone, solo, trying to figure out which way to go on one’s own. They are not practicing the Presence of God, not believing that He has promised to be **HERE**. **Most** do not know (or they ignore) that He calls us to draw **NEAR** to **Him** in prayer and in the Word.



¹ Genesis 22:5, 12; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10.

Then, there are a host of people failing to honor the Heart of God, walking instead in their own ‘wisdom.’ They do not really worship the Lord in spirit and truth. Genuine worship and honor toward the Lord and His will can come with a recovery or a rediscovery of the Lord **Himself** and of the **Fear of the Lord**. This in turn can lead to a recovery of a lifestyle of worship and walking in wisdom. One can know His grace for right choices, right living. He longs for each of us to know the immense value, not only of a **changed** life, but of an **exchanged** life, dying to one’s old life and living by His **Life** working in and through each. His desire is for each of us to allow His righteous life to be lived in and through each life, in words and deeds.

One more thought—“Fear Not” or Fear God, which is it?

We sometimes hear that the Lord communicates “*fear not*” or similar words 365 times in the Scriptures, one for each day of the week. That’s actually not true, but it is in the Scripture enough times (several times, though once is enough)—the main point is that He does not want us to fear **life** and its uncertainties. Rather, we are to have a healthy fear of **Him**, a reverence, awe, and, yes, even a holy fear of Him that gives us the right perspective for daily life. That also means **knowing** Him—He has shown Himself through over 500 names, titles, and descriptions in Scripture. He wants us to know who He is. That, in turn, should lead to **trusting** Him for daily life along with its uncertainties. How does this work out in practice?

SEEING CLEARLY

FEAR—Walking in the Fear of God is the Foundation of Worship and of Wisdom. We could describe this with an acrostic, **F.E.A.R.** Let's unpack this.



F.—Focus. One of the main points of Genesis 22 is **focusing on the Lord** in “**worship,**” the first place that word is used in Genesis (Genesis 22:5). The Fear of God is the foundation for Worship in Abraham’s life.

E.—Entrance. The Fear of God opens the door for us to have Entrance into the insight and wisdom of God. It is “*the Beginning of Wisdom,*” specifically, the wisdom **God gives**, the “*wisdom from Above*” (Proverbs 9:10; James 3:17). The wisdom the world gives is actually counterfeit; it is foolish in God’s sight.² We need God’s insight and view to do God’s will, to make wise choices.

A.—Attitude—One’s attitude in all of life should be this—the Lord is watching, evaluating, and willing to guide.³ Solomon testified, “*You alone know the hearts of all*” (1 Kings 8:39b). The Lord tells us He is willing to guide us with His wisdom, even very personally “*with My eye upon you*” (Psalm 32:8).

R.—Response—The Fear of the Lord should determine all our responses to life and to God in life, knowing we are ever in His sight and care. We should be asking...

Who is God? Who am I in light of Who He is? What is God up to?
What is God doing? What is God saying? What should I be doing or saying in light of that? Who is God showing Himself to be?

We see a clear example of this in the life of the soon-to-be Apostle Paul. When the resurrected, ascended Lord Jesus appeared to Paul on the Damascus Road, Paul fell at his feet, blinded by the intense light. That encounter changed Paul. His words reveal the goings-on of his heart. He said to the Lord, “*Who are You, Lord?*” Then, “*What shall I do, Lord?*”⁴ The realities of identity and action—being and doing—came into clear focus for Paul. The Lord instructed him from that time onward. In Acts 27, in the midst of a fierce Mediterranean storm, an angel appeared to Paul instructing him about the situation. There, again, Paul gave testimony to his personal relationship with the Lord, his identity and his activity. Paul spoke of “*the God to Whom I belong and Whom I serve*”—Identity and Activity seen every step of the way, evidence of the fear of God in his life (Acts 27:23).

² 1 Corinthians 1:20; 3:19-20; James 3:14-16.

³ Psalm 119:168; Proverbs 5:21; 15:3; 1 Kings 8:39-40; Jeremiah 16:17; Psalm 32:6-11.

⁴ Acts 9:5; 22:8, 10; 26:15.



FEARING GOD—A WALK OF WORSHIP

One of the clearest examples of the fear of God is seen in the life of Abraham in Genesis 22. It shows the inseparable link between the fear of God and genuine worship. It reveals a picture that helps us see more clearly God's heart. Jesus told us in John 4:23-24 that the Father is looking for true worshipers who worship Him in spirit and truth. What does that look like?

First of all, **prayer** voices one's fear of God, one's respect of and humility before the Lord. Prayer is certainly a part of worship. Prayer is the voice of true worship and worship is the heart of true prayer. The revelation of God is the foundation of worship and prayer is the response... in yielding and surrender, in praise and thanks, in confession and repentance, in giving and blessing, in interceding for others, in petitioning for our own needs (Isaiah 6:1-13 is a good example). Prayer is the expression of faith as that faith is tested. When faith is tested, many fail to pray and so they become faint in faith. Prayer expresses the heart, even when the heart does not know what to say or what to pray. It is often simply the heart lifted, the desire brought near to the heart of God, though that desire is not fully understood. Prayer entrusts to God the heart's willingness to do His will, whatever that may be. We see that in Abraham's life.

If prayer is the voice of true worship, what is true worship? What does it look like? Does it refer to singing? Sometimes. Could it be silent? Of course. There are times when there are no words, only wonder, amazement, surrender afresh. Sometimes it is a simple obedient action, without fanfare or flash, with no one looking, except God, as in the case of Abraham. It includes giving. Giving what? Whatever God has asked for. Whatever the heart offers.



When we turn to the Scriptures, we find an example of this in the life of Abraham (Genesis 22). It is the first time that the word “worship” is mentioned in the Scriptures, the Hebrew word *shachah*, meaning to bow down, to

prostrate oneself, showing homage to royalty. The story is quite familiar to many, but some have yet to discover the riches of this God-encounter in the lives of Abraham and Isaac. The incident is the call of God to Abraham to take Isaac, the son he loved and travel to Mount Moriah, to the place “of which I will tell you”—travel trusting Me—and offer him there in worship.

This time of worship began with God calling out to Abraham. God had in mind a test of Abraham’s faith. This was an opportunity for Abraham to trust God’s test. He arose the next morning and took himself, Isaac, two servants, the wood and the fire. They journeyed three days and came to Mount Moriah (the location of modern day Jerusalem).

There Abraham testified to his two servants, “we will worship” and return (22:5; Hebrews 11:17-19). Abraham and Isaac walked up the mountain with the wood, the fire, and Isaac as the sacrifice. As they walked, Isaac asked about the lamb for a sacrifice. Abraham confidently assured him that God would provide Himself a lamb. On Mount Moriah, Abraham prepared the altar, arranged the wood, bound Isaac, and before the knife could strike—the Angel of the LORD stopped Abraham. He had seen his heart of worship. In that moment, the LORD revealed **what He saw** and described what that **worship** looked like to Him.

Note it is what Abraham **did**, not only what Abraham said or felt or thought or sang. Worship is action. Singing can be action, but worship is more. In our modern context it is important to understand this truth: Worship is not about the songs we sing. It is about the heart that sings the songs. It is not a matter of the styles or sounds or the loudness or mellowness of the songs one sings. It is the heart God is looking at. God saw Abraham's heart in Abraham's actions.

Since Genesis 22:1 says that "*God tested Abraham,*" it is important to make the faith connection here. James 2:17-24 testifies that Abraham's actions showed true faith. James does not say that works merit any favor with God. He is saying that genuine "*faith*" works and that kind of "*works*" shows that genuine faith is present before the works begin. Righteous works follow real faith, out of a heart of faith.

What did that true worship, that genuine faith look like? There are three descriptive phrases God used to describe what Abraham **did**. When He stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac, He said, "*now I know*" (Genesis 22:12). Know what? "*Know*" is a translation of the Hebrew word *yada* which is the word for experiential or interactive knowledge. It was used of a hunter seeking a deer, of a sailor piloting a boat, or of a musician playing an instrument—all examples of hands on, experiential, interactive knowledge.

FEAR GOD ONLY AND ALWAYS

What did the Lord **see** in what Abraham **did** that made Him **know**? "*Now I know that you fear God*" (22:12). The **first** mark of true worship—**one fears God only and always**. One walks in the fear of the Lord, in reverence of and respect for God. It is also the fear of missing out on life the way God is directing it, missing out on life as God can give it. Abraham feared God and feared missing out on all God had for him. He had seen what he could do on his own, apart from God. He had experienced the fruits of some foolish choices and wanted none of that. He walked fearing God, desiring to please Him. Someone wisely said, "He who does not fear God, will be ruled by a thousand lesser fears."

What would the fear of the Lord look like today? Here is one definition. **The Fear of the Lord** is making decisions knowing that the God of the Bible as revealed in Jesus Christ is weighing all my thoughts, motives, choices, actions, and deeds AND that I will answer to Him; I will give an account and receive His reward or loss of reward.

The Fear of the Lord is not merely knowledge-based or emotion-based. It is **action** based or action proven. What you **DO** shows if you have the genuine article. Certainly, it is **knowing** ... It is 1) Knowing Who is **GOD**, His place, His position, His power. That eliminates all the competition, all the pretenders and the stand-ins. 2) It is also knowing Who God **IS**—What He is like, His character, nature, and ways. 3) It is choosing to **Follow** that God with reverence and fear.

This is not a terror of life or fear of life or any phobia. It is a fear of living without Life, without **HIM**, without His Life since He is “*the Life*” as well as “*the Way*” and “*the Truth*” (John 14:6).

Scripture says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, of understanding. It is the beginning of **SEEING**, of true perception, seeing what **IS**, perceiving clearly. It is the beginning of **HEARING**. If you fear the Lord, you are open to hear Him and He gives His wisdom (Proverbs 2:7). God is “*intimate with the upright,*” with those who “*fear Him*” (Psalm 25:14; Proverbs 3:32). He gives His intimate counsel to those who fear Him and spend time with Him, like Abraham or David.

Consider what David wrote in Psalm 103:6-14 and note his reverence for the Lord, his awareness of personal frailty, his praise of God for who He is and what He does, and the vital link found in being one who fears God.

6-“The LORD performs righteous deeds, and judgments for all who are oppressed. 7-He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel. 8-The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. 9-He will not always strive with us; nor will He keep His anger forever. 10-He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11-For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those **who fear Him**. 12-As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. 13-Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those **who fear Him**. 14-For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.”

David knew the Lord. He saw Him in His mercy and His holy justice. Abraham knew much about the Lord. God gave him tremendous insight in many ways, especially in the events on Mount Moriah in Genesis 22. This is not seeing everything. It is seeing what God wants us to see, enough, not everything, but enough. He keeps us trusting.

The Fear of the Lord is at the heart of the Disciples' Prayer which is centered around **"Hallowed be Your Name,"** His NAME. **HE** matters. It is not making a name for myself, like those at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). His will, not my will, but the Father's will is what matters. Jesus revealed this very clearly in the Garden of Gethsemane—**"My Father, if it is possible..., nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will"** (Matthew 26:39).

Jesus **NEVER** did anything selfish, or self-focused, always Father-focused, honoring the Father, pleasing the Father (John 8:29). Jesus Himself walked in the Fear of the Lord. He was a worshiper, not worshiping the devil or anyone or anything else. He stated emphatically in **Matthew 4:10**—**"YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY"** [quoting Deuteronomy 6:13].



What does this look like today, for the Christian? Consider these questions. What or who do you treat as priority? What or who is your first consideration in any action? Who do you call first before a final decision is made? Fearing the Lord means your First Decision is to call on, look to, ask God. He is **LORD**. You **Surrender, Yield** to Him. **Bow** to His Wishes, His Way. You Fear Him.

WITHHOLD NOTHING—GIVE WHOLEHEARTEDLY AND FULLY

The **Second** factor of true worship is also found in Genesis 22:12. God said, *“now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”* True worship **withholds nothing, but gives all wholeheartedly and fully.** How was this seen in Abraham’s life?

When we look at the whole picture of this multi-faceted series of events, we find that Abraham listened very carefully to the details the Lord gave. He listened with a trusting heart. When God called, he answered. God spoke specifically. Note God’s four-fold detailed description of who—it was Isaac—*“take now your **son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac**”* He told him where, *“the land of Moriah”*—what, *“offer him”*—and promised him specific direction as he traveled... Go to *“one of the mountains of which I will tell you.”* You go and I will show you. You trust and I will give you what you need to know when you need to know it. Abraham listened carefully with a trusting heart and paid attention to the details.

In worship, the Word is heard. Abraham arose early in the morning, obedient, ready to give all. God saw that he withheld nothing (22:12). This is not giving away his son, but giving his son to the Lord. The focus is on a relationship with the Lord. A worshiper is not a withholder, but a giver, a releaser. A worshiper is not a pre-occupied talker, but a loving, trusting listener. A worshiper is not focused on “my agenda,” but on surrender to the Lord and His will.

Often a contrast helps us see things better, like brilliant white diamonds on black velvet. There is a contrast of worshipers in the New Testament found in John 12. Mary took *“very costly perfume of pure nard”* and kneeling at Jesus’ feet, she *“anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair”* (12:3). That act of worship filled the house with the aroma of the perfume... **and** the aroma of her surrendered, worshiping heart. Physically, she also carried that aroma in her hair for some time. Spiritually, that aroma of worship lingers even today through the pages of Scripture. She was a living example of one practicing the fear of the Lord, withholding nothing, giving all, releasing a gift worth at least a year’s wage.

In **contrast**, Judas complained about this giving, about this worship (John 12:4-6). He showed no fear of God in his heart, no giving heart. Judas was not a true worshiper, but a whiner. We whine about what God wants, because we think He’s not worth it (like Judas thought about Jesus) and we think only of self. True worship says He’s worth giving all, total release. Judas worshiped himself, his pilfering treasures, his agenda. He was a selfish talker, not a loving listener, a taker, not a giver, thinking of greedy self-gain, not giving for God’s gain.

OBEY GOD PROMPTLY AND FULLY

There is a **Third** factor—**Obey Promptly and Fully**. Genesis 22:18 states, “... **because you have obeyed My voice.**” God’s command to Abraham came and he obeyed, trusting God in it all. He walked in the Fear of the Lord only and always. He Withheld Nothing, but gave all, wholeheartedly and fully... **AND**... He Obeyed Promptly and Fully all God said.

When Abraham revealed that he feared God, God stopped him from sacrificing Isaac and at that point, we see Abraham with significant insight. He perceived incredible truth. He looked up and saw a ram for the current sacrifice and offered up that ram. He testified about a **lamb**. He perceived some of what God was up to. So, Abraham **Named** the **place**, staking a spiritual claim on **THAT** place, Mount Moriah. In the Old Testament, names are often descriptive or prophetic. Both are true here on Mount Moriah. It was the location of the future threshing floor of Araunah or Ornan the Jebusite which David purchased. There he built an altar and worshiped.⁵ Later, he purchased the entire area around there, acknowledging it as “*the house of the LORD God*” and the place of the altar (1 Chronicles 21:25; 22:1). It would be the location of the Temple of Solomon and Herod’s Temple, where Jesus would teach, preach, and give His Life.⁶

The name of the Place, “*Jehovah Jireh*” or “*Yahweh Jireh*,” is translated “*the LORD will provide.*” Literally, it means “the Lord will be seen.” The writer further described this place stating, “*as it is said to this day, “In the mount of the LORD it will be provided”*” or literally, “**he** will be **seen.**” **Who** will be **seen?**—the **Lamb**. Abraham saw that. That is not all. God promised more. What did God promise Him?

In Genesis 22:17—“*Indeed I will greatly BLESS you, and I will greatly MULTIPLY your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed [this is Hebrew, masculine, singular—talking about a Man] shall possess the gate of their [literally, “His”—again, Hebrew, masculine, singular] enemies, and in your seed [Him] all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.*”

⁵ 2 Samuel 24:18-25; 1 Chronicles 21:18-28.

⁶ 2 Chronicles 3:1.

God gave Abraham perception about the lamb, the Redeemer to come and a promise about the lion, the Ruler to come. He showed Him the Lion to come who would conquer the Gates, the Headquarters of **ALL** His enemies and He would rule over them. He would also bless all the nations.

Jesus said in John 8:56, “*Abraham rejoiced to see **My day**, and he saw it and was glad.*” He perceived Christ’s day and rejoiced. He rejoiced that he saw it that day and that he would see it and experience it one day. The word for rejoice is *agalliao*, which refers to exuberant joy, leaping, exulting, and skipping with excessive and ecstatic joy. Abraham, over one hundred years of age, had a rejoicing time on Mount Moriah because of the revelation of God to him about the coming Lamb and Lion... and that he would one day participate in that Kingdom.

The New Testament fills in many details about the “*day of Christ*”—it is the day of His **return** (1 Corinthians 1:8; Philippians 1:6, 10), of full **redemption** (1 Corinthians 3:15; 5:5; 2 Timothy 1:12, 18), of **rejoicing** (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20), of **reunion** (2 Corinthians 1:14), and of **reward** (1 Corinthians 3:13; Philippians 2:16; 2 Timothy 4:8). It will also be a day of uninterrupted, undistracted worship as we are made like Him and see Him as He is (1 John 2:28; 3:1-3). The fear of Him will be full, giving to Him will be ongoing, obedience to Him will be undying. Glory will go to Him in greater and greater measure.

Throughout the Scriptures, the Words and the works of God show us Who He is. When the Scriptures speak of the “**glory of God,**” they refer to that which causes one to have and express a high opinion of another. When we see an athlete run or wrestle well or accomplish a feat, we speak well of that one. So it is with God. As we hear Him speak, consider His wisdom, observe His might and power, see His acts of grace and mercy, we form a true opinion of Him which leads us to boast of Him; we give Him glory. We cheer Him, His will, and His ways. Are we living that way today?

Are we true worshipers? It means walking in the fear the Lord—we fear God only and always. It means hearing His Word, listening, giving full attention and giving all to Him, withholding nothing. It means obeying Him promptly and fully. In this way, we show we know Him—through obeying. That, in turn can lead others to take notice of Him... for the work of His grace in our lives... and for what He could do in their lives. They give Him glory.

Three questions will help us evaluate if we are true worshipers.

- 1) Who do you **Fear**? Who is the **Lord** in your life?
- 2) Who do you **Hear**? Whose **Word** matters to you?
- 3) Who do you **Cheer**? Whose **Glory** do you seek?

If these three realities are yours or mine, then we will be praying people.

Prayer is the voice of dependence on God. The one who fears Him, prays. The one who hears Him, prays. The one who cheers Him, prays.

Fear Him. Hear His Word. Cheer His Glory. Obey Him. Show your love to Him and show Him to others by the deeds you do, in obedience to Him.

Tell others how they too can know, obey, and follow Him.

In the **First Spiritual Awakening** recorded in **History** we find **three** characteristics... The text of Genesis 4:26, fresh with the thoughts of the birth and life of Seth and with the clear memory of faith-filled Abel, thoughtfully declares, ***“Then men began to call upon the Name of the LORD.”*** What did that look like? How did they live and walk? They walked in the **Fear of the Lord**, focused on **“the LORD,”** the **“I AM.”** They walked ready to give all based on what they heard of His Word. The **Word** was **heard** and responded to in prayer, they ***“began to call upon”*** the Name of the Lord continually, a lifestyle of calling... like Abraham. They walked honoring and obeying God as they gave **Glory in their attention to *“the Name of the LORD,”*** His Name, His fame, His honor, obeying Him. They were true worshipers. Are we? Are you?



FEARING GOD—A WALK OF HONESTY AND HONOR

As we have seen in Abraham’s life, the Fear of the Lord was and is at the heart of true worship. It is also at the heart of a true walk of faith, even in times of testing, That is clearly seen in the life of Jacob’s son Joseph, a detailed picture of the coming Messiah to all who could perceive the picture painted by the account of his life in Genesis 37-50. What marked Joseph’s life?

Joseph was born the eleventh son of Jacob, but the firstborn of his favored wife Rachel. He was very special in the eyes of his father Jacob, so much so, that when Joseph was a young man, Jacob gave him the *“tunic of many colors,”* or *“varicolored tunic”* (Genesis 37:3). **This** coat was indicative of leadership in the family, perhaps as the “first born,” the preeminent one who would rule over the family in the days to come. His brothers did not like this favored treatment, nor the testimony of his dreams (even if they might be from God), and they did not like Joseph, especially his honesty—the story reveals many selfish and wicked motives in the various brothers’ lives.

Eventually, these brothers plotted against Joseph and sold him into Ishmaelite slavery. The Ishmaelites resold him into slavery in Egypt to Potiphar, chief of Pharaoh's guards (the head of security for the palace) (Genesis 37:25-36). God's hand was upon Joseph and he continually proved faithful as a God-centered man.

Potiphar's wife had eyes for Joseph, his youth, his looks, her superior status over him—she sought to seduce him. When he refused her advances, Joseph declared, *“how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”* (Genesis 39:9). His God-centered and God-focused heart led him away from wickedness. Even when falsely accused and imprisoned, he behaved with honor, refusing to lash out in anger or revenge.

While in the palace prison, two imprisoned servants had related dreams. Later, Pharaoh had very disturbing dreams and needed them interpreted. In both instances, Joseph focused not on himself, but on God as the interpreter of dreams (Genesis 40:8; 41:16). Genesis 40-41 record that as a result of the interpretation and Joseph's evident wisdom, Pharaoh made Joseph the second in command in Egypt, like a Prime Minister over the land. God blessed the land with seven years of plenty, and then famine struck Egypt and the surrounding nations. His family in Canaan felt the adverse effects and ten brothers traveled to Egypt to buy grain. They unknowingly met Joseph and in that encounter he said of himself to his then unknowing brothers, *“I fear God,”* a clear testimony of his life (Genesis 42:18).

When Joseph finally revealed his identity, he told his brothers three times *“God sent me”* here (Genesis 45:5, 7, 8) and made clear his understanding of how he was where he was: *“God has made me lord of all Egypt”* (Genesis 45:9). Jacob's entire family moved to Egypt, to the well-watered and secluded land of Goshen. Seventeen years later Jacob died and the brothers revealed their underlying uncertainties about Joseph. He assured them, even in their fearful state, that he cared for them and he knew his place and he remained God-centered. *“Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? ... You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good...”* (Genesis 50:19-20). Joseph was a **God-centered** man who genuinely feared God.



FEARING GOD—A WALK OF INTEGRITY AND PRAYER

When we turn to Israel's most notable king, **King David**, we find another example of walking with integrity and genuine prayer, evidence of his **fear of God**. After years of experiencing the faithfulness of God in his life, David penned in Psalm 25:12-15a, *"Who is the man who **fears the LORD**? He will instruct him in the way he should choose. His soul will abide in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the land. The secret of the LORD is for those **who fear Him**, and He will make them know His covenant. My eyes are continually toward the LORD..."* That was David's testimony.

Even as a young boy, David focused on the Lord. After Saul's failure of unbelief and self-will, God chose the boy David to be the next king.⁷ David was anointed as future king around 12 to 14 years of age. Then, around the age of 15, David killed Goliath. After that, he served in Saul's court and became famous to many in Israel. Soon Saul became jealous and began plotting against, then hunting David.

⁷ 1 Samuel 13:11-14; 15:7-11, 28, 35; 16:1, 11-12.

David, on the run, went to several places in Judea, in the Judean wilderness, and eventually into Philistine territory. During his 20s, around 400 men and their families joined him. First Samuel 22:2 describes these followers this way: *“everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented [literally, bitter of soul], gathered to him; and he became captain over them...”* What a challenge!

One incident in the lives of David and these men illustrates with strange circumstances how David walked with integrity and continually sought the Lord. Because of the intensity of Saul’s hatred and his continuous search for David, David, now with 600 men, decided he was safer in Philistine territory (1 Samuel 27:1). The Philistines gave David and his men the village of Ziklag where they lived for about 16 months (1 Samuel 27:6-7). With their wives and children, the population of the village probably reached over 3,000.

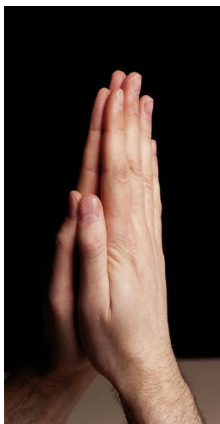
David and his men served the Philistine Achish, king of Gath. Other Philistine commanders complained about David’s presence among their troops and demanded he depart. Achish defended David as a man of impeccable character—*“I have found no fault in him,”* an *“upright”* man (1 Samuel 29:3, 6). Nevertheless, they still demanded his departure. David and his men left early the next morning for the three-day journey back to Ziklag.

They came to the village, seeing smoke and ashes—their wives, children, and livestock gone as captives and the village burned to the ground. It was a time of **great grief** for David and his men and they wept *“until there was no strength in them to weep”* (1 Samuel 30:4). Several of David’s men spoke of stoning David; they blamed him for the calamity, though obviously not his fault. What David did in this situation reveals his heart and how he lived as a man of integrity, a man of God, and a man of prayer. **Consider him from three angles...**

The Personal Belief Angle (what we’re facing)

The Battle Angle (what we’re fighting)

The Big Picture Angle (when we’re choosing between feeling or faith-ing)



The Personal Belief Angle (what we're facing)

One of the first things we find about David is the immediate response of his heart to the accusations and the difficult situation. **He prayed.** That says a lot about what a person truly believes. Someone wisely stated, "What a person **does** is what he believes; all the rest is just talk." First Samuel 30:6 says, "**But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.**" He knew God, "**the LORD,**" Yahweh, as his God in a personal relationship, as his personal companion, as his covenant-keeping God. So, David focused his attention on the Lord, finding his **strength in Him**

This is not only an Old Testament reality. Ephesians 6:10 urges every believer to "**be strong in the Lord...in the strength of His might**" for the battles we face. Know the Lord Jesus Christ in a personal relationship. In this exhortation, Paul uses **three power words**. The **first** power word is "**strong,**" a translation of the Greek word **endunamao**, to have power **in** you—power in its execution, in being activated in you. The command is to be **strengthened-in** the Lord, in His strength. In other words, be open, let Him work in you. It is an admission of personal weakness and need, with the willingness to let Jesus rule as Lord.

The **second** power word is "**power**" or "**strength,**" a translation of the Greek word **kratos**, which is vigor, dominion, the "outward manifestation of power" according to Spiros Zodhiates.⁸ It is strength abundantly available to overcome *whatever* is in the way so as to reach the goal, conquer and win. In other words, let the Lord loose in you and through you as you depend on Him.

The **third** power word speaks of "**His might,**" a translation of the Greek word **ischuos** which means **to have force**, referring to strength one possesses. It is full ability, latent power. Each of us should surrender to His **authority**, depend on His **power**, receive His **strength** and stand strong in the conquering power of His inherent, latent ability. This is the **ability** He **always** has for winning a battle. Jesus has strength He puts into us, His strength, ready to activate in us, through us, and which is always **able** to win. We could sum up these three words this way—Be strong in the Lord with the strength He puts in, letting Him loose and showing the power, ability, and strength of the Force He holds. **HOW?** Let Him work **in** you—Let Him loose **out** through you.

⁸ Spiros Zodhiates, *AMG's Annotated Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1984, 1992), Synonym note for Strong's #2904 in Strong's # 2479, p. 2191.

We must know the reality of spiritual battles. We wrestle. We have a tactical mine field around us, *thoughts* aimed against us—to distract us from knowing, loving, obeying, and following Jesus. There are methods, strategies, and temptations customized **against each of us** (through circumstances, people, and all kinds of deceptions and distractions). This is not a **“flesh and blood” battle**, but a **spiritual forces battle**. We have to look to the **Lord, the Spirit**.

Ready yourself. How? **“Put on the Whole Armor of God”**—it is **God’s** Armor. He thought of it. He made it. He gives it. He energizes it. It is not something anyone could buy or sell, trade or barter, create or improve on. It is linked to knowing Jesus. Put on **this Armor** by faith. Hear His Word. Pray that Word all the time, every day, every night...

Like Paul or David... Every day each of us needs to **first look** to the Lord, to find our daily strength in Him. Then, when we face difficult days, we can go to Him who is ever our daily strength... not just for calamities, but also for the calm days, the mundane, the ordinary days. Where is your **personal strength** found?



The Battle Angle (what we’re fighting)

David had a mess on his hands. After he focused attention on the Lord as his strength, after the men stopped weeping and stopped plotting to stone him to death, he still had to deal with the loss of families, finances, and their homes. How? Again, David focused attention on the Lord. He spoke to Abiathar the priest about calling on

the Lord. Then, 1 Samuel 30:8 states, *“and David inquired of the LORD.”* This is not the first time David **“inquired.”** It was his habit, his custom, his pattern for every military encounter. In 1 Samuel 23:2, we find him inquiring of the LORD about whether or not to go down to Keilah to defend the people against Philistine raiders. What was going on in David’s life?

The Hebrew word translated **“inquire”** is *shaal* and it means to ask, to make a request. David was ever willing to go straight to the Lord in prayer, to seek His wisdom, His guidance.... “Do I do this or not, do I go here or there, do I go now or later?” And God led him each time in the specifics.⁹ It shows David’s humility, his dependence, and, at the same time, his strength of character. What was his strong point? His relationship with the Lord, his calling on the Lord, his asking the question, making the request, always walking in **the fear of the Lord, with** the Lord, not against the Lord and His will.

That is what happened at Ziklag. He asked the Lord for guidance. Specifically, David said, *“Shall I pursue this band? Shall I overtake them?”* The Lord gave him the ‘go ahead.’ Then, as he and the 600 men marched, 200 men, because of exhaustion, stayed behind at the Brook Besor (30:10). David and the remaining 400 men marched on.

They found a sick Egyptian slave in a field, having been abandoned by his Amalekite master three days before. After giving him some water and needed nourishment, this young man gave David and his men needed intel for conquering these marauders. He probably knew the location of their main camp. David and his men came to the Amalekite camp as they were *“eating and drinking and dancing,”* the idea being of a ‘feast time,’ except their feasting was centered on wickedness, reveling in their wrongs, degenerate, not righteous.

David and his men utterly defeated them, recovering all their family members and capturing the many spoils of war. They returned to the Brook Besor where the 200 awaited, guarding the camp and the goods they had (1 Samuel 30:16-20).

⁹ The Hebrew word *shaal* is used of David when he *“inquired”* in 1 Samuel 23:2, 4; 30:8; 2 Samuel 2:1; 5:19, 23. It is also used of Joshua and his men when they failed to inquire or *“ask”* the Lord about the Gibeonites (Joshua 9:14).



The Big Picture Angle (when we're choosing between feeling or faith-ing)

There were three matters David dealt with—**First**, the **wrong thinking** of a **few** of his men. **Second**, the **needs** of **all** of his men and their families. **Third**, the **part** played by a large part of the **nation** in David's view.

First, David dealt with the wrong thinking and sought to ingrain right thinking... When the 400 returned to camp, some wanted to claim all the spoils for themselves—'we fought for it, we earned it' was their attitude—*"because they did not go with us ["me"]*—**self-focused, self-exalting, self-accumulating.**

Here again we see the character of David as a leader and a man of God. David was concerned for **all** of his men and their families. He was not selfish for himself or his family. David cared about others and he cared about doing what is right. In 1 Samuel 30:23, David rebuked the selfish attitudes and words of certain *"wicked and worthless men."* David focused their attention on the reality of the situation—it was *"the LORD"* who had *"given"* them the spoils of battle and *"who has kept us and delivered into our hand the band that came against us"* (30:23). He corrected their wrong thinking, and gave them a **God-Perspective.**

Second, David dealt with the needs of all the people as much as possible. Thinking of the needs of everyone, David declared a new "law" or "statute" in his camp which later became the law of the land: *"For as his share is who goes down to the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage; they shall share alike"* (30:24). David cared for all his men.

Here is a clear New Testament application. Those who **FIGHT THE FIGHT IN PRAYER** share in the victory, the answers, the **“spoils of the Lord”** and from the Lord. We read in 1 Corinthians 3:8—*“Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but **each** will receive his **own reward** according to his own labor.”* Some plant, some water, all labor in weeding or harvesting or some other venture, and all share in the reward.

Third, David thought of the part played by others, in this case from all over Judah. This attitude and care carried over into his attention to others, to other cities in Judah. After this incident, they returned to Ziklag and from there David sent spoils to several cities of Judah. First Samuel 30:26-31 specifically lists **eleven** cities as well as the **cities** of two family groups, the Jerahmeelites and the Kenites. These were places David had gone and likely places the Amalekites had robbed or pillaged, so David sent them the spoils justly returned.

What and How did he do this? He sent **“to his friends”** a share of the spoils with the message, *“Behold, a **gift** [literally, **“blessing”**] for you from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD”* (30:26). Note the perspective of where David fit into the Big Picture. He was on the Lord’s side and the Amalekites were not.

Why? Each of these was one of *“the places where David himself and his men were accustomed to go”* (30:31). They had connections, relationships formed, and David honored those relationships. And, most likely these are cities the Amalekites had robbed in their marauding.

The events of 1 Samuel 29-30, from the Philistine army camp through the Amalekite rebel camp to the final gathering camp with families rescued and spoils disbursed, we find **three Big Picture truths**.

One—The Hand of God—He works even through antagonistic and angry Philistines and greedy Amalekites to accomplish His full will—clear examples of how God moves in the lives of various authorities to move His will into place (Proverbs 16:1; 21:1; James 4:13-15). The Philistine leaders initiated David’s expulsion from their forces so that he was immediately on the move back to Ziklag.

Two—The Timing of God is evident in the various events. He worked so that David and his men left the Philistine camp just in time to discover their devastated village, but miss the attacking Amalekites. This meant David and his men had time to pray, recover for a moment, and prepare for the pursuit. David “*encouraged himself in the LORD his God,*” then, prayed for guidance. Shortly thereafter he left the 200 exhausted men to recover, found the Egyptian who provided invaluable intel just in time, very close to death with no water for three days, but alive enough to recover. Because he was still alive, he could give them the help they needed, probably knowing the exact location of the thieves’ camp. They arrived as they were ‘partying’ and not armed for battle—a clear advantage for David and his men. The sending of spoils to the various villages unknowingly set up a network of support for his soon-to-be-realized reign as king. This prepared the way for David to be seen as a very able king-to-be, just a short time before Saul died and the throne was vacated.

Three—The Plan of God—We see how God uses all kinds of people and all kinds of issues, problems, and situations. We see God’s plan for David, his family, the families of his men, and the many villages of Judah—each ultimately protected, provided for, and blessed. We see God’s plan at work in the timing of the villages receiving these gifts. This revealed David as an able and compassionate leader, capable of being king at a time when King Saul had just died (1 Samuel 31).

AN EXAMPLE WORTH FOLLOWING

The **example** of David is worth following from all three angles, at all three levels... **Whatever** we are **facing, fighting, and feeling / faith-ing...**

1) Never leave out the **personal** relationship with the Lord, **always “inquire”** of Him, think of Him, see how He is working all around and depend on Him, His strength.

2) Then, show **care** for those around you, the people you have a relationship with, even some of the *riffraff* people who still have needs.

3) And, share with **others** who have helped along the way—don’t forget them. These actions... praying, caring, sharing... were in David’s heart and touched all of life...

Each of us needs to do the same—**1)** Make sure our personal life is in tune with the Lord, especially in prayer. **2)** Make sure we care about others, especially in the battles all of us face and that they face, along with the hurts, needs, and various situations. **3)** Remember those who have helped along the way and share as we are able.

What can we learn from David's encounters in 1 Samuel 30?

David encountered devastation in Ziklag, opposition from his own men, but then, he encountered the Lord in prayer for his own soul. He encountered the Lord in prayer for His will and for the families of David and his men. That's not all. David encountered the reality of 200 of his 600 men too exhausted, too weak to go on and apparently instructed them to set up a base camp at the Brook Besor in the valley there. He encountered an Egyptian slave and rescued him out of his slavery world. The Egyptian apparently followed David from that day on, now part of the people of God.



When David encountered and conquered the Amalekites, he rescued his family and all the families of the men, now safe and sound. With that David encountered a great victory and much spoils.

Then, he faced those back at base camp at the Brook Besor with the news of victory and the rewards of the win. He also had to face the selfish, greedy attitudes, as well as words and ways of a few of his men, which he squelched

David enjoyed experiencing the wisdom of God in setting right the attitudes and actions of his men and of the disbursement of the spoils, giving rewards as he saw fit. David was a lawgiver, making a statute which later applied to all Israel—he who stays by the baggage shares in the spoils of victory alongside those who are frontlines warriors. The last first, the first last. David also blessed the many cities of Judah with a share of the spoils.

CHRISTLIKE FEAR OF GOD—CHRISTLIKE INTEGRITY

David is a picture of **Christ**... coming to an Amalekite-devastated place (**Amalek** is always a picture of the flesh in rebellion against God). **Ziklag**, a Philistine border town is a picture of the world system in a condition of wreck and ruin, the burned, wasted village with families and flocks captured, enslaved. David pictures **dependence** on the Father-God to strengthen him and to give him clear guidance. He joined God in His ways, even using an Egyptian slave to give clear guidance, a picture of those saved out of the world being used by God to further His purposes.

David won a great victory over Amalek. Jesus won a great victory over sin, flesh, rebellion, disobedience and all that went with it. Jesus conquered and carried the spoils of people—lives rescued from flesh enslavement brought back into fullness of life, full provision, protection, and the security of the Word of God. Christ's good Word is symbolized in the "Law" David enacted against those within the camp of God who were yet fighting against the heart of God. The greedy men were "*sons of Belial*," with a nature like the devil, sons of disobedience, thinking only of self, greedy, with hearts darkened, with a greedy "evil eye" and no concern for others.

David on the other hand, had a full, lasting, loving concern for his family, for his men and their families, for their goods, even for these wicked men, whom he treated like "*brothers*," as Jesus treated Judas until Judas crossed the final line of no return. David took care of all the Kingdom he had at that point, the cities that had a relationship with him. He gave them parts of the spoil and he gave them clear revelation from God—he saw them as his "*friends*" and sent them a "*gift*," literally, a "*blessing*," and pointed to the spoil as from victory over "*the enemies of the LORD*" (30:26). David went on to become King over all of Israel and reign fully for forty years, a full generation, symbolic of a full life.

Jesus, the Son of David, came to a place devastated by the works of the flesh with its sin and disobedience. Jesus prayed to His Father, receiving strength from Him, and guidance in how to deal with the enemies He faced. He took on the forces of the flesh, the Amalek-like forces of hell and won. He conquered all, making an open show of His victory and their defeat. He captured all His own—many family members, and freed them to the joy of the life He desired, provided for, protected, and reunited with family. He blessed them and others not of that fold, giving them many gifts. As David went on to rule over the entire Kingdom, Jesus went on to rule over the entire Kingdom forever and ever.

LIVING IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD

God's revelation begins in Genesis 1:1, "*In the beginning God...*" giving a clear foundation for life. **The** issue addressed from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22 is twofold: who is **God** and who God **is** and with that how one should **respond**. The right response is worship, love, and obedience—as we see in the lives of Abraham, Joseph, David, Paul, and so many more in Scripture. To worship rightly can be summed up in the testimony of those New Testament believers in the land of Israel—they were "**living in the fear of the LORD**" (Acts 9:31). The opposite is the life of "self-will" where self is lord, self-fulfillment is the daily goal, and obedience to God's Word is considered irrelevant. What do the Scriptures say about living in the fear of the Lord? Consider these seven statements. **Living in the fear of the Lord leads to...**

1. ...More intense and insightful knowledge of God. The intimate counsel of the Lord is for those who fear Him (Psalm 25:14; Proverbs 2:2-22 (v. 5)).
2. ...Increased wisdom and understanding about God, self, and everyday life (Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; 15:33).
3. ...Avoiding sin, evil, and all ungodliness (Genesis 39:9; 42:18; Job 28:28; Exodus 20:20; Proverbs 5:21-23; 8:13; 16:6).
4. ...Enhanced life, contentment, and peace (Proverbs 10:27; 14:26-27; 19:23; 22:4).
5. ...Greater personal growth and enhanced relationships (Deuteronomy 5:29; 6:24; 31:9-13; Leviticus 19:14, 32; 25:17, 36; Proverbs 19:23; 22:4; 23:17).
6. ...More fruitful ministry for the local church (Acts 9:31)
7. ...Greater insight and skill for leaders to help people, to solve problems, to enhance relationships (Exodus 18:21; Deuteronomy 1:17; 17:19; 2 Samuel 23:1-4; 2 Chronicles 19:4-11; Nehemiah 5:15).

How... Now?

What do I need to do to live in and **walk** in *the Fear of the Lord* day by day?

First, ask God to examine your heart. Listen to Him and His Word. Compare your life to the examples we have viewed. Do you see any inconsistencies in your life? Is there anywhere God's Spirit has pinpointed the need to surrender afresh, to trust Him with a specific issue, person, event, or circumstance?

Second, ask yourself—Am I fearing someone or something more than Him? Am I withholding anything from Him? Am I obeying Him now? Am I walking in honesty and honor? Am I walking with integrity? Do I have a lifestyle of prayer—going to the Lord first and foremost?

Third, search the **Word**, looking to the Lord to **search** your **heart**—Psalm 26:2 and 139:1, 23-24.

Fourth, take the next step—in the power of **His** Spirit. Remember, it is a **walk with Him**. What step? Whatever step the Lord reveals. It could be something very simple, even seemingly very small. **Do it**. Speaking of Jesus, Mary said to the servants, "*Whatever He says to you do it*" (John 2:5). That is good counsel; it matters forever. Jesus said the one who enters the kingdom is "*he who does the will of My Father*" (Matthew 7:21). He described those who are genuinely related to Him as those "*who hear the word of God and do it*" (Luke 8:21). **What next?** Take the **next** step, then the **next**—it's a **walk in the fear of the Lord**.

May we walk in the fear of the Lord, ever living with a clear conscience toward God and people, hearing and obeying the voice of God, drawing near to Him and practicing His presence day after day wherever we are. As the Apostle Paul testified, *“We have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him... Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men... For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf”* (2 Corinthians 5:9, 11a, 14-15).



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