

THE JOY OF FEARING GOD

FINDING FREEDOM AND JOY IN GOD

CONFERENCE THEME

Understanding the Fear of the Lord

THEME VERSE

*“Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!”
(Psalm 33:8)*

CONFERENCE SYNOPSIS

We live in a culture of fear. Yet the irony is that people in our day fancy to fear just about anything but God. We fear political agendas, social rejection, bad influences, crimes, diseases, carcinogens, environmental dangers, etc. Anxiety is at an all-time high and yet so are security mechanisms, psychological therapy, and medications. The fear of God is the key to dispelling all other fears. Learning to fear God is learning to live in the freedom and joy of true God-centeredness.

More than methods, the key to genuine spiritual growth is grounded in a view of God that powerfully grips the soul. Information is necessary yet insufficient to overcome in the heat of temptation and the luring influences of idols and the stunning seduction of sinful pleasures. The fear of the Lord is foundational and paradoxical. Fearing God involves loving God. To fear the Holy One is to draw near to Him. This is our aim. How does a Christian draw near to God in an arena of idols, where pride and self are constantly celebrated? How does a young Christian man or woman glorify God and enjoy Him in a world that denies and despises Him? It cannot be accomplished on our terms. Awe of God must be awakened in the soul. This is the good news of holy fear. Here is where God is truly glorified through Christ. Here is where we find true peace and everlasting joy.

SESSION 1 - GROUND

TITLE

The Ground of Godward Fear

KEY PASSAGE

“Moses said to the people, ‘Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.’” (Exodus 20:20)

SYNOPSIS

This session introduces the theme. It lays some of the groundwork for rightly understanding the meaning of fear. It addresses some of fear’s complexities, godless and Godward distinctions, and touches on how the fear of the Lord brings peace, comfort, and joy. There is no other theme in Scripture that is more comprehensive, more pervasive, or more penetrating concerning man’s relation to God.

OUTLINE

1. FEAR IS COMPLEX

Exodus 19:16, 18; 20:18, 19-20

Genesis 3:10; Psalm 68:35

2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 4:18; Luke 8:50

Psalm 33:8; Deuteronomy 10:12-13

Exodus 14:10, 13, 30-31; Isaiah 60:5

2. FEAR IS CHRISTIAN

James 2:19

Genesis 3:8, 10

Hebrews 10:26-27; 2:14-15

Luke 19:21

Proverbs 1:29; Psalm 34:11

Deuteronomy 10:12; Psalm 145:19-20

Luke 1:50; Acts 10:2, 35; 13:16, 26; Romans 3:18

Romans 11:20; Psalm 119:38

2 Corinthians 5:11; 7:1; 1 Corinthians 2:3; Matthew 10:28

Philippians 2:12–13; Colossians 3:22

Hebrews 4:1; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:17; Revelation 14:7; 15:4; 19:5

3. FEAR IS COMPELLING

Matthew 28:4, 8; Mark 4:41; 5:36; 6:19-20;

John 7:13; 9:22; 12:42; 19:38

Acts 9:31

MAIN TAKEAWAY

Fear is central to a person's apprehension of God, compelling, and is more accurate and glorious for those in a right relationship with God.

SESSION 2 - GLORY

TITLE

The Glory of Godward Fear

KEY PASSAGE

“Thus says the LORD: ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.’” (Isaiah 66:1–2)

SYNOPSIS

The weight of God's glory is the gravitas of souls. We are created to draw near. Yet God is holy. Though we must draw near yet not without awe. The whole principle of Godward fear begins not with us or sin. Rather, it emphatically begins with a view of God in majestic holiness, power, justice, and grace.

OUTLINE

1. FEARSOME CREATOR

Psalms 33:6–9; Jeremiah 5:22; Revelation 14:7

2. FEARSOME LORD

Psalm 33:10–11; Psalm 96:4; Daniel 6:26; Jeremiah 5:24; Psalm 47:1–2

Psalm 33:13–15; Psalm 33:16–19

Mark 4:37–41

3. FEARSOME JUDGE

Acts 5:11; Psalm 119:120; Isaiah 59:18–19; Revelation 14:7

Luke 12:4–7

4. FEARSOME REDEEMER

Exodus 14:10, 13, 30-31

MAIN TAKEAWAY

Godward fear begins with a view to the glory of God’s person and work.

SESSION 3 - GOSPEL

TITLE

The Good of Godward Fear

KEY PASSAGE

“And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.” (Jeremiah 32:38–40)

SYNOPSIS

The consequences of Godward fear now come into view. These are benefits, good for the soul. After introducing the fear of the Lord and focusing on the nature and attributes of God that furnish cause to fear Him, we set before us consequences of fearing Him. First in line is the good of Godward fear, that is the good that is given to those who fear the Lord.

OUTLINE

1. ABSENCE OF FEAR

Romans 3:18; Psalm 36:1

Exodus 9:29–30

Hosea 10:1–3

Luke 23:40–41

2. ABJECT FEAR

Genesis 3:10; Luke 21:25–26; Hebrews 10:26–27

3. ADORING FEAR

Deuteronomy 10:12; Psalm 145:19–20; Psalm 85:9

Psalm 119:38; Hebrews 12:20–29

Psalm 5:7; 40:3; 56:3–5; 115:11; 130:4

1 Samuel 12:24; Jeremiah 33:8–9; Hosea 3:5

John 17:3; Proverbs 9:10

Isaiah 33:6

MAIN TAKEAWAY

Godward fear is realized only in and through the gospel of Christ.

SESSION 4 - GLADNESS

TITLE

The Gladness of Godward Fear

KEY PASSAGE

“Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.” (Psalm 2:11)

SYNOPSIS

The consequences of Godward fear are not only good for us but induce a marvelous and mysterious mixture of gravitas and gladness. Godward fear is not simply compatible with joy, it is a way of depicting the sheer intensity of it. Joy without fear lacks weight. But the fear of the Lord has both.

OUTLINE

1. REJOICING IN GOD'S FATHERHOOD

Romans 8:15, 29; Isaiah 11:1–3

Proverbs 10:27; 14:27; 19:23

Jeremiah 32:38–40

2. REJOICING IN GOD'S WORTHINESS

Psalms 2:11; Job 37:22–24; Psalm 89:6–7; Revelation 15:4; Isaiah 8:12–13

Deuteronomy 10:17; Jeremiah 32:40

Malachi 3:16; Psalm 22:23–26; 47:1–2; 89:6–7; 96:1–4; 112:1

3. REJOICING IN GOD'S PROVISION

Deuteronomy 14:23; Jeremiah 32:38–40; 33:9

Psalms 111:2–5; 1 Samuel 12:24

4. REJOICING IN GOD'S PROTECTION

Psalms 31:19; 34:8–10; 2 Kings 17:38–39; Hebrews 2:14–15

Psalms 34:8–10

MAIN TAKEAWAY

Godward fear includes intensities of joy.

SESSION 5 - GROWTH

TITLE

The Growth of Godward Fear

KEY PASSAGE

“Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.” (2 Corinthians 7:1)

SYNOPSIS

The fear of the Lord derives from a right view of His glorious perfections and excellencies. It is the consequence of beholding and thus knowing Him as holy, just, and gracious. Godward fear is realized in all its goodness and gladness to the redeemed in Christ. But it is not something that can be acquired by human effort. It is a divine grace. Yet the redeemed are still responsible to steward the means of grace to grow in Godward fear. This last session focuses on our responsibility and the gracious means available to us for growth in Godward fear.

OUTLINE

1. PRAY

Hebrews 5:7; Acts 2:42–43; 10:2;

Psalms 86:11–12

2. READ

Psalms 19:7–9;

Deuteronomy 4:10; 17:19; 31:11–13

Isaiah 66:1–2

3. MEDITATE

Hebrews 2:1

Proverbs 9:10; 1:29; 2:5

Proverbs 3:7; 22:4; Jeremiah 44:10; Romans 11:20

Psalms 33:18; 147:11

4. DISPLACE

Ephesians 4:22–23; Colossians 3:5, 8, 12-14; Romans 12:2

Joshua 24:14; Deuteronomy 10:20; 13:4

Job 1:1, 8-9; 28:28; Proverbs 8:13; 16:6

Deuteronomy 5:29; 6:1-2, 24; Ephesians 6:5

1 Chronicles 29:10–12, 17-18; Colossians 3:2; 2 Corinthians 10:4–6; Philippians 4:8

MAIN TAKEAWAY

Godward fear is a grace gift in Christ, yet it must be cultivated.