

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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Series: Awe
May 21, 2023

What Does it Mean to Fear God?

Hey, Harris Creek! How are we doing? Let's go! Come on, I love hearing that. Good morning!

Listen, we're starting a new series today called "Awe." Much of the inspiration for this series has come from this book, *The Awe of God*, by John Bevere. This summer, if you're anything like me, you have got travel plans and your Life Group is running in a bunch of different directions. You guys are asking, "Hey, when is the next time we're going to meet? When is the next time everyone will be together?" I want to make a suggestion to you. What if you took this week to get this book and we begin it next Sunday or Monday? We read it together. It's a devotional and in the devotional format over six weeks—a reading a day. As we start this series, I think this will be a great supplemental read for you. *The Awe of God*; I want to put that in front of you and then in your group text and kind of every day as you read something, just text the group and say, "Hey, what did you guys think about this?" and kind of stay up. It's a way to remain connected through the summer in your Life Group, even as you guys go different ways. I think that's going to serve you really well. I have seen that be helpful to people. I just want to commend that to you in the chaos and craziness that sometimes summer is.

As I've said many times from this stage, I grew up in a small town in South Texas. I got in a lot of fights growing up, which didn't go well for me because I wasn't good at it. It means I got beat up a lot. I was from this small town, but the biggest town, Victoria, TX, was about 30 minutes away. That's where you would go to the movies. That's where you would go to the mall if you were going to see anything. That's where you would go for pizza. Victoria was the place that would you go to. In high school, I'm kind of this wannabe gangster. Alright? If you can picture little JP as a wannabe gangster. I grew up on a farm; that really hurt my gangster rep. You know, the cows and all. But I would go to Victoria and when I would go there, it was kind of this like constant, like looking over my shoulder because there were just a lot of rivalries amongst high schoolers with dating in high school and all of the things that kind of drama brings. It was just this fear that set in. In my high school, my small high school in Cuero, there was a Kiki. Everybody has a Kiki in their high school. So, I'll just kind of tell you about him. He's the guy that's good at everything. He became a man his freshman year. Everybody else was still a boy, but Kiki—he could bench press more than anybody else. He can dunk a basketball. He can run fast and jump high. He's the star athlete at football, basketball, and track. That's Kiki—but Kiki's got an edge to him and you don't want to cross him. Everybody knows that he's the bad dude. When I say "bad dude," he's the guy that can kind of beat everyone up.

In fact, I remember one occurrence—he got crossed with someone. They had said something behind his back and he just walked in the locker room with the smile and asked, "Hey, I just was curious: did you say this about me?" And the guy was like, "Yeah, I said it about you." "OK, just checking..." and just knocked him out. Listen, I don't condone violence. I'm going to try to redeem this story with this message, but I can remember what happened is Kiki and I became

friends. I can remember going to Victoria with Kiki and how different that was then when I went to Victoria without him. So, I go to Victoria without him and it is like, “Man, please don't mess with me. Please stay away from me.” I go to Victoria with him and it's like, “What are you looking at?” It's just a different confidence.

I think we love, as followers of Jesus, to talk about the courage and confidence that we get from knowing God. He's on our side. He's with us. If He's with us who can be against us? If God is for me who can be against me? We kind of think about that and we stick out our chest; “Yeah, I am a Christian.” I don't believe we think enough about the fear of God and the implications of the fear of God.

If you ask 10 seminary graduates—people who are passionate about the Word of God and knowing the Word of God—and you say, “Hey, what does it mean to fear God,” what are they going to say? If you came in here this morning and I said, “Hey, what does it mean to fear God,” what would you say? (*To the crowd*) What's that? Obey. Stand in awe – like the series “Awe.” Reverence. Respect. Right? This is typically what we grew up thinking. When you're turning through the Bible, the Bible says 365 times, roughly, “Do not be afraid.” We love those verses. “Don't be afraid!” “Don't be anxious about anything.” “Do not worry about tomorrow.” “Do not fear.” We need those reminders. We're constantly like, “Don't be afraid.” But did you know that over 300 times the Bible says to fear God? We get to that and, as believers, we have a hard time reconciling that with what we know of God—that He's our friend and we can approach Him at any time. We read “the fear of God” and what we've said is, “Oh, that means stand in awe, like you would at the edge of the Grand Canyon. When you see all of its vastness, that's what it means to stand in awe of God.” We think, “Oh, like when you're looking at the ocean and the mighty waves and the vastness of the ocean, that's what it means to fear God.” We think, “Oh, a beautiful sunset that just takes my breath away. That's what it means to fear God.” And we've missed it. That is an incorrect or, at the very least, an incomplete definition of the fear of God.

Awe is not less than fear, but it is more than awe. So, if we say that “fear” means “awe,” the problem with that is this word “awe” includes a healthy amount of fear. For a long time, that word always meant “trembling.” It always meant trembling, which I feel loses a little bit of teeth when we describe it as a sunset. What has happened is that you've come in here this morning and I don't think we appropriately understand the character of God. His followers should feel some amount of fear. For the longest of time, a Hebrew God-follower would not speak His name. Even the nature that I'm carelessly saying the word God from this stage, through this microphone, is very different than what the Church experienced for centuries. If they were to write the name God, they would take their quill or their pen, they would wipe it clean; they would say out loud, “I am about to write the holy name of Yahweh.” They would write it without vowels and then they would discard the pen. That's different. We may sometimes go back and feel a conviction and go back and capitalize His pronouns or something or capitalize the “G.” It is different to say, “I will never write with that pen again.” We have come a long way. What does it matter? Without a right fear of God, you can't appropriately respond to the Gospel. This mediator, this go-between, this champion that comes between us and the wrath of God satisfies the wrath of God.

Here's the deal: if there's somebody that's mad at you and I say, “Hey, so-and-so was mad at you, but it's okay. I made it all right. They're not mad at you anymore.” You don't know how thankful

to be unless you know how mad they were and who they are and how powerful they are. Does that make sense? If I say, “They were mad at you, but I made it OK.” You’re wondering, “Was it my mother-in-law? Was it my neighbor? Was it a madman with a gun? Was it a powerful attorney? Was it the president of the United States? What was their grievance and what were they going to do to me when you went in-between and intercepted?” That’s really going to impact the gratitude that I feel towards you. If they’re coming to you and they’re going to wipe out you and they’re going to wipe out your family—burn your house to the ground—and I intersect that and I change that destiny, you would be pretty thankful. “Wow! You saved my life.”

What you’re going to find today—I want to say this up front as a disclaimer: I have prayed over this message and think it is very needed—illustrations fall short. When you’re trying to describe God, Kiki just doesn’t do it or come anywhere close to doing it justice. I’m going to do the best I can with the illustrations I have to point out the problems that I think come with us falling short of a right, healthy understanding of the view of God. I’m unapologetically saying this up front: I believe we do.

We’re starting a new series today called AWE—A.W.E.—about what it means to stand before God in awe. I’m making the point—the message today is that without fear there is no awe. Without fear, there is no awe. Without the fear of God, we can’t even understand the work of the Gospel.

As we move through this, it is going to be different today. You know that my preference is always to take a chunk of Scripture, to break it up, and to teach that idea by idea. Today, because we’re setting up a series, I am going to give you a lot of Scriptures. We’re going to jump around. If you want to hang out in one place, just hang out in the Proverbs. That’s one we will return to a few times, starting in Proverbs 1. But really, I’m jumping around.

As we move through this message, we’re going to answer these questions: Why should we fear God? How can we have a relationship with the God we fear? And how should the fear of God impact our lives?

I’ll start here Proverbs 1:7—this is the book of wisdom—and it says this, “**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.**” That word for “fear” is the Hebrew word *yirah*. The fear (*yirah*) of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. There is no knowledge apart from a healthy fear of God. You are not wise. You do not have wisdom. I will give you another verse—it won’t be on the screen—to support that first verse. Proverbs 9:10—“**The fear (the *yirah*) of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.**” The Scripture makes it abundantly clear that there is no knowledge, there is no wisdom, you are not wise unless you begin with a foundational understanding that you are to stand in fear of God. You could say, “Yeah, but that word fear, it means awe/reverence/respect.” You grew up believing that, just like I did, Except when we look at the definition of *yirah*, this is the definition from STRONGS: “fear, terror, fearing.” Okay? It is interpreted “fear” 41 times in the Scripture. It is interpreted “dreadful” 1 time. It is interpreted “awe/wonder/reverence/respect” zero times.

We’ll go to the other word that is interpreted “awe” in the Bible. This is the word *yareh*. Which is like, *yirah*, but it’s different—*yareh*. So in Psalms 33:8: “**Let all the earth fear (*yareh*) the Lord;**

let all the people of the world revere him (*yareh*).” Now listen, I know this feels like class. A little bit different. Some of you love it. Some of you hate it. Some of you are sleeping; elbow your neighbor and make sure they're not sleeping. This is the word that sometimes is translated in your Bible as “awe.” It's the word in Genesis 3: “I heard you coming for me, and so I was afraid and I hid,” Adam says. That's this word *yareh*. And here's the definition: “To fear, revere, be afraid.” It is “fear” 188 times in the Bible. It's “reverence” 3 times in the Bible.

Now, I will say it depends on what your translation of Scripture is. Right? So we have New American Standard, English Standard, New International Version, New King James; there are lots of different versions of the Bible. Any of those you can read. They're all going to teach essentially the same idea of the Scripture, but you want to study and not just read it because of things like this. Let me show you in Exodus 15:11: “**Who among the gods is like you, Lord? Who is like you – majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?**” Awesome in glory – *yareh*. OK? Exodus 15:11, in New King James, “**Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises...**” (*yareh*). Same idea, but that word is still “awesome and fearful.” We can begin to think, “Oh, ‘awesome,’ like a sunset.” This word, until the 18th century, always insinuated trembling. In the Romantic poetic culture of the 18th century, this word began to mean and take definition as more of “awe, wonder, beautiful sunset, ocean, Grand Canyon.” Does it mean what you feel at the Grand Canyon? If you're afraid of heights. If you feel your knees get weak and you can hardly stand—it's that. Does it mean what you feel at the ocean when you see the waves? If you have an appropriate understanding that the force and mystery and complexity of what you're looking at takes the lives of people. Is it what you feel when you're looking at a beautiful sunset? If you have a healthy understanding that if you were to move much closer to that ball of fire, you would be incinerated—then yes. That's this word.

I'm saying that I think we have missed it. I'm going one step further to say that if you get it, it's going to change some things. It's different! And the fear of God, lest you think something different... in case you think, “Oh, you grabbed the three verses that said that.” No, no, no. This idea is something God really wants you to understand. I'm going to show you quickly like some; this is not comprehensive, not complete:

- Proverbs 9:10 ~ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...
- Proverbs 14:7 ~ The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life...
- Proverbs 111:10 ~ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...
- Proverbs 1:9 ~ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge...
- Proverbs 16:6 ~ Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the Lord.
- Genesis 22:12 ~ Now I know that you fear God,...
- Exodus 20:20 ~ So that the fear of God will be with you...
- Deuteronomy 6:13 ~ Fear the Lord your God, serve Him...
- Deuteronomy 10:12 ~ Fear the Lord your God.
- Deuteronomy 31:12-13 ~ Fear the Lord your God and follow carefully...
- Joshua 4:24 ~ Always fear the Lord your God...
- 1 Samuel 12:14 ~ If you fear the Lord and serve and obey.
- 2 Chronicles 19:7 ~ Now let the fear of the Lord be on you.

- Nehemiah 5:9 ~ The fear of the Lord to avoid the reproach...
- Job 28:28 ~ The fear of the Lord that is wisdom...
- Psalm 19:9 ~ The fear of the Lord is pure...
- Proverbs 15:16 ~ Better a little with the fear of the Lord.
- Proverbs 19:23 ~ The fear of the Lord leads to life...
- Proverbs 22:4 ~ Fear of the Lord.
- Proverbs 23:17 ~ Fear of the Lord.
- Ecclesiastes 12:13 ~ Fear of the God.
- Isaiah 11:2-3 ~ The fear of the Lord.
- Isaiah 33:6 ~ The fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure.
- Jeremiah 5:24 ~ Let us fear the Lord our God...
- Jeremiah 32:40 ~ Fear me...
- Acts 9:31 ~ Living in the fear of the Lord.

This list is not close to comprehensive or exhaustive—just a few to say, “Oh, wow. God is trying to tell us something.” He should have said, “Beautiful like a sunset.” No, no, no. There's no “beautiful like a sunset” in that.

Why would we fear God? Why would we fear God? Why do you fear anything? Why do you fear anything? Because it is powerful and in control. It can do the things that you are afraid of. I'm afraid of heights; I'm afraid of being robbed; I'm afraid of my kids. Whatever you fear—it's like the highest level of that fear is here (*hand is low to the ground*) and the fear of God is so much more than that (*hand is way above JP's head*). He says in Matthew 5 in the New Testament: **“Do not fear the ones who can harm the body on this earth, but fear the one who can destroy the body in hell.”** These are the words of Jesus, our loving Savior. He is telling us something that I am just going on record saying that I think we missed it. I think we have missed it. And that's going to bring me to my first point, which I'm telling you is startling. So hang in there with me; I'm going somewhere.

1. Why do we fear God? Because God kills.

And you say, “Well, why would he say that? Why would he make that his point? Wow! Where is he going with this? That is uncomfortable.” I want to say this with a lot of kindness and compassion. It's uncomfortable especially if we internalize that and personalize that, thinking in terms of our own story. That's not the context of that point. I'm saying that when you zoom out 30,000 feet and we're talking about the nature and the character of God. And you say, “Well, God kills.” Wow! “Are you sure?” Yes, I'm sure.

We just read this week in the Bible Reading Plan, in the book of 1 Chronicles, which is repeated in 2 Samuel, that David is to carry the Ark of the Covenant. He has been given really specific instructions to put poles through rings of the Ark of the Covenant and to have the Levites carry it. This is the way that he's supposed to transport it, but he cut some corners and he loaded up on the back of oxen. As those oxen are walking one of them trips. OK? This is history. This actually happened. It's recorded in a historical book. One of those ox trips and Uzza reaches out to steady the Ark of the Covenant so that it doesn't fall. He touches it and he dies. Why? Because God is

holy and set apart. His works are sacred. He's different. He's making a point. He records that in history so that we would know something and understand something about Him.

And you say, “Yeah, well, that's interesting. That's one place.” Guys. Do you remember Genesis 6? That little children's story that we paint on the side of nurseries where God killed everyone? It's crazy. We laugh in the discomfort and the mystery of like, “Oh yeah. Wow. Oh yeah.” He wiped them out. He looked down and He saw that the people of the world were wicked and He said, “Hey, I want you to build this boat, this ark, so that your family is protected and my wrath is going to come down in the form of a flood. And everyone is going to die.” We have softened that. In Genesis 19, Sodom and Gomorrah—two cities were wiped out. “Save them; there are some righteous people in there.” “Who is righteous? Who is righteous?” Exodus 12-14 is another children's story. You remember the plagues? The 10 plagues; “Let my people go?” The 10th plague kills the firstborn sons of all the Egyptians. Do you remember that? Is it true? Is it OK to say what is true from the Scriptures? Exodus 16: Korah's rebellion against Moses; the ground opens up and swallows Cora and all his followers. Is it true? Yeah, but that's the God of the Old Testament. That is the God of the Old Testament and then Jesus comes. Everything changes! The new covenant makes it different now.

Acts 5: the Church is growing and strengthening. Thousands are being saved and there's a couple at Harris Creek and they are like, “We're going to sell a field and bring in; we're going to support the work. We hear you are building a building across the street.” They hold some money back for themselves and they say, “Here it is. Here's all the money we got from selling our property.” Peter says, “Is this all the money that you got from selling your property?” And Ananias said, “Yes it is,” and he falls down dead. Then his wife, Sapphira, walks in. And Peter says, “Hey, is this all the money that you got from selling that field?” And she says, “Yes, it is.” And he says, “The same fate of your husband is about to fall upon you, and the same men that carried out his body are now going to carry out yours.” And she falls down dead. You can see with how God dealt with Herod. This is not an Old Testament idea. It's not like God's character shifted in the New Testament. That's why my point is what my point is.

This is what it says in Acts 5:11: “**Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.**” You cannot speak about the nature and the character of God and erase these things from the Scripture. They are in there and we have to make sense of them. We have to see how that fits. He's calling you to be holy and not only is He calling you to be holy, but in His kindness and mercy towards you, He's making you holy. The word is sanctification. The Spirit of God is conforming you to the image and the character of God if you're surrendered to Him and His word. I think that we have been like, “Well, it is the kindness of God that leads to repentance.” And we have overindexed on the ‘He is my friend’ nature of God and, in doing so, erased over 300 verses with really clear instruction.

When I started dating Monica, my wife, she had a Rottweiler named Lexus. Everybody loved Lexus. In full transparency, she got Lexus through a breakup—ex-boyfriend—and she inherited the Rottweiler. So now, I am the new boyfriend who comes into town and I would go to pet Lexus and she would growl. And I am like, “Please don't eat me.” You know? And everybody who knew Lexus and loved Lexus and was close to Lexus said, “She would never. She would never. She's a sweetheart. She's a good dog.” I'm like, “Listen, I've seen Dateline. I know how

this goes. All the family thought the dog would never do that and next thing you know, the boyfriend's lunch, right? But I know how this goes.” I think we've done that with God. “Oh, He would never.” I'm not—let me be clear—I am not comparing God to a dog. I'm not doing that. I am comparing our response, or bringing commonality to our response of naivete to what He's capable of. He is still fierce in nature. He is capable of all things; in control; and sovereign. As you're talking about Him, we want to make sure that we know and understand the full picture. Yes, the Bible says 365 times to not be afraid, but over 300 times it says to fear God. Fear the Lord. Fear God.

The problem with this is that, when you're afraid of someone, you don't want to be near them. When you're near them, it's uncomfortable. You're like, “I don't know what you're going to do.” And I think what can happen is we can think, “Well, gosh, is He a tyrant? Is He flippant? Is he going to lash out on me? What is His character nature?” We have to be true and consistent with all of the other things that we know about God. We think, “Well, how can I approach a God that I'm afraid of?” Insert Jesus. Jesus is when God became a man. He put on flesh; He came to this earth. You think, “Well, I don't want to be near someone that I'm afraid of.” He comes to you. He draws near to you. He saves you in spite of you. That's my second point.

2. *God died.*

As if the first point wasn't controversial enough, here in number two, we have the reality—another truthful reality—that God died. He came to us, in spite of us, to save us. Here's what the Scripture says. Romans 5:8: “**But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**” You are an enemy of the most powerful force that has ever been. You have no metaphor to appropriately understand His power and might. Nothing else comes close because anything you could say would just be something He's sovereign over. And you are an enemy to that ruler. And He said, “But I want you on my team.” Why? Because you are good? Because you are smart? Because you are rich? Because you are attractive? No. According to His glory, riches, and kindness—He says, “I chose you.” He brings you into the family.

Romans 5:10 says, “**For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life?**” “Shall we be saved through His life.” God's anger, that ruler's anger at your sin and what you've done. When you have cheated. When you were a bad dad. When you were too busy with work. When you went about your own ways. You did your own things. When you cheated and nobody saw and nobody would know. Prom night! What do you deserve? You deserve death! But His anger at your sin was satisfied on his Son. So that He's free to love you and pursue you. What's the right understanding about that? “How do I know if I really get that?” Gratitude.

If you wake up every day, the Gospel, Jesus—oh, man—what you did for me! The go-between—the wrath of God on Him. I can know God now! I can have a relationship with God now! And you go about your life and continue to live in this world and do what you want and talk to people and treat people the way that you want. You cannot. You do not fear God. You do not understand the Gospel. But when we do, there's a kindness that marks us. A gratitude that marks us. A compassion that marks us. A charity that marks us. The fruit of the Spirit that marks the follower

of God. As it stirs gratitude in us, then we do not—you and I do not—get stuck in a routine that robs us of reverence.

You are like, “Well, where are we missing it?” Man, I am telling you—we missed it. I don't know what it looked like to come in here today. I don't know if you're pulling in the parking lot and are like, “Hey guys, we're about to approach a holy God in a place of worship, and so let's just spend a few minutes praying and preparing our hearts.” My hunch is it's a little bit more like, “I hope they have coffee. I hope the line isn't long. I hope I get a parking spot.” Right. This is where I'm like, “Man, I think we missed it. I don't think we understand what we're doing.”

I was raised Roman Catholic, very Catholic. I was in Catholic school and was an altar boy taught by nuns. You know? Church every Friday and Sunday. I can remember sitting down in kind of altar boy training, if you will, where the priest was telling us this story about how the priests were just going through the motions. They would have these white robes and they would come in. When you enter the Catholic Church, you dip your hands in holy water and then you make the sign of the cross anytime you enter Catholic Church. Then you would do something called genuflect, or kneel, before the Tabernacle and make the sign of the cross. So there's all of this tradition that comes in. What he notices is that these priests in training were just going through these motions carelessly. Their hearts had drifted away from the tradition. The routine had replaced the reverence. So, the bishop comes into town and he fills those holy water containers—I don't know what they're called right now; it escapes me. He fills them with black ink. And the guys come in and they didn't even pay attention to what they were doing. They dipped their hands in it. They did the sign of the cross and, by the time they had all made it in and sat down, they realized they just had this black messy cross across them just striped across their white robes. He was making the point that their hearts had drifted from their actions. “You have forsaken the work of the cross. There's no gratitude. You are just going through the motions because you've been taught to.”

I thought, “What a word for us today.” Are you sure you understand who God is? Are you sure you know Him and are you sure you get what He has done for you through His Son? That we would not just go through the motions, that our routine would not replace our reverence. That our tradition would not pull us back from standing before a terrifying, terrifying God—capable of all things, yet choosing to love us. He is saying, “I want you. I want you on my team.”

The enemy's plan is to turn reverence into routine. So, God did indeed die, but He didn't stay dead. He raised on the third day and the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead lives in us and with us and now—this is crazy; this is theology—check me here. Now that Christ who was raised from the dead goes between us and the Father and declares our innocence. He says to the Father, “They are not guilty. He's not guilty. She's not guilty. Remember your anger at their sin was satisfied on me, so they are clean.” This is why it's good news! If we don't understand the fear of God, the gospel is not good news. But when you rightfully understand that the judgment of God is upon you, then you understand the gospel. Now it's great news – we have been freed.

Hebrews 9:15 says this, “**For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.**” So what does it mean to fear God and be saved by Jesus? It means we have God. The promised Holy Spirit lives

with us. God makes a home in us; we become the temple. The Spirit of God is now influencing us in this life, showing us how to live, convicting us of sin, conforming us to the image and the character of Jesus. He's dealing with us and He's sanctifying us. My third and final point:

3. *God shows us how to live.*

God shows us how to live. We said the fear of God is the first step to living with wisdom. So there are really two ways to think about the fear of God historically, and you said both of them up front. The fear of God is obedience; it means following His commands. But also that the fear of God means awe and reverence. But I am going to give you a third one here in a minute. That is the one I want you to leave with here in just a moment. As we move to the last song in a minute, that is the definition I want you to hold fast to.

But right now I want to talk about this: what does it mean to walk in obedience? We have the Holy Spirit. You are right, it is the kindness of God that leads to repentance, but it is the fear of God that keeps you from needing to repent in an ongoing fashion. Does that make sense? The kindness of God allows me to go to God and say, "God, I messed up. I am so sorry. Thank you for paying for my sins in Christ." It is the fear of God that says, "I don't want to do that again. I want to walk in right relationship with you." Proverbs 16:6: "**Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for, through the fear of the Lord evil is avoided.**" Simply put, the fear of the Lord is doing the right thing always, even if only God knows it. Even if God is the only one that knows you are faithful.

If you've ever been to this place where you do something, you're looking at something on your phone and you look over your shoulders, thinking, "Is anyone seeing this?" That is the anti-faith. That's the fear of man. If you do something and you think, "How do I scheme and get away with that? How do I maintain my innocence? How do I twist the story so that the truth they know is different than the reality of the wrong that I've done? How do I make myself look good?" This is the anti-faith. This is the fear of man! You're not thinking at all. You're not at this place of realizing God knows! God knows! You are not in the place like David, "**Against you alone, Oh Lord, have I sinned.**" You're thinking, "How do I manage perception like Ananias and Sapphira and make myself look good for these people?" That is the anti-faith. It is different than the fear of God.

And if you don't know Him, you haven't rightfully trusted in his son... when I was in the corporate world, I was sharing with this coworker who was not a believer. He was not a Christian and I was just hitting a wall with him. And I was like, "All right, I'm going to bring out the big guns." I said, "Hey, let's go to lunch with my friend." So, my friend is a master evangelist. And we go to lunch and we're sitting there and he is sharing the gospel—in all the ways I did—the bridge illustration, the chair illustration, the Romans Road. He's telling them about the finished work of Jesus, he's talking through his objections: the seven-day creation and dinosaurs and the age of the earth and Tectonic plates. All these things. I am like, "Come on, come on." I am praying. I have other people praying. I am like, "Please trust in Christ." And he goes, "Yeah, well, just let me think about it. I just need to think about all that. You have given me a lot to think about." And my friend the evangelist says, "That is great. Think about it. Take the time you need to think about it. Just don't die in the meantime." Which is a really loving and honest thing to say

to somebody that may die and go to hell forever. “Hey man, think about it. Just don't die.” And we pull out--true story—of that parking lot at the restaurant where we were meeting. We pull out of the parking lot. I pull out of the parking lot onto the road that quickly turns into the highway and there's a car right there that just blew past the stop sign. It's coming 60 miles an hour for his door and I hammer the gas. They turn into the curb and jump the curb. It is a big ordeal. He just barely misses just being T-boned on his door. We're kind of spun out and they have spun out. I just look at him and I am like, “Are you ready now? Man, life is short. We have got a lot to think about, but not always a lot of time to think about it.”

It is indeed the kindness of God that leads to repentance, but it is the fear of God that keeps us in obedience. And the grace of God and the joy of God. The challenge with those tweetable statements like that is they're always incomplete. There's lots of complexity and nuance to theology. But it needs to influence what you do when you're by yourself and who you are. When you're not concerned about the fear, man.

I purchased a car this year. A used car. When you buy a used car, you get the title. You have to transfer the title. You have 30 days to transfer the title in your name or you pay penalties. And so, I knew I had 30 days to transfer this title, but the seller didn't date the title. They didn't put a date down. And so that 30 days of when I bought the car, it was fast, I was traveling. I was coming in, meeting with the staff, all the things. Life was just really busy—those 30 days came and went. And then the next 30 days came on, I kept looking for an hour and a half window to go over to the title transfer place and get this thing transferred. I just couldn't find that hour and a half. I didn't prioritize it. Another 30 days came and went and now is the time to go to the title company. I racked up \$350 in fees, in late penalties for not getting the title transfer in time, but it's OK because the seller didn't put the date down. All I have to do, nobody knows--there's no consequences. Nobody has any idea. No one would ever know. All I have to do is write the date within 30 days of when I'm there and there's no fee. I save \$350. But it's a lie. It's not the absolute truth. The date of sale is saying “when was the date of sale,” not “how do you avoid paying \$350?” And I'm like looking at that and I'm embarrassed that I even wrestled for a moment. That the Spirit of God would even have to say, “But it is not the truth?” You want to walk in the truth. If it costs you \$350, you walk in the truth. If it costs you \$350,000, you walk in the truth. If it costs you \$3,500,000. Could you imagine standing before a holy God at the end of this and you're like, “God it cost me \$3,500,000 to write the right date down, and no one would have known.” And he is like, “But I knew. I knew, I was right there. I saw you. Well done. \$3,500,000, by the way that is payment up here, but well done. It's going to hit you later.”

In summary: God kills all who remain His enemies, but He died so that we can live with Him. Because he died for us, we live for Him.

I will try to redeem that story up top. Kiki, the athlete, the strong guy in my school. Did I fear Kiki? Was I afraid of him? Yeah. Yeah, I was afraid of him. He had already demonstrated he could do whatever he wanted to me at will. I was afraid of him, respected him. In some sense, I was amazed by him. I was grateful that he was my friend, now. Now, he's my friend; he's with me. We're on the same team. That's good news, right? Now, I don't want to cross him. You know? I don't want to do anything to intentionally hurt him. But what I would say was the greater fear of Kiki, and in my adolescent rebellion, was the fear of being separated from him.

And this is what the fear of God means for the believers in the room today. What does it mean to fear the Lord? It means to walk in an intimate relationship with Him, not wanting anything to compromise the intimacy that you feel with Him. That being the most important to you and understanding that you live in a world where all kinds of things can choke out that faith. They can distract you from a right understanding of who He is and what He desires for you. And so, at every turn you say, “God, what would you have me do? And I'm just going to do that, no matter what it costs me and no matter who knows. For you know, God. I'm going to walk in faithfulness to you. I don't want anything to compromise that intimacy.”

What I see, why I think this is so important for our church—I see a lot of people in our city that are going through the motions. They have some semblance of a relationship with the Creator; they read their Bibles and they go to church and they're decent people. They're not experiencing the real benefit of being yielded to the Holy Spirit at every turn. It's one thing to know the right thing to say. It's a whole different thing than to do the right thing from the Spirit of God, yielding to Him. You are saying, “God, you're in control. I'll do whatever you ask me to do. I just don't want anything to separate me from you. My greatest fear in this moment is that I go to pray and you feel far. I don't want you to feel far. So I'm so thankful to Jesus who brought us close.”

Let me pray for us. As I pray for us, I am going to give you a minute to pray. Personally, where in your life have you misunderstood the fear of God? As I give my title example, maybe you're thinking about your taxes, or maybe you're thinking about a test. Or maybe you're thinking about some area where you cheated that no one's ever going to know; you're going to take that to your grave. How you have operated not in the fear of the Lord. You have schemed; scheming is the anti-faith. God sees the schemes of men and women. You're so smart. You're strategic. You're smart enough to get away with things here on this earth. That is the anti-faith. There's no fear of God in that. Talk to Him about it. Ask Him for help.

Now that you've prayed personally, I would ask for you to pray for us corporately. Think about the church of Harris Creek. Where have we missed it corporately? What are those things where routine has replaced reverence? Where we care more about parking places, and hot coffee, or comfortable chairs, or central air and heat, or whatever it is—more than the reverence of God and who He is. Pray for us.

Lord, I just ask that you would draw near to us. That even as we sing, that you would purify us from all unrighteousness. That you would mercifully expose our sins. That you would strip us of our rebellious nature. That you would humble us before an almighty God. That we would not rely on our strengths or looks or financial resources or our relationships. That we would stand on the cornerstone of Jesus Christ; the go-between, the mediator, the one who has shielded us from your wrath and anger and allowed us to have a right relationship with you. Would you stir in us, Lord, gratitude even as we sing this song? In Jesus' name, amen.