



FIRST BAPTIST
— CHURCH —
FAIR OAKS RANCH

Day 1: The Beginning of Wisdom

Proverbs 9:10 *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.* (ESV)

DEVOTIONAL

Of all the starting points to begin a journey toward holiness, Scripture points us to a place most of us would rather hurry past: the fear of the Lord. We live in an age that has stripped the word “fear” of its meaning and value. Instead of reading fear as awe and wonder, we arrive at this verse assuming it must mean dread or doubt. This is not the fear Scripture commends. The fear of the Lord is not being afraid of God or uncertain of circumstance; it is being rightly overwhelmed by Him and walking in the faith of His sovereign and loving care.

The Hebrew word for fear is *yir'ah*, and it holds more than our English “fear” typically carries. It is true that it can mean terror; however, far more often it means reverence, awe, or a trembling honor before someone infinitely greater than ourselves. Charles Bridges, a peer of Charles Spurgeon, defined it beautifully: *the fear of the Lord is “that affectionate reverence, by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father’s law.”* Not the terror of a slave facing a vengeful master, a criminal fleeing the consequences of their crime, nor the frightened nature of a toddler spooked by the dark; but the overwhelming love and humility of a child who so treasures his Father affection and approval that he cannot bear to grieve Him.

Notice how this passage describes this fear: not the end of *reason*, but the beginning of *wisdom* — the Hebrew *re’shith*, the first thing, the chief and controlling principle. It is the foundation stone on which everything else is built. A person may be brilliant, educated, and successful, and still be, in the truest sense, a fool, because he has never bowed his heart to the Lord. All genuine wisdom starts on our knees.

Here is why this matters for the forty days ahead. We are setting out to pursue holiness and purity, and the world offers us a hundred techniques for cleaning ourselves up and a thousand reasons why it’s unnecessary. But Scripture insists that lasting purity does not begin with a technique; it begins with a Person; that of Jesus Christ living in you. It begins the moment we see God as He truly is — high, holy,

and worthy — and our hearts respond not with terror but with worshipful surrender. Holiness is not a set of rules to obey; it is the fruit of a heart that has come to fear the Lord.

TAKE AWAY

Everything you hope to become this season flows from one beginning — an affectionate awe of God. Do not start with rules; start on your knees.

Prayer Prompt

Ask the Lord to trade any dread or doubt you carry of being rejected or inadequate for a childlike, affectionate awe of Him.