

Dr. Knut Heim, Proverbs, Session 2, Proverbs 1:1-7

Podcast, Audio Overview

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Hey everyone, welcome to another deep dive with us. Hey everybody, and today we're going to be unpacking this idea of fear of the Lord, yeah, which I've got to admit, when I first heard that phrase. It's kind of like whoa.

Okay. Yeah, a little bit intimidating. Maybe it's like fire and brimstone that come to mind. Yeah, it does have that feel to it.

It does, right? Yeah, but we're diving into this lecture series today by Dr. Knut Heim Okay on the book of Proverbs. All right, and he really digs into some pretty cool stuff, especially in Proverbs 1.7 and 9.10. Okay, and he kind of argues that fear of the Lord is actually all about wisdom and knowledge. Interesting, and he even takes on some other scholars who interpret these key verses in a way that he thinks kind of misses the point.

Okay. Yeah, I mean, that's interesting, right, because on the surface, when you hear fear of the Lord, you do think about being terrified of God, like, yeah, he's going to punish you if you step out of line. Yeah, totally. Yeah, so I'm curious, like, how can fear lead to wisdom? Yeah, especially that kind of fear, right?

Well, Dr. Heim starts by saying that we often misunderstand fear of the Lord because we take it too literally, okay. He says it's more like an idiom, kind of like when we say, like, you know, catch my drift, right? We don't actually mean that somebody's catching anything; we know it's about understanding. Yeah, exactly. It's about understanding what someone means, not physically catching something, right? Yeah, and Dr. Heim says that fear of the Lord is similar.

Yeah, it's not about, like, trembling before God in terror, right? He says it's more about obedient trust that comes from having a positive and trusting relationship with God. So instead of being scared of messing up, it's more about trusting God and then letting that trust guide our actions. Exactly.

Okay, I'm starting to see how that could connect to wisdom. Yeah, and to illustrate this whole idea of fear leading to obedience, Dr. Heim brings up a fascinating passage in Exodus 20. Okay. Do you remember when the Israelites encountered God at Mount Sinai? Oh, yeah, that's a pretty intense scene.

Yeah, you've got thunder and lightning; the whole mountain is smoking. Understandably freaked out; they're terrified, and they even tell Moses You talk to God; we can't handle this direct interaction Yeah, but then Moses says something really interesting. He says Don't be afraid; God is testing you, putting the fear of him in you so that you do not sin whoa Okay, so it's like that experience of God's power was meant to lead them to obedience. Yes, but not just like out of terror, right? It's more like respect for God's authority. Exactly, it makes

you want to do what's right? Yeah, I think that's closer to what we mean when we call someone God-fearing today, right? We're not talking about somebody who's constantly afraid of punishment. Yeah, it's more about someone who's known for their faith and their good character. Exactly.

They're living out their faith naturally, not because they're scared of messing up. Yeah, and it's interesting how that connects back to what Dr. Heim is saying about this obedient trust in Proverbs. Yeah, and Dr. Heim also says that this fear of the Lord isn't just an abstract feeling or idea.

It's meant to lead to practical action. Yes, that's really important; that benefits others. Yes, so it's not just about having warm, fuzzy feelings towards God. It's about how that trust shapes our choices, right, and how we treat other people. Yes, exactly. That's where things get really interesting because one of the most debated verses in Proverbs is 1.7 which says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, right? Okay, so I can see where that might cause some debate. Yeah, especially with this full new understanding of fear of the Lord that we're talking about. Sure, a lot of the debate centers around that word beginning right in Hebrew.

The word is *reshit*. Which literally means head. Now, a scholar named Bruce Waltke. He suggests that it just means beginning, and he points to a similar verse in Proverbs 9.10. Okay, that uses a more straightforward word for beginning.

So he's basically saying the author is using "beginning" in both verses, even though one uses a more metaphorical word exactly, but Dr. Heim isn't so sure about that. He points out that Proverbs is poetry, right, and poetry uses imagery and metaphors. He even quotes another scholar, Louis Alonzo Schoeckel, who said What has been written with imagination must be read with imagination So we're missing something if we just stick to the most literal interpretation.

That's Dr. Heim's point. Okay, he argues that if we assume Beginning is the only meaning, we're basically saying the author made a mistake by using head in the first place, and I get the sense that Dr. Heim really doesn't think the author of Proverbs made careless mistakes. He doesn't, right, and this is where it gets really exciting.

Okay, Dr. Heim argues that the author chose head on purpose. Okay, because it has multiple layers of meaning, it can mean beginning, right? But it can also mean the most important part. Or the very essence of something, so maybe the author is saying Fear of the Lord is the beginning, the most important element, and the essence of wisdom all at the same time. That's what he's arguing.

That's a pretty cool way to think about it. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, so we're talking about this fear of the Lord as this multifaceted idea that's the head of wisdom and all these different senses. But thinking like Proverbs is known for being a really practical book.

Yeah, so how does this idea of? fear of the Lord as like Obedient trust actually play out in our everyday lives. That's a great question. And Dr. Heim definitely gets into that Okay, he says it's not about just blindly following rules because we're scared of being punished It's

more about developing the sensitivity to what God wants for us. Okay, and genuinely wanting to please him. I see, so it's not about being a goody-two-shoes out of fear.

Yeah, it's about wanting to do what's right. Because we actually trust God. Exactly. Okay, I guess it makes sense that that kind of mindset would lead to wiser choices. Totally. It's like we're aligning our hearts with God's heart. So our actions naturally follow. That makes me think about all those Proverbs that talk about specific areas of life, yeah, like relationships, money, work.

Are you saying this fear of the Lord should influence how we approach all those things? Absolutely. Take finances, for example, okay. If we're managing our money with fear of the Lord, we're less likely to make decisions based on like greed or anxiety. So it's not just about like tithing or donating to charity. It's about every financial decision. Yeah, like, would I take that shady business deal, or would that go against this? Obedient trust that we're talking about.

That's a great example. It really gets to the heart of it, and it's the same with relationships. If we approach them with fear of the Lord, we treat people with love, respect, forgiveness, you know, all those things that Proverbs talks about because those values reflect God's character. Yeah, so living them out is like a natural part of this obedient trust. Yeah, it's starting to click for me now. Good. It's like that proverb that says the fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Yes, if we truly revere God, we will naturally want to avoid anything that goes against his character, right? Okay, so it's not just about doing good things; it's about rejecting the bad stuff too. That's right.

Is it almost like fear of the Lord is this inner compass? Yeah, that helps us navigate tricky situations, big or small. That's a great way to put it, and remember how Dr. Heim emphasized that fear of the Lord isn't just about our personal relationship with God, right? It also affects how we interact with the world around us. You mean, like how we impact our community and society as a whole. Proverbs talks a lot about seeking justice, helping the poor, speaking up for what's right. Okay, those things flow naturally from fear of the Lord, so it's not enough to just be a good person, yeah, in our private lives, right? We have to live out those values in the public sphere, too. It's about being a force for good in the world, being a light in the darkness, as they say. This is pretty challenging stuff. It is; it's making me think about how I can cultivate this fear of the Lord more intentionally in my own life. It is challenging, but it's also incredibly inspiring. I think the key is to remember that it's not about achieving some kind of perfect fear of the Lord, right? It's about continually growing in our understanding of it, letting it shape our lives more and more each day. It's a journey, not a destination.

That's right, but I have to admit this whole conversation is giving me a lot to think about. What about you? Definitely, there's always more to learn, but I think Dr. Heim's perspective is really helpful. Yeah, because it moves us away from this idea of fear of the Lord as just being scared of punishment. It's more about cultivating that relationship of trust with God that influences every part of our lives. Exactly, and that's what makes it so relevant even thousands of years after Proverbs was written, and there's still so much more to unpack. I'm ready to dive back into those lectures. Are you game to keep going with this? Absolutely, there are some really fascinating insights coming up, especially when we look at how this

concept of fear of the Lord connects with other wisdom literature in the Bible. All right, so picking up where we left off.

I was really intrigued by how Dr. Heim addressed those scholars who claimed that Proverbs is like a purely secular book. As they say, because it doesn't explicitly mention things like the Covenant or the Exodus, it must not be very theological. Yeah, you do hear that sometimes. Yeah, but I think, as we've seen with this emphasis on fear of the Lord woven throughout Proverbs, it suggests there's a much deeper theological foundation. It's like even when Proverbs is talking about just everyday stuff, yeah, like how to handle your money or who to choose as friends, right? It's subtly pointing us toward a right relationship with God. What's interesting to me is that Proverbs isn't trying to lay out, like, a systematic theology like you would find in other parts of the Bible. Yeah, it's more like a Tapestry of wisdom, and all those threads of reverence and trust in God are what hold it all together. Oh, I love that analogy. Yeah, so it's not about, like, rigid doctrines; it's about a way of life where we're constantly aware of God and want to do what he wants, and that emphasis on a personal relationship with God isn't unique to Proverbs either. Okay, you see it in other wisdom books like Job and Ecclesiastes. So it's like a recurring theme across this whole genre of biblical writing. Yeah, it is; that honestly makes me want to go back and reread those books. Yeah, with this new understanding of fear of the Lord in mind.

I think you'd find it really enriching. Yeah, you might discover like new layers of meaning in those stories and a deeper appreciation for the wisdom that they offer. I'm definitely adding that to my reading list. Good. It's amazing how like one concept can open up so many new avenues for understanding the Bible. It is. That's the beauty of learning, right? There's always more to discover, and it's those connections that make it so fascinating. Totally. But I think as we wrap up our deep dive on fear of the Lord, yeah, maybe we should take a moment to highlight, like, the key takeaways for our listeners. That's a great idea. Okay, so for anyone listening, here's what we hope you walk away with. Okay, first: fear of the Lord isn't about being afraid of God in a sense of terror or dread.

Yeah, it's about cultivating a heart of reverence, trust, and obedience that flows from a relationship with him. It's about recognizing his authority, not shrinking back in fear of punishment, but responding with a willingness to do what he wants out of love and gratitude. And second, remember that fear of the Lord isn't just this internal feeling. Yeah, it impacts how we live our lives. Yes, the choices we make, yeah, how we treat other people. It's about letting that reverence permeate every aspect of who we are: our thoughts, our words, our actions. And finally, this is a lifelong journey.

Mm-hmm. We're not going to reach some perfect state of fear of the Lord overnight. No, it's a process.

Yeah, it's about consistently seeking to understand what it means and allowing it to transform us from the inside out. It's a process of aligning our hearts and minds with God's will, and as we do that, we'll find ourselves growing in wisdom, experiencing true fulfillment, and becoming a blessing to those around us. Well said. This deep dive has been such a thought-provoking journey, and I feel like my understanding of fear of the Lord has been completely transformed, too. It's not about cowering in fear. It's about walking through life with a sense of awe and reverence, trusting God to guide our steps.

It's been a pleasure unpacking this topic with you. Likewise, it's amazing how a phrase that seems so simple on the surface can have so much depth and richness. Hopefully our listener feels equipped to explore this idea further on their own. Absolutely, and as we wrap up, I want to leave you with a question to ponder. Okay, if fear of the Lord isn't about being afraid, how might embracing this concept be obedient trust? Change your approach to learning and living. Hmm.

That's a good one. Think about that as you continue your own exploration of Proverbs. Yeah, it's a book full of wisdom that can help us navigate life's complexities with grace, integrity, and hearts that are in tune with God's will. Amen to that. Thanks for joining us on this deep dive into the fear of the Lord. Thanks, everybody. Until next time, keep seeking wisdom.

Keep trusting God and keep diving deep