

Dr. Knut Heim, Proverbs, Session 3, The Fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7; 9:10)

Podcast, Audio Overview

Sponsored by Biblicallearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

All right, diving in again with another deep dive today. You know that phrase, the fear of the Lord? Yeah, the way you might have heard it forever ago in Sunday school. We're going to really get into it, specifically how it pops up in Proverbs, you know, Proverbs 1.7 and 9.10. Okay, yeah, those wise sayings exactly, and we've got some lectures from Dr. Knut Heim. He's a Biblical scholar, right, and he has some really surprising takes on how we should be understanding this whole idea because, honestly, thinking about being afraid of God.

Yeah, doesn't exactly scream happy life, does it? Well, that's a great point, and it's where Dr. Heim brings up this whole concept of idioms. He's saying that this phrase fear of the Lord it might not mean what you think at first glance, you know, just looking at the words themselves, not about hiding under the covers because you think God's going to smite you. Exactly. Think about it: we use idioms all the time. Like when we say catch my drift, right? Is no one actually out there with a fishing net trying to catch ideas floating by, right? Good point.

So, if it's not about being totally terrified, like, what's Dr. Heim's take? What does he say fear of the Lord really is about? Okay, so he points to Exodus chapter 20. This is where the Israelites are at Mount Sinai, right, and the mountains are like on fire. There's thunder and lightning- dramatic, super dramatic and they're obviously scared. But then Moses tells them, and this is important: He says Do not be afraid, for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you, so that you do not sin. Okay, that's interesting. So Moses is saying that fear is supposed to help you stay away from sinning, right? And Dr. Heim's point is that the kind of fear being talked about here is more like this deep respect and trust the kind of respect and trust that would inspire you to want to live a good life. I think I'm starting to get it. So it's kind of like you trust God's goodness and guidance so much that you want to do what's right, not because you're scared, but because you know it's the best path for you. Exactly. It's a much more positive kind of fear. Yeah, and then think about it like when we say someone is God-fearing today, right? Like, I know this woman who volunteers at a homeless shelter every week always goes above and beyond for everyone, super kind and giving. She's definitely God-fearing in that sense, right, but she's not like walking around terrified all the time.

That's a great example. It really fits with Dr. Heim's interpretation, right? Being God-fearing is less about being afraid and more about living in a way that reflects that deep trust in God. So okay, we're already seeing that fear of the Lord has way more to it than just being scared. But I know this is coming: it gets even more interesting when we look at how this idea connects to wisdom, right? Especially in Proverbs 1.7. Absolutely, that verse says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. But that Hebrew word for beginning, *Risha*, actually has other meanings, like head or essence. Wait, hold on. So is fear of the Lord the starting point of wisdom, or the most important part, like the core of it? Yeah, you see the debate,

right? I mean, those are pretty different ideas. A lot of scholars, folks like Bruce Waltke point to Proverbs 9.10 where there's a different Hebrew word that very clearly means "beginning," and they say that the second verse clarifies the meaning in the first. So they're basically saying that the author just wasn't clear enough the first time around. I know that feels a little, I don't know- dismissive, maybe like maybe they're not giving the author enough credit, you know, Dr.

Heim agrees with you. He thinks that the author of Proverbs was a skilled poet, someone who knew exactly what words they wanted to use, right? I mean, we're talking about a book that people have been turning to for centuries for wisdom. I have a feeling they knew exactly what they were doing, and Dr. Heim suggests that the ambiguity of that word *Rishita*, it might be intentional, like maybe the author wanted to pack multiple meanings into that one word. Whoa, wait, are you saying the author might have like deliberately used a word that could mean? Beginning, head, and essence all at the same time. That's what Dr. Heim is suggesting, and I find it pretty compelling.

It means the author was creating layers of meaning right from the start. Okay, my mind just did a backflip, so how are we even supposed to unpack all that? It sounds like we need more than just a dictionary to figure this out. Well, Dr. Heim quotes another scholar, Louis Alonzo Schuykill, who said, and I love this quote What has been written with imagination must be read with imagination? Maybe we need to approach these texts with more than just logic. Yeah, like with a willingness to be surprised, to really let the poetry and the artistry kind of wash over us, to engage with it on a deeper level, and maybe even find our own understanding of fear of the Lord through that process. Okay, that's incredible. But how does all this play out in the rest of Proverbs? It can't just be this, like, vague poetic idea. There has to be some practical stuff in there to write, like, some actual advice on how to live. Oh, absolutely.

And that's exactly what we're going to explore next. Like, what are some of the other ways? Dr. Heim connects fear of the Lord to living a wise life. Buckle up, everybody. We're about to get into some seriously fascinating stuff.

But for now, we'll leave you with this: What if fear of the Lord isn't about cowering before some? Like a vengeful God, but something much deeper and, dare I say, even life-giving. Something to think about as we head into part two of our deep dive. We'll be right back, and we're back, still deep diving into this whole fear of the Lord thing. We're starting to see it's way less about trembling before a wrathful God and a lot more about this deep respect and trust that kind of inspires you to align your life with God's wisdom, you know. Yeah, that's right. And Dr. Heim makes this really interesting point that this fear of the Lord isn't just this internal feeling you have, right? It's actually meant to affect how you live. So it's not enough to just, like, say you fear God; you got it. You've got to walk the walk, exactly. It's supposed to impact like everything: how you treat other people, the choices you make, how you handle your responsibilities. Remember Proverbs, it's all about that practical wisdom for daily life.

Yeah, that's one of the things I love about Proverbs. It's not just some abstract philosophy up in the clouds somewhere. It's about actually navigating the real world, dealing with difficult people, managing your money. Yeah. Yeah, and Dr. Heim, he sees fear of the Lord as

the foundation for all of that practical wisdom. So it's like if you truly respect and trust God, then that naturally shapes how you approach everything else in life, exactly. It affects your whole outlook, and here's where it gets even more interesting: Proverbs may not explicitly talk about things like the Covenant or the temple. Okay, hold on for those of us who aren't Biblical scholars, can we get a quick refresher on what those terms even mean? Oh sure. Yeah, the covenant refers to that special relationship between God and his people- like a sacred promise or an agreement between them. And the temple was the central place of worship in ancient Israel, a symbol of God's presence.

Okay. Okay, so even though Proverbs isn't directly talking about those things. Dr. Heim is saying it's still deeply rooted in those ideas.

Exactly. He's saying that Proverbs is profoundly shaped by this understanding of a covenant relationship with God that's built on trust and obedience. So it's subtle, but Proverbs is still pointing to a way of life that honors God and everything you do. Yes, and here's another key point. Dr. Heim says that fear of the Lord. It's not static It's a journey so you don't just like achieve fear of the Lord and then you're done It's something you're constantly working on right Proverbs talks about this this idea of constantly seeking and learning and growing in wisdom and understanding Like a muscle you got to keep exercising that's a great way to put it and fear of the Lord is like the fuel for that growth the Motivation to keep learning and refining how you live in a way that honors God, you know That's actually really encouraging It means that even if you mess up even if you fall short You can you can always come back to that that core principle of respecting and trusting God and let that guide you back on Absolutely, and that's the beauty of Proverbs.

It's not this book of rigid rules; it's a source of wisdom to help you navigate the ups and downs of life and grow in your understanding of God through it all. Okay, so we've covered a lot. We talked about how fear of the Lord is connected to trust and obedience, how it's meant to affect your actions, not just your thoughts, and how it's an ongoing journey. What else should we be keeping in mind as we build our understanding of this concept? One more crucial element. Dr. Heim highlights humility.

Ooh Humility. Yeah, I have a feeling this is a big one. It is.

Dr. Heim argues that true fear of the Lord makes you deeply aware of your own limitations, your need for God's guidance and grace. So it's the opposite of being arrogant or thinking you have it all figured out, right? Yeah, it's about admitting that you need God's wisdom to actually navigate life precisely and that humility It's what allows you to learn and to grow to be transformed It's what makes you open to receiving God's wisdom and using it to live a truly flourishing life Wow, okay I'm really starting to see how all these pieces fit together the trust the obedience the practical living the growth the humility They all come from this this deep abiding fear of the Lord exactly and that's what's so fascinating about these deep dives isn't we can uncover all these layers of meaning in these ancient texts that that have the potential to To transform how we understand faith and how we live our lives. This has been mind-blowing. Honestly, I think I need a minute to process all this. Let's pause here for a second and give our listener a chance to do the same. What's standing out to you so far? What's resonating most strongly? Well, we'll be back in a moment to wrap up our

exploration of fear of the Lord. Okay, we're back to fear of the Lord. It's been a wild ride: respect, trust, actions, journey, humility. We've covered a lot of ground.

Yeah, we have, but Dr. Heim doesn't stop there. He's got even more to say about this fear of the Lord, and honestly, it gets pretty mind-blowing. All right, lay it on me. What else is there? Remember how we were talking about fear of the Lord being an idiom? Oh, yeah. Yeah, like, catch my drift, right? Meaning, understand, not literally fishing for drifts in a river. Well, Dr. Heim is saying that Proverbs actually uses another idiom to describe the same concept.

Okay, another one. What is it, knowledge of God? Whoa, hold on. So two idioms for the same idea exactly. And what's even more interesting is these two phrases, fear of the Lord and knowledge of God, they pop up together a lot in Proverbs, almost like they're interchangeable. So it's like they're two sides of the same coin, two ways of talking about the same deep truth. Yeah, that's a great way to put it; this gives us even more insight into what this whole fear of the Lord thing is really all about: it's not just this vague sense of awe or reverence.

It's about truly deeply and personally knowing God; that makes sense. Like the more you know somebody, the way you understand their character, their heart, the more you trust them exactly and directly. Heim is saying that this knowledge of God, it's not just theoretical. It's not like reading about God in a textbook.

It's about experiencing God in a way that changes your whole being. So it's not just knowing about God. It's knowing God personally. Yeah, experiencing God's presence in a way that impacts how you see the world and how you live in it. That's exactly it, and this leads to Dr. Heim's most thought-provoking idea: he's suggesting that this fear of the Lord, this intimate knowledge of God, is actually the goal of wisdom. Well, wait, hold on. I thought the goal of wisdom was like making good decisions, living a successful life- all that practical stuff. That's what we often think of, right?

But Dr. Heim is arguing that those practical benefits are just the fruit of wisdom; the real root of it, the source, the ultimate aim, is that deep? Transformative relationship with God. So it's like wisdom isn't just about what you do, but who you are in relation to God. Yes, it changes everything, doesn't it? Totally, and it fits with what we see all through the Bible, you know. The point isn't just following rules or being successful. It's about knowing God, experiencing God's love, and letting that shape how you live. My mind is officially blown. So, what does this all mean for us right now? How do we cultivate this fear of the Lord? There's this deep knowledge of God in our own lives.

That's the big question, right? And Dr. Heim points us back to all those practical teachings. We find in Proverbs that he encourages us to really, truly engage with the text to let it shape our thoughts, our actions, our relationships- everything- because wisdom isn't just about knowing things. It's about putting them into practice and letting them change you from the inside out. Yeah, it's like this constant cycle: you see God, you learn about God through his word, you put that wisdom into action, and then that leads to an even deeper knowledge of God, which makes you want to seek him even more.

That's it. It's this beautiful ongoing process of growth and transformation, and it all starts with that one foundation: fear of the Lord. I am so inspired right now. It feels like I have a whole new perspective, yeah, on my faith, on life, on reading Proverbs, even me too.

It's amazing what happens when you really dig deep, you know, even just one little phrase can unlock so much richness and depth. That's what we're all about here on the deep dive: taking those little nuggets of wisdom and turning them into pure gold. But the real magic happens when you, our listener, take these insights and weave them into your own life. That's right. So as you go about your day, think about this. Yeah, how can you cultivate a deeper knowledge of God? How can you let that knowledge shape how you live? How can fear the Lord be your guide, leading you toward a life of true wisdom and flourishing? It's a journey worth taking, a question worth pondering, and We're here to support you every step of the way.

Thanks for joining us on this incredible deep dive, and until next time, keep seeking, keep learning, keep growing