

S T U D Y   G U I D E



# *The Fear of the Lord*



MICHAEL REEVES

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# The Fear of the Lord

Michael Reeves



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

*Renew your Mind.*

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# Introduction

The paradox of the gospel is that it frees us from our fears yet leads us to fear. We rejoice in this because the gospel helps us see God rightly. We can at once tremble before Him in all His holiness yet trust Him to deal with all our sins and misplaced fears. In this teaching series, Dr. Michael Reeves cuts through the confusion about the fear of the Lord so that we might grow in the knowledge and wisdom of God that is promised to all those who fear Him.

This study guide is a companion to the video teaching series. Whether you are using the DVDs, streaming the videos on Ligonier.org, or going through the course in Ligonier Connect, this resource is designed to help you make the most of the learning experience. For each message in the series, there is a corresponding lesson in this guide. Here is what you will find in each lesson:

INTRODUCTION	<p>The introduction is a brief paragraph that summarizes the content covered in the lecture and considered in the study guide lesson.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Use the introduction to each lesson to get a sense of the big picture before watching the video. Refer to these statements as you work through the study guide to remind yourself of what you have already covered and where you are headed.</p>
LEARNING GOALS	<p>The learning goals are the knowledge and skills that the study guide lesson will endeavor to equip you with as you work through the lecture content.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Familiarize yourself with the goals of each lesson before engaging its contents. Keeping the overall purpose in mind as you watch each video and reflect on or discuss the questions will help you get the most out of each lesson.</p>
KEY IDEAS	<p>The key ideas are the major points or takeaways from the lecture.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Use these ideas to prepare yourself for each lesson and to review previous lessons. They describe specifically the knowledge that each lecture is communicating.</p>

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	<p>The questions are the guided reflection and/or discussion component of the lesson that is intended to help you prepare for, process, and organize what you are learning.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Reflect on individually or discuss in a group the questions in the order in which they appear in the lesson. The time stamps in the right margin indicate where the answers to questions during the video can be found.</p>
PRAYER	<p>The prayer section offers suggestions for how to close the lesson in prayer with respect to what was taught in the lecture.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Consider using each lesson's prayer section as a guide to personal or group prayer. These sections follow the ACTS prayer model, which you can learn more about in R.C. Sproul's Crucial Questions booklet <i>Does Prayer Change Things?</i> This helpful guide is available as a free e-book at <a href="http://Ligonier.org">Ligonier.org</a>.</p>
REVIEW QUIZ	<p>The review quiz is a set of six multiple-choice questions that appears at the end of each lesson.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Use each quiz to check your comprehension and memory of the major points covered in each lecture. It will be most beneficial to your learning if you take a lesson's quiz either sometime between lessons or just before you begin the next lesson in the study guide.</p>
ANSWER KEY	<p>The answer key provides explanations for the reflection and discussion questions and answers to the multiple-choice questions in the review quiz.</p> <p><b>How to use:</b> Use the answer key to check your own answers or when you do not know the answer. Note: Do not give in too quickly; struggling for a few moments to recall an answer reinforces it in your mind.</p>

# Study Schedules

The following table suggests four plans for working through the *The Fear of the Lord* video teaching series and this companion study guide. Whether you are going through this series on your own or with a group, these schedules should help you plan your study path.

	Extended 10-Week Plan	Standard 8-Week Plan	Abbreviated 5-Week Plan	Intensive 4-Week Plan
Week	Lesson			
1	*	1	1	1 & 2
2	1	2	2 & 3	3 & 4
3	2	3	4 & 5	5 & 6
4	3	4	6 & 7	7 & 8
5	4	5	8	
6	5	6		
7	6	7		
8	7	8		
9	8			
10	*			

\* For these weeks, rather than completing lessons, spend your time discussing and praying about your learning goals for the study (the first week) and the most valuable takeaways from the study (the last week).

# Not All Fear Is the Same

## INTRODUCTION

The fear of the Lord is a complex topic, not only because fear is an intense, complicated emotion but because the Bible itself presents it, on the one hand, as a bad thing. Yet on the other hand, it presents fear as a good thing, the very substance of true faith. So which is it? In this lesson, Dr. Reeves addresses the tension surrounding fear by showing how the fear of the Lord puts all other fears in their proper place.

## LEARNING GOALS

When you have finished this lesson, you should be able to:

- Identify the different challenges for rightly understanding the fear of the Lord
- Describe how our culture's repulsion by the fear of the Lord has created a more fearful culture

## KEY IDEAS

- The gospel both frees us from crippling fears and gives us a delightful fear.
- Our culture is so fearful because it refuses to fear the Lord.
- The fear of God is the antidote to our fretfulness.

## REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before the Video

*What Do You Think?*

Take a moment to answer the following questions. They will prepare you for the lecture.

- What are you most afraid of? When you are feeling anxious, how do you typically cope with your fear?

- Why do you think the Bible’s most frequent command is “Fear not”? What does this tell you about humanity? What does it tell you about your own heart?

### *Scripture Reading*

*Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.*

—2 Corinthians 7:1

- How is the fear of God related to holiness?

### *During the Video*

Answer the following questions while you watch the video. They will guide you through the lecture.

### *Introduction and Tension*

0:00–7:15

- How is fear a complicated emotion? Consider two different ways that we relate to fear, and note how this is puzzling.
- What makes the fear of the Lord a challenging topic to address biblically? Does the Old Testament say something different from the New Testament about fearing God?

### *Cutting through the Confusion*

7:15–22:53

- What fears does the gospel free us from? What fear does the gospel give us?
- How does the Messiah respond to the fear of the Lord?
- Why has our culture’s rejection of the fear of God led to a more fearful culture?



### After the Video

Answer the following questions after you have finished the lecture. They will help you identify and summarize the major points.

- The Bible says many things about fear. Why is the fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom? In what ways have you or others held misconceptions about the fear of the Lord?

If you are in a group, have the members discuss how the fear of the Lord makes them feel. Does it make them feel that God is distant and always displeased? Or does it make them feel passionate about the gospel and sanctification? Why?

- How does the gospel set you free from your crippling fears? How does it encourage a delight in the fear of the Lord?

If you are in a group, have the members name some of those “crippling fears.” Ask: How might an appropriate, gospel-centered fear of God free you from those fears?

- Our culture is repulsed by the fear of the Lord. In what ways have you noticed our culture’s anxious fearfulness? Likely you share some, if not many, of those same fears. How do these fears expose your own lack of fear of God and belief in the gospel?

If you are in a group, have the members share their answers to how they have observed both cultural fearfulness and their own. In the discussion, urge them to resist “throwing stones” and encourage honest vulnerability. Help them see that their fears do not expose weakness but rather reveal areas of unbelief.

### PRAYER

Commit what you have learned from God’s Word in this lesson to prayer.

- Praise God that He alone is Lord of all and can free you from fear.
- Confess areas of unbelief and anxiety, and the ways that you fear people more than God.
- Thank God for being worthy of trust and for loving you despite your fears.
- Ask God to equip and empower you to delightfully fear Him as you grow in holiness.

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REVIEW QUIZ

Use these multiple-choice questions to measure what you learned from this lesson.

1. What is the most frequent scriptural command?
  - a. “Be holy as I am holy.”
  - b. “Love the Lord your God.”
  - c. “Trust in the name of the Lord.”
  - d. “Do not be afraid.”
2. What has become the “Holy Grail” of our culture?
  - a. Fear
  - b. Atheism
  - c. Safety
  - d. Immorality
3. Which of these is a true statement about the fear of the Lord?
  - a. Fearing the Lord does not mean that we should be afraid of God.
  - b. The Messiah does not need to fear God, since He is the King.
  - c. The loss of the fear of God is not the true source of our culture’s age of anxiety.
  - d. The gospel sets us free from every fear.
4. Of those who add fearfulness to our culture, whom did Dr. Reeves identify as a primary instigator?
  - a. Kidnappers
  - b. Bertrand Russell
  - c. Media
  - d. Terrorists
5. The Old Testament talks about the fear of the Lord in a different way from the New Testament.
  - a. True
  - b. False
6. According to Dr. Reeves, what is the fear of God the antidote for?
  - a. Unbelief
  - b. Fretfulness
  - c. Sinfulness
  - d. Cravings

# Answer Key—Not All Fear Is the Same

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## REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Before the Video

#### *What Do You Think?*

These are personal questions. The answers should be based on your own knowledge and experience.

#### *Scripture Reading*

- How is the fear of God related to holiness?

*Paul describes the fear of God, here, as both the ultimate goal for and means of attaining holiness. The fear of God is what motivates us to cleanse ourselves of “every defilement of body and spirit.” Thus, fearing God leads you to godliness. But Paul also mentions that we bring holiness “to completion in the fear of God.” In this way, it also functions as the primary end of holiness. The fear of God and holiness are directly connected, and they mutually enforce each other. In other words, you cannot have one without the other.*

### During the Video

#### *Introduction and Tension*

- How is fear a complicated emotion? Consider two different ways that we relate to fear, and note how this is puzzling.

*Fear is a complicated emotion because we respond to it in different ways. Dr. Reeves mentioned two ways that we respond to fear: we are fascinated by it and repelled by it. It causes deep anxiety, yet we are cautiously interested in the feeling of fear in controlled settings.*

- What makes the fear of the Lord a challenging topic to address biblically? Does the Old Testament say something different from the New Testament about fearing God?

*The most frequent command is “Do not be afraid,” yet we are supposed to fear the Lord. It becomes challenging when we try to understand each of the commands in light of the others without understanding the logic of Scripture: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7); therefore, we need not fear other things once our proper fear is placed on God Almighty. The Old Testament and New Testament are complementary in their understanding of the fear of the Lord.*

### *Cutting through the Confusion*

- What fears does the gospel free us from? What fear does the gospel give us?  
*The gospel frees us from crippling fears, but it gives us a delightful fear. Fearing the Lord will give rest to your other fears, but through the gospel, fearing the Lord is a delight because we know God's character as He has revealed Himself to us as our Redeemer and loving Father.*
- How does the Messiah respond to the fear of the Lord?  
*The Messiah delights in the fear of the Lord. One might say that the fear of the Lord characterizes His entire life. Isaiah 11 describes the fear of the Lord as a blessing from the Spirit (vv. 2–3). Thus, one of the fruits of the Spirit in a believer's life is the fear of the Lord. Since the Messiah was endowed with the Spirit above all measure, He perfectly feared the Lord.*
- Why has our culture's rejection of the fear of God led to a more fearful culture?  
*As Dr. Reeves explained, our culture has refused to identify the Lord as the primary object of fear, thinking that this provides freedom from bondage to religious and cultural fretfulness. By removing the Lord as the proper object of fear, however, people have encountered more anxiety in the struggles of life because they rejected the fear that governs all other fears.*

### *After the Video*

- The Bible says many things about fear. Why is the fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom? In what ways have you or others held misconceptions about the fear of the Lord?  
*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom because we were created to glorify and enjoy God forever. This is the chief end of man (Westminster Shorter Catechism 1). To fear the Lord is to live out the abundant life of being a creature in relation to our blessed triune God, so that fearing the Lord is not matured out of. Regarding the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom, "the beginning" is less like starting blocks that a runner leaves behind after a race begins and more like a house's foundation. It is what properly grounds the house and enables it to be built, but the house is entirely dependent on it for its entire existence. Thus, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom for people who want to find and live out their true purpose as they navigate life.*
- How does the gospel set you free from your crippling fears? How does it encourage a delight in the fear of the Lord?  
*The gospel sets you free from crippling fears because it points and reconciles you to the holy Creator of heaven and earth (see Ps. 121:1–2). In other words, when you face challenges or uncertainty, the gospel puts those fears to rest by reminding you that the God who is the self-existent, self-sufficient, all-powerful Creator of all things is on your side through Jesus Christ. Nothing can happen outside His will,*

*and nothing can separate you from His love. You are enabled, by the Spirit, to fear not. The gospel encourages a delightful fear in the Lord because the Spirit is the One who produces the fear of God in you and enables you to live in alignment with the purpose for which you were created (Isa. 11:2).*

- Our culture is repulsed by the fear of the Lord. In what ways have you noticed our culture's anxious fearfulness? Likely you share some, if not many, of those same fears. How do these fears expose your own lack of fear of God and belief in the gospel?

*We fear many things. We are afraid of people and what they think of us, and we fear that our reputation might be defamed. We fear judgment from others who appear to have it all together when we clearly do not. We fear rejection from a spouse, friend, child, coworker, boss, pastor, etc. "Nobody could ever know this about me. If they did, they would certainly reject me!" These fears expose our lack of fear of God and belief in the gospel, because if we truly feared God and believed the gospel, we would know that we (1) are fully accepted and loved by our Father in heaven, (2) possess every spiritual blessing in Christ, and (3) belong to a God who defends us. We need not fear any other.*

## REVIEW QUIZ

1. **D.**  
*Although the others are also frequent commands, "Do not be afraid" is the most frequent. Dr. Reeves made this point in his introduction.*
2. **C.**  
*The other three options are aspects of our culture, but the "Holy Grail"—the thing that everyone clings to, searches for, and cannot live without—is safety.*
3. **A.**  
*While fearing the Lord does mean that we revere and honor Him above all and show Him a proper respect as our Creator, those are different postures of worship. They are not what we experience when we are afraid of something. The good news for believers is that Jesus has paid for our sins and intercedes as our High Priest, and we have bold access to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:14–16). Since there is no condemnation in Christ (Rom. 8:1), we are no longer afraid of God. The fear of the Lord thus emphasizes our posture of worship rather than our fear of condemnation and judgment.*
4. **B.**  
*Dr. Reeves mentioned the other three as things we fear or experience anxiety because of, but he specifically identified Bertrand Russell as a figure who both influenced and anticipated (wrongly) the impact of the fear of the Lord on our culture.*
5. **B.**  
*Both Testaments speak about the fear of God in similar ways. They by no means*

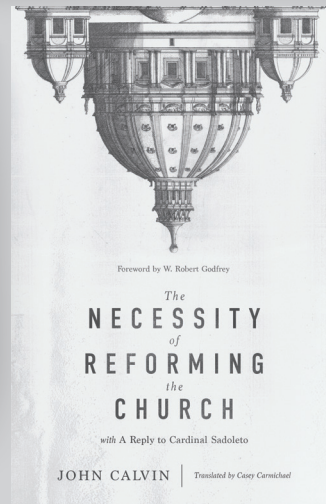
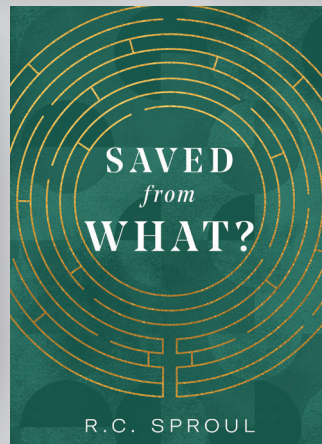
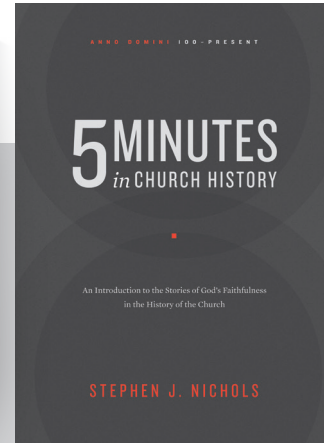
*contradict each other; rather, the New Testament's teaching on the topic derives from, supports, and complements that of the Old Testament.*

6. **B.**

*Although each of these answers is affected by our fear of the Lord, the fear of the Lord is the antidote for our fretfulness. Fearing God puts our other fears in the proper place. Therefore, the gospel liberates us from crippling fears by causing us to delight in the fear of the one true God.*



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