

Title: AWESTRUCK

Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; *nothing* you desire can compare with her. The fear of the Lord – that is wisdom (Prov. 3:13-15; Job 28:28).

## **I. Introduction to Fear of God**

There seems to be a lot of hype about the new iPhone X and its stunning features such as not having a home button, having a super retina display, facial recognition functioning as your password- it is said to still work even if you cut your hair, wear glasses, grow a great beard or even if you are in low light. The infrared technology will still recognize you. It has wireless charging capability AND battery life increased by two hours. The list goes on. Tech bloggers are using this very rare English word to define it- AWESOME (post the word). Now the features of the new iPhone are cool, exciting, unique, but are they really awesome? Like AWESOME!

Last Sunday my wife made us dinner, which we freely received from Blue Apron. It was delicious, well-prepared, appealing to the eyes, and flavorful. It was indeed good, but to say it was awesome is an overstatement. Let me tell you what I mean: Barb Sawyers wrote a blog in 2013 titled, “Awesome: The Most Overused Word in English.” Probably, I think, it’s the most overused *misused* word in English. Tim Askew said, “When something describes everything it describes nothing.” Several years ago, I was walking to my car on lunch break during a storm, the clouds were dark, it was barely raining, but the thunder was loud. Suddenly, like I have never seen it since, there was a loud thunder and multiple fingers of lightning began rolling through the clouds. The sky

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was on fire. I immediately fell to my knees raising my hand over my head as though I could somehow protect myself. I was afraid and simultaneously amazed. Awe came over me because THAT was awesome. When scripture talks about the concept of the fear of God, awe is the best English word we have to correspond to this Hebrew word for fear. Awe is a feeling of reverential respect mixed with fear or wonder. Dread inspired by something great or majestic. Friends, God is awesome. In fact, God is referred to as the Fear/Awe of Isaac, the son of Abraham (Gen. 31:42 & 53).

## **II. The Foundation of Wisdom and Knowledge**

The fear of God is a theme woven through all of scripture and emphasized in Proverbs. Chapters 1-9 of Proverbs provide an introduction to the individual Proverbs of chapters 10-31. Chapters 1-9 are sandwiched in between the two “fear of God” statements of 1:7 and 9:10. Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge but fools despise wisdom and instruction/discipline.” Proverbs 9:10 says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” So the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge of God is understanding. The fear of God is the suitcase in which the proverbs of chapters 10-31 are carried. The fear of Yahweh as the beginning of knowledge and wisdom means it’s the foundation and source of it just as alphabets are the foundation of language. Therefore, no one who does not fear God can be truly wise. Since wisdom and knowledge begins there in the fear of God. Yahweh is the center of the universe and the one who fears God is on a trajectory of becoming skillful at living. But this does not mean that those who do not fear God cannot make substantial contributions

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to life (they have and will). However, it means they ultimately cannot fulfill their responsibility as God's representatives since fearing God and keeping his commandments is the responsibility of all human beings (Eccl. 12:13NIV). Let's talk briefly about the phrase "...knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Once, Jesus was in a synagogue and a man possessed by a demon referred to him as *the Holy One* of God (Mark 1:24). If true understanding is knowing the Holy One, then how can one be convinced they genuinely *know* God? One can be convinced of genuinely knowing God when they rely on him as the smartest and most influential person in their life. How many of you know your name? That is something you KNOW. You are the expert. You are not guessing. "We *know* that we have come to *know* him *if* we keep his commands" (1 John 2:3). We are not guessing! We can *know* that we know God. Knowledge of the Holy one is understanding.

The fear of the Lord provides a lens through which the individual Proverbs of chapters 10-31 are understood and implemented. Furthermore, it functions as a synonym for the commands of God, for knowing God, loving God, being wise, knowledgeable and having understanding.

### **III. Defining the Fear of God**

What is the fear of the Lord? The fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom and knowledge (Prov. 1:7 & 9:10 – The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom/knowledge). The fear of God is wisdom (Job 28:28- And [God] said to the human race, "The fear of the Lord-that is wisdom and to shun evil is understanding). The fear of the Lord is hatred for evil (Prov. 8:13- "To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech"). It is obedience to God and faithfulness to

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his commands (Ps. 128:1 “Blessed are all who fear the Lord who walk in obedience to him”; Prov. 14:2 “Whoever fears the Lord walks uprightly, but those who despise him are devious in their ways”). Fearing the Lord is deep admiration of him (Jeremiah 10:6-10- “No one is like you, LORD; you are great and your name is mighty in power. Who should not fear you, King of the nations? This is your due. Among the wise leaders of the nations and in all their kingdoms there is no one like you”).

The fear of the Lord is something we should be passionate about for God said, “Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always *be zealous* for the fear of the LORD. There is surely a future hope for you and your hope will not be cut off” (Prov. 23:17 &18; **2 Corinthian 5:4-10** “...knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade men”). The fear of the Lord enables one to resist misusing wealth, to help the poor, respect spouses, abstain from sin, settle disputes, keep one’s promise, to be fair, speak truthfully, make amends for sin, and more. We read of these attributes in Proverbs. They are results of fearing God. In Proverbs, the blessed; the good; the wise; the faithful; the understanding; the disciplined; the righteous; the humble; the truthful; the diligent; the generous; the kindhearted; those who delight in God; those who seek God; the obedient; those who are generous and humble are those who fear God. Those who fear God are wise. The wise build their lives on the teachings of Jesus (Matt. 7:24-27). The fear of God is the path to everlasting joy and fulfillment.

#### **IV. Cultivating the Fear of God by Three Ways**

- 1). By **meditating** on God’s authority and power as Creator and Sustainer of Life (Jeremiah 5:22; Psalm 147:8-11).

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2). By **practicing** what he has said. When we rely on God, by obeying him, we show that we believe he is the smartest and most influential person in our lives (1 John 2:3).

“And can we seriously imagine that Jesus could be LORD if he were not smart? If he were divine, would he be dumb? Or uninformed? Once you stop to think about it, how could he be what we take him to be in all other respects and not be the best informed and most intelligent person of all, the smartest person who ever lived?”

Dallas Willard

3). By **memorizing** his words (Psalm 119:11; Joshua 1:8).

End with Psalm 34 as a praise to our *awesome* God.