

Fear of the Lord – Reverence and Obedience

Prov 24:3-4 *“By **wisdom** a house is **built**,
and by **understanding** it is **established**;
and by **knowledge** the rooms are **filled**
with all precious and pleasant riches.”*

These verses make it very clear that for us to succeed in building our lives in accordance with God’s plan for us we must have wisdom, understanding and knowledge. So let’s investigate how we go about attaining the wisdom, understanding and knowledge that are sourced in God alone.

While James says if you lack wisdom, “Ask of God” ... (Jas 1:5), we must remember God is not a convenience vending machine, and so behind the asking a certain lifestyle is required. That is what living in the “fear of the Lord” is all about, and that is the subject for our current consideration.

Prov 9:10 *... “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding”...*

Job 28:28 *... “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;
and to depart from evil is understanding”...*

So we see that the **fear of the Lord** is the source of **Wisdom**

Prov 1:7 *... “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” ...*

So similarly, the **fear of the Lord** is the source of ... **Knowledge**

Prov 14:27 *... “The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,
that one may avoid the snares of death”... and,*

Prov 16:22 *... “Understanding is a fountain of life to one who has it” ...*

So by deduction, the **fear of the Lord** is the source of ... **Understanding**

The **fear of the Lord** is the source of **wisdom**, **understanding** and **knowledge**, which we need in order to succeed and to be fulfilled, in accordance with God’s plan for our lives. And, reversing their order, if we have knowledge with understanding we will have wisdom.

Link between Reverence, Obedience and the Fear of the Lord

So now, understanding the importance of living in the “fear of the Lord”, let us consider the link between **reverence**, **obedience** and the **fear of the Lord**.

Ps 33:8 ... *“Let all the earth **fear the Lord**, let all the inhabitants of the world **stand in awe of Him**”.*

First, we must understand the meaning of the word “fear”. The Hebrew root word for fear – **אָרַ'** “yare” has the following root meanings which are behind the word “fear” as used in “the fear of the Lord”: “**call to constant attention**”, “**being awe struck**” and “**being aware of a presence**”.

To understand this word “fear” as used in the “fear of the Lord” picture Moses and the burning bush.

The bush was on fire but not being consumed. It certainly had Moses' constant attention, and he was also awe struck and fully aware of a "Presence", especially when God started to speak to him out of the bush! Moses was experiencing the "fear" of the Lord.

Now we get back to looking at the link between reverence or respect and the fear of the Lord.

Reverence or Respect:

- Reverence for God is expressed through a deep respect, awe, love and adoration.
- Reverence is honouring God above all else. It's giving Him constant attention.
- Reverence is a heart attitude of gratitude, respect, adoration and worship:
 1. First of all for who God is – His holiness, His purity, His omniscience, His omnipotence, His omnipresence, and that in Him all things find their meaning and purpose. That He is our all in all.
 2. And secondly, for what He has done out of His infinite mercy, grace, love and compassion for us. A thankfulness for our redemption from all corruption and evil and for the abundant life we have in Christ.
- Reverence is the adoration and thankfulness of heart towards God which says to God, "You, Lord, hate evil so much and desire so strongly to see man live free of all evil and corruption, to live uprightly by Your pure and holy life, that You gave your only begotten Son, Jesus, to die on our behalf. To give His life so we could share in it – to share His abundant life.
- Reverence is worship – which is a response to a revelation of who God is and what He has done for us in His demonstration of grace, mercy and lovingkindness.

Obedience:

Similarly, now we look at the link between obedience and the Fear of the Lord.

It is not your eloquent words of respect and adoration that impress God as much as your heart attitude and willingness to submit to Him, honour Him and obey Him.

Your submission to Him and obedience to His instructions, directions and commands will quickly reveal your true love and respect for Him.

So this is the link and this is what the "Fear of the Lord" really is; it's the respectful submission and obedience to Him, His word and the voice of His Spirit.

John 14:15 ... *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments"...*

Prov 8:13 ... *"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil"...*

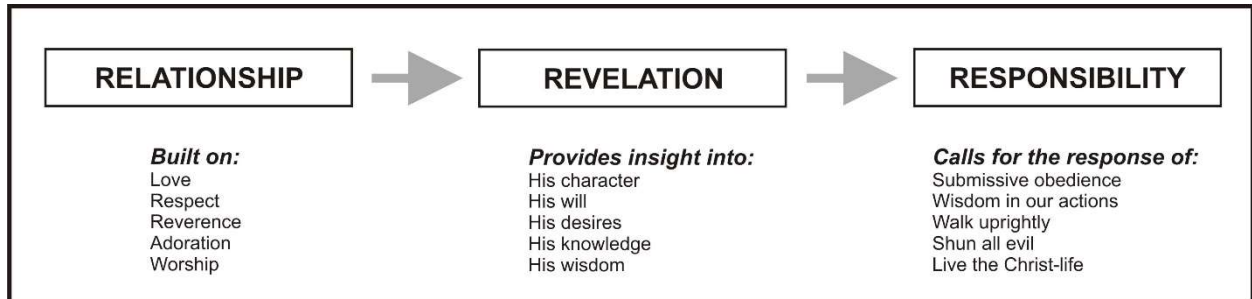
Prov 14:2 ... *"He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD"...*

- The "Fear of the Lord" is the action or result of the reverence and respect you have for Him.
- Your inward reverence and respect is expressed by your outward actions. Your actions demonstrate your reverence, respect, submission and obedience, all of which collectively make up your "fear of the Lord".

You bow before Him and take in the Word, listen to the voice of His Spirit – receive a revelation of the character and nature of the Father and His desires and ways – then, in submission, you respond in obedience and put out the word in acts and words of wisdom. Why? Because ...

John 14:21 ... "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and **will disclose Myself to him.**"

Let's put this into a picture so we can see graphically how it all fits together:



Let's look at an example of this in the scriptures to explain it further:

In Genesis 27 we have the account of Jacob cheating his brother Esau out of his blessing and incurring the wrath of Esau. Esau wanted to kill him, so Jacob ran away and hid from Esau.

Then, after some time has passed, in Genesis 32 we have the story of Jacob meeting up with his brother Esau. He thinks Esau still hates him so he tries to appease Esau by sending him presents of flocks and herds. Jacob split up his family and servants so that if Esau was still mad at him his wives and children would be in hiding while Esau would only encounter the rest of his people. So Jacob takes his two wives, two maids and eleven children over the other side of the Jabbock stream and left them there.

Then we get to Gen 32:24-32.

He is alone that night and a "man" (who turns out to be God) wrestled with him. Jacob doesn't let go of the "man" until he receives a blessing from Him. In this encounter God asks Jacob "What is your name?" In that statement He was not looking for simple identification. He was asking for Jacob to describe his character or personal qualities. Jacob replies, "Jacob" which means "heel catcher", or "supplanter". In other words he was saying I am a trouble maker, devious man, horrible person.

God immediately replies, "you shall no longer be a supplanter or devious person (a 'Jacob'), but you are now a prince with God or one who rules with God" (an 'Israel'). God gives him a covenant name, because the 'el' part of Israel is one of the names used for God in the Old Testament.

Jacob immediately responds by asking God what His name is. To which God says "why do you ask", to imply, "you know who I am". This is evident when Jacob named the place "Peniel" which means "the face of God" and says "I have seen God face to face and have survived".

God blesses Jacob, but at the same time He touches the sinew in his thigh socket leaving him with a permanent limp. It was to be constant reminder that he was not to walk after the 'old life' of the 'supplanter', but rather in the strength of his new life 'Israel' – prince with God. For us, it's a reminder that weakness is the way of the cross, for when we are weak then we are strong, as we now live by the life and strength of Another. (Gal 2:20; Phil 3:13).

Then in Genesis 33 we hear of how Jacob and Esau meet. Esau is no longer mad with him and all is well. Then, on returning to Canaan and having bought a piece of land there, Jacob erects an altar and

calls it “El-Elohe-Israel”, which means “God, the God of Israel” (Gen 33:20). Prior to this (Gen 32:9) Jacob had always referred to God as the “God of my father” or “God of Abraham and God of my father Isaac”), but from here on he refers to God as “God of Israel” – his own God. One with whom he has had a personal encounter and One with whom he now walks in a personal covenant **relationship**.

Then in Genesis 34 we have the encounter of Dinah, Jacob and Leah’s daughter, being raped by Shechem (son of Hamor the Hivite) and the slaughter of all the Hivite men by Simeon and Levi (Jacob’s sons) after the Hivite men had been circumcised. Jacob was now concerned as he thought this would bring the wrath of the Cannanites and Perizzites upon him and his clan.

So, in Genesis 35, God tells Jacob to get up and go to Bethel and live there. Jacob obeys and tells his clan to get rid of all idols, foreign gods and purify themselves before their journey to Bethel. As we move on in chapter 35 we can learn from this, that **repentance and a pure heart precedes revelation**. Also we can learn from Genesis 35:5 ... *“As they journeyed, there was a great terror upon the cities which were around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob”*, that true repentance and walking in integrity and in the fear of the Lord will result in the ‘glory of God’ being present in and upon us. With that comes God’s protection and favour.

So Jacob gets to his destination, Bethel, safely and builds an altar to worship God and calls the place ‘El-Bethel’ (the God of Bethel, or more literally, the God of the house of God).

Then, a bit later, God appears to Jacob again and blesses him again, and it is here we see **relationship** leading to **revelation**, and revelation leading to **responsibility**:

Gen 35:9-15 ... *“Then God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him. ¹⁰ God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; you shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.” Thus He called him Israel. ¹¹ God also said to him, “I am God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you. ¹² “The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you.” ¹³ Then God went up from him in the place where He had spoken with him. ¹⁴ Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He had spoken with him, a pillar of stone, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it. ¹⁵ So Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him, Bethel.”*

Relationship – verse 10: Israel is a covenant name signifying the covenant RELATIONSHIP he had with God. Jacob’s worship of God and seeking Him had brought him into a covenant relationship with God.

Revelation – verse 11: “I am God Almighty” (El Shaddai). God reveals Himself to Jacob. Relationship leads to revelation.

“El” is used numerous times in the Scriptures as a name for God. “Shaddai”, translated “Almighty”, comes from the Hebrew word “shad” which means breast. The milk from a woman’s breast contains all the nutrients and antibodies a baby needs to grow healthily. It is a complete diet. So while the name Shaddai, translated to “Almighty”, suggests God is all powerful and able to do anything, it really contains the meaning that He is One who nourishes, supplies and satisfies **all** our needs. Being the All Sufficient One He pours out or sheds forth all the sustenance and blessing we could possibly need.

So in this name God is seen to be the total source of power and blessings, the All-Sufficient and All-Bountiful One. He is able to triumph over all and any situation or opposition; He is more than sufficient for all these things. *“He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think, according*

to the power that works within us”... (Eph 3:20). El Shaddai, God Almighty, achieves His will by His power and His sufficiency working in and through us. This is the power and sufficiency that worked a miracle in the deadness of Sarah’s 90 year old womb. This is the sufficiency that raised a dead Lazarus from the grave. This is the sufficiency that will provide the answer to any and all of our needs!

This is the name that introduces to us the God who is all-bountiful in the fullness and fruitfulness He imparts to all who trust Him, rest in Him and wait patiently on Him. He is the All-Sufficient One who says, *“apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5)*. He’s the one in and through whom we can with confidence say *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13)*.

His name God Almighty (El Shaddai) speaks to us of His infinite supply of grace in self-sacrificing lovingkindness that pours itself out for others. It tells us He never tires from pouring His mercy, love and blessings on his people. But it also reminds us that His strength is made perfect in our weakness and His sufficiency is most evident in our insufficiency. It’s only when we come to Him empty and looking to His sufficiency that He fills us and causes His Rivers of living waters to flow out from within us to touch the thirsty and needy around us. It’s through His sufficiency that we can, in His power, succeed and meet the needs of others.

So, like limping Jacob, as we walk through life in a **relationship** of dependence and trust in Him, God will **reveal** Himself to us and we will find that He is more than sufficient to meet the needs of our situation and circumstances and the challenges of the assignments He sets for us.

Responsibility – verse 11: God told Jacob to be fruitful and multiply, and that this would be done through His abundant provision and ability. Jacob had a responsibility that flowed from the relationship he enjoyed and revelation he received.

Now these principles apply to us. We demonstrate the “fear of the Lord”, the respect and reverence we have for Him, as we fulfill the responsibilities God has given us that flow from our relationship with Him and the revelation He brings to us as a result of our intimate relationship.

The more we draw near in worship and adoration, in seeking Him, to know Him, the more He brings fresh revelation (wisdom, knowledge, and understanding) to us. And the more revelation we receive the more responsibility He places on us to *“walk in the light”*, to be *“salt and light in the earth”*, to be His ambassadors, to present Christ to a lost and dying world. The more we submit and obey and carry out our responsibilities the nearer He draws to us and the more He reveals of Himself to us and the more responsibilities He will entrust to us. And so the whole process deepens.

The **relationship** we have with God is borne out of the reverence, respect and adoration we have for Him. As we draw near to Him He **reveals** Himself and His ways, His wisdom, knowledge and understanding to us. As we come to the revelation of who He is and His plans and purpose for us we see the **responsibilities** we need to fulfill as His ambassadors. As we submit and obey we demonstrate our real love for Him, our **fear of the Lord**.

And so we see the linkages between reverence, obedience and the fear of the Lord; the links between relationship, revelation and responsibility.

Final Caution

Before we finish there is a very important cautioning that must be raised.

A person can make serious mistakes by accepting and walking through the open doors of apparent opportunities without first consulting with the Lord. This happens when we presume that since we have come thus far with God's blessing, that all our steps and decisions will automatically enjoy the same blessing.

We see a good example of this, where Israel enjoyed early victories in Canaan under Joshua's leadership because he sought and followed God's direction. But then, in Joshua 9, we see that the Gibeonites deceived Joshua into a treaty through false pretenses because (Josh 9:14) ... *"the men of Israel ... did not ask for the counsel of the LORD. Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live; and the leaders of the congregation swore an oath to them"*... So even after they found out they had been deceived by their Gibeonite enemies, Israel were forced to honour the treaty and live in peace with them instead of being able to destroy them. Israel's failure to seek God's counsel resulted in them being compromised.

What this tells us is that our relationship and seeking God is to be constant and continual. It tells us that yesterday's wisdom, knowledge, understanding and direction does not automatically insure that we will not make mistakes and do foolish things today. We must continually, every day, bow our hearts afresh before God, seek Him continually and receive fresh wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and instruction (and correction, if necessary), so that our decisions and actions are in response to His specific direction for the situation we currently face, and so that we walk in His sufficiency.

That is what it takes to **build** and **establish** your "house" and **fill** it with all precious and pleasant riches.

That is what it means to walk constantly, daily in the "**fear of the Lord.**"