

“Charm is deceitful
and beauty is vain,
but a woman who
fears the LORD, she
shall be praised.”

Proverbs 31:30

Fear of the Lord

Proverbs 31

As we have looked at some of the different characteristics of a godly woman that are portrayed in Proverbs 31, we have also seen many examples of amazing godly women who demonstrate these characteristics. One thing ties all these women together and inspires the character qualities that we see in their lives. That is their fear of the Lord.

What do you think that “fear of the Lord” means?

Fear of the Lord is a difficult term to define. It involves a deep respect, awe, and recognition of who God truly is, but looking at the Hebrew meaning of the word, it has the meaning of ...fear. It is the same type of fear that is spoken of in other verses of Proverbs 31 that speak of what the woman does not fear. Though she does not fear winter, she fears the Lord. We understand this to be a positive fear, a concept that is largely foreign to us. We are usually afraid of negative things, but in this case it is a fear of Someone we know to be all-powerful, but at the same time entirely good and supremely loving.

The more intimately one gets to know the Lord, the more apparent it becomes that above all other things or people, God is worthy to inspire the most intense of emotions within us. One day we will certainly all realize the magnitude of His awesomeness when we are faced with His glory, and until then we can only grasp glimpses of it through the accounts of scripture and personal experiences of Him, which we try to understand by relating them to only feebly comparable earthly experiences.

Describe the experience of fear.

When we are afraid, our minds are consumed. It is often difficult to think of anything else when we are afraid, and when we do, the fear still nags at the back of our minds. We may have the feeling of having our breath taken away or experience a rush of adrenaline. The feeling of fear is very closely tied with the feeling of excitement. Though only a pale and tainted comparison, the fear of the Lord is mimicked by the experience of being “in love.” There is a preoccupation with an individual, a seeming inability to get the person entirely out of one’s head. We are concerned about this person’s opinion above all others. Every moment of the day is affected by this person’s very existence, and anything that goes wrong seems not to be as wrong as it would without this person. Every good happening is another excuse to share a moment of joy together. The passionate and intense relationship with the Lord for which we were created is one in which we will never be betrayed, nor is it a passing romance.

Hannah was a woman who feared and focused on the Lord. Her story is found in 1 Samuel 1-2, and the very first mention of her we find her in the temple pleading with the Lord in such a passionate way that the priest thought that she was intoxicated. God grants her request, a request for a child, and when she comes to the point of relinquishing her young son back to the Lord at the temple, she once again is so focused on God’s magnificence that she spends her

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."

Proverbs 9:10

"The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, That one may avoid the snares of death."

Proverbs 14:27

last moments with her son praising God and describing His goodness and power. Hannah was more greatly influenced by her relationship with the Lord than even the powerful bond a mother has to her child.

Why can the relationship between a mother and child sometimes come before the fear of the Lord?

Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, demonstrated a true fear of the Lord. She had prioritized her relationship with the Lord as most important, and was unconcerned with what other people thought of her ardent devotion or priorities. She sat at the Lord's feet and conversed with Him while her sister complained that there was work to be done. Mary recognized that an encounter with the Lord merits a halt in the daily tasks of life and was more concerned with His opinion than that of any other person. Her life revolved around her love for the Lord.

How can a woman's duties and responsibilities sometimes come before the fear of the Lord? Why?

A virtuous woman fears the Lord, and all her actions and attitudes flow from that. Her every thought, every moment, is affected by her romance with the One who created her and knows her better than any other. This fear of the Lord is the essential quality that is the basis for all the others of the Proverbs 31 woman. This is the heart attitude from which all the others grow. Without this fear of the Lord, our efforts are in vain.

When we fear the Lord, we have an entirely different perspective on life. This fear of the Lord affects every area of our lives and transforms us. Every situation takes on the feel of an opportunity to serve the Lord and to bring glory to Him. Trouble, conflict, and bad days all are chances to experience God more fully and to point others to Him.

When we live in the fear of the Lord we see every day of our lives as another chance to be faithful to the Lord and those around us. Our work takes on a joyous feel as we find ourselves doing every task with a greater purpose. We become more willing to share the resources that we have as we learn about the love that has first been lavished on us. Our fear is replaced by a firm confidence in One who will never leave us. We find that we have access to the source of all wisdom and learn to use our insight for the good of others. Our words begin to reflect the heart of our Lord in their meaningfulness and kindness. When we fear the Lord, pleasing Him is the utmost priority in our lives. We are not focused on making ourselves happy or pleasing others. We are single-minded about Whom we are living for and our minds are consumed with Him.

Lives lived in the fear of the Lord look and feel different.

Is there an area in your life that has not yet been strongly affected by the fear of the Lord?

How do we develop this fear of the Lord? We can begin by asking the Lord for it (Matthew 7:7-8) and by continually seeking Him. Getting to know God better through time in His word and prayer will inspire this type of relationship. You

*“The fear of the LORD
leads to life, So that one
may sleep satisfied, un-
touched by evil.”*

Proverbs 19:23

will find that it is not about rules or religion; it is about a personal relationship. It is about intimacy and closeness.

This is what God desires and what He intended from the beginning of time. That is what He created us for, and He designed us in such a way that we will sense the absence of it. His plan is that we have life fully and abundantly (John 10:10, Ephesians 3:17-19), and fearing Him is where it begins.

With all that there is that we can fear, isn't about time we started fearing the right thing?

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?
