



Unit 4: Disciple of Christ

Live life as a disciple of Christ and intentionally make disciples for the glory of God.

Lesson 14 Fear the Lord

Day One ***Fear Defined***

In Lesson 13, *Overcoming Emotional Suffering*, we explored the deep impact of emotional suffering and examined practical strategies for finding hope and healing. Each approach was grounded in God, the ultimate source of comfort and restoration for every person and situation.

Understanding that God is the answer to everything leads to an essential truth: we must know God and respond to Him appropriately. Thankfully, knowing God and responding to Him is not a mystery—it is taught throughout Scripture.

From the very beginning, the Bible reveals the significance of knowing and obeying God. In Genesis 3:1–11, Adam experiences fear after his disobedience. This principle continues in Genesis 22:12, where Abraham is commended for fearing God, and it culminates in Revelation 14:7, where an angel calls all people to “fear God and give Him glory.”

But what does it truly mean to “fear the Lord”? Some claim that the phrase refers only to reverence and respect for God, excluding any sense of being afraid. However, if that were the full meaning, why did the biblical authors use a Hebrew word that also conveys fear, rather than other terms only denote reverence, respect, or holiness?

The Hebrew word for fear encompasses a range of meanings, including fear, reverence, honor, and awe. The Bible calls us to embrace all these aspects in our relationship with God, revealing that it is possible to fear and honor Him while also loving Him and finding safety in His presence.

Like all emotions, fear serves a purpose designed by God. It is an intense response to danger, prompting us to protect ourselves. For instance, imagine walking down the street when a bolt of lightning strikes nearby. Your immediate reaction would be fear, which would drive you to seek shelter and safeguard your life.

Similarly, the fear of the Lord arises from an awareness of who God is—holy, just, and all-powerful. God abhors sin so intensely that He sent His Son to endure a horrific death to pay its penalty for humanity. Because unrepentant sin carries eternal consequences, it is right for us to respond to God with a reverent and healthy fear.

We should fear dishonoring God because He is infinitely worthy of praise and reverence. Disrespecting Him undermines His authority, invites judgment, harms our relationship with Him, and leads us away from His blessings. Understanding the fear of the Lord is essential for deepening our faith and aligning our hearts with His will. This concept is deeply rooted in the teachings of the Old Testament.

The fear of the Lord is frequently linked to wisdom, obedience, and reverence for His holiness and sovereignty. These qualities enabled God's people to serve Him with wholehearted devotion. This fear is not merely an emotion but a profound acknowledgment of God's majesty and authority, inspiring awe and respect. It is essential for living in covenant with Him, walking in His ways, and experiencing His blessings. Fear reflects a deep awareness of God's power and justice, motivating worship and righteous living.

Definition: *Reverence* is a deep sense of respect, awe, and honor toward someone or something, often accompanied by humility. It goes beyond simple respect, involving an attitude of profound admiration and veneration, particularly toward someone considered sacred. In a biblical context, *reverence* toward God includes recognizing His majesty, holiness, and authority, leading to worship, obedience, and a heartfelt desire to honor Him in every aspect of life.

Understanding reverence in this way prepares us to see how the fear of the Lord unfolds throughout the Old Testament. A clear example appears in Genesis 22:12, where Abraham demonstrates profound trust in the Lord by his willingness to obey an extraordinary command—to sacrifice his son, Isaac. After Abraham faithfully proceeds to carry out God's command, the angel of the Lord intervenes, saying:

“Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”

This moment underscores Abraham's fear of the Lord as a profound, awe-filled reverence that compels him to trust God wholeheartedly, even in the face of an unimaginable sacrifice. His obedience demonstrates the fear of the Lord—acknowledging His authority, trusting His purposes, and honoring Him above all else.

In Exodus, we encounter another dimension of the fear of the Lord. Moses was given specific instructions for the Israelites to observe strict boundaries in approaching God. Anyone who touched the mountain where God was to appear would be put to death (Exodus 19:12–13).

Read Exodus 20:18–20 and answer questions 1– 2:

When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance ¹⁹ and said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.” ²⁰ Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.” Exodus 20:18–20

1. What emotion did the Israelites experience when they witnessed God’s presence on the mountain (v. 18)?

2. Why had God revealed Himself to the people in such a powerful way (v. 20)?

This theme of reverent fear is echoed throughout Scripture, including in the wisdom literature of Proverbs. Here, the fear of the Lord is presented not merely as an emotional response but as the foundation for gaining true knowledge and understanding.

Read Proverbs 2:1–5 and answer questions 3–5:

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, ² turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding— ³ indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, ⁴ and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, ⁵ then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. Proverbs 2:1–5 (Solomon addressing his son or younger generation—symbolizing God addressing His people through Solomon’s words.)

3. What are three conditions for understanding the fear of the Lord and finding the knowledge of God (vv. 1, 3–5)?

4. What does searching for wisdom and understanding “as for silver” or “hidden treasure” imply about the value of the fear of the Lord and the knowledge of God (vv. 3–4)?

5. How does the fear of the Lord connect to the knowledge of God in this passage (v. 5)? (To better understand how the author connects these ideas, it is helpful to read the following section on Hebrew Literary Structure.)

Hebrew Literary Structure

Understanding the rhetorical¹ patterns used by biblical poets and prophets can enhance Bible study. One such pattern is *parallelism*², where ideas are arranged in pairs to deepen meaning and impact. In this structure, the second line often complements the first by expanding, illustrating, or completing the thought. At other times, it may contrast with the first line, offering an opposing perspective. Recognizing these patterns enriches your understanding of Scripture, especially in the Psalms, Proverbs, and prophetic writings.

¹ Rhetorical means using language in a way that clearly and effectively communicates a point.

² Parallelism comes from the word *parallel*, meaning two things are similar. In Hebrew poetry, it refers to lines or phrases that match in structure and meaning, either by repeating, expanding, or contrasting an idea.

With this in mind, Proverbs 2:5 uses parallelism to emphasize that the “knowledge of God” is more than intellectual understanding. It refers to an intimate grasp of His character, will, and purposes—truths that shape how we live and worship. The pairing of “knowledge” with the “fear of the Lord” highlights that a proper view of God’s holiness and authority is essential for truly knowing Him.

Similarly, in Deuteronomy 10:12–13 on page 5, parallelism highlights the interconnectedness of fearing the Lord, walking in obedience, loving Him, serving Him wholeheartedly, and keeping His commands. Each action reinforces the others, creating a unified picture of a life devoted to God.

Because the Fear of the Lord is the focus of this lesson, the following Hebrew terms help us better understand what Scripture means by it.

Hebrew Definitions:

Yirah (יִרָא) is a Hebrew *noun* from the root verb *yare* (יָרָא) translated *fear* in Proverbs 2:5 and many Old Testament passages. It carries several nuanced meanings:

- (1) Fear or dread: acknowledging God’s authority and justice, often in the context of His judgment.
- (2) Awe or wonder: a profound respect inspired by God’s greatness and sovereignty.
- (3) Reverence or honor: showing deep veneration, especially through worship and obedience.

Yare (יָרָא) is a Hebrew *verb* meaning to *fear*, “to stand in awe,” or “to revere.” It describes an active response to God or sacred things, with shades of meaning determined by context:

- (1) To fear: experiencing dread or terror, especially in light of God’s power and justice.
- (2) To stand in awe: feeling overwhelmed by God’s majesty and the wonder of His works.
- (3) To revere: showing deep respect, especially in worship and obedience.

Definition: *Fear of the Lord* is a profound blend of reverence, awe, and wonder, rooted in a deep awareness of God’s holiness, power, and authority. It involves trusting, obeying, and worshiping God wholeheartedly while recognizing our accountability to Him (2 Corinthians 5:10–11). Often described as “genuine faith” or “true religion,” *fearing the Lord* evokes both reverence and an actual, healthy fear. It guards us from presuming upon His grace and fosters a heartfelt desire not to offend Him. Because we love God, we feel genuine sorrow at the thought of failing Him.

This kind of reverent, obedient posture toward God has been modeled by believers throughout history. One example is found in the life of Corrie ten Boom (1892–1983). She grew up in Holland in a God-fearing family—a family deeply committed to knowing and honoring God. Their devotion to God began every morning at 8:30 AM, when Corrie’s father, Casper, would take his large, black, leather-bound Bible from the shelf. He would read a chapter aloud to the family and then lead them in prayer. Every evening at 9:15 PM, Casper would read another

chapter from the family Bible. Attendance was expected of everyone in the household, creating a routine that firmly rooted their lives in Scripture and prayer.³

This fear and knowledge of God would soon face a severe test. It was 1940 and Nazi Germany had invaded Poland the year before—predictions loomed that Holland, along with Belgium and Luxembourg, would be next. The Ten Boom family was confronted with a challenging question: *What does it mean to fear the Lord during war or under an oppressive occupation?*

The Ten Booms would soon discover what it meant to fear God and trust Him through the darkest of times. The Jews, like the Israelites of old, were facing persecution once again, as they had throughout history. The Bible teaches that fearing God is not conditional on circumstances but is a command to be followed in every situation—whether in times of peace or war. Through Moses, God instructed His people to fear Him for their own good. They were not to fear their enemies, but to trust God.

Read Deuteronomy 10:12–13 and answer questions 6–9:

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,¹³ and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good? Deuteronomy 10:12–13

6. Speaking for God, Moses asks Israel to fear the Lord and provides a four-part definition of how this is to be done. List the four ways Moses describes fearing the Lord in this passage.

7. For each of the four ways Moses describes fearing the Lord, provide a short explanation of what it means and how it can be applied in daily life.

8. Compare the instructions in Deuteronomy 10:12–13 to the two greatest commandments Jesus taught in Matthew 22:37–39 (See Bible). How are they similar or different?

9. Parallelism often clarifies or reinforces a message. How does identifying parallelism in this passage deepen your understanding of what the Lord desires from His people?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers #1–9 with your discipleship team.

—End Day One—

³ Janet and Geoff Benge, *Corrie Ten Boom: Keeper of the Angel's Den, Christian Heroes: Then and Now* (Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 1999), 20–21.

Day Two

Fearing the Lord vs. Sin

We ended Day One with Deuteronomy 10:12–13, where God reveals His desire for a relationship with His people and instructs them how to fear Him. For the Israelites, this involved obeying the Lord’s commands, which involved observing the sacrificial law.

Today, fearing the Lord no longer involves offering animal sacrifices but centers on Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross. While disobedience to God is considered sin in both the Old and New Testaments, believers are now cleansed by the blood of Jesus rather than by animal sacrifices. Even so, the teachings and warnings of the Old Testament remain relevant, offering wisdom and guidance for our lives—just as Proverbs continually reminds us.

Read Proverbs 28:13–14 and answer questions 10–12:

Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy. ¹⁴ *Blessed is the one who always trembles before God, but whoever hardens their heart falls into trouble.* Proverbs 28:13–14 (Renounce means to formally give up.)

10. What is one surefire (guaranteed) way not to prosper (v. 13a)?

11. What steps can lead to finding mercy (v. 13b)?

12. What is the difference between someone who “trembles before God” and someone who “hardens their heart”? What are the outcomes for each (v. 14)?

When we disregard or misapply God’s Word, we sin. Sin is rebellion against God—choosing our way over His. It takes us off track, away from God’s purposes for our lives, and reveals a lack of reverence and fear of the Lord. The Bible emphasizes the seriousness sin and its far-reaching impact.

Despite sin’s ability to push us off course, we must not lose heart. In Philippians 3:12–21, Paul encourages believers to press on in their faith, striving toward the goal of Christlikeness. His words remind us that, though we are not yet perfect, we are to live with heavenly focus, following godly examples, and keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus.

Read Philippians 3:12–21 and answer questions 13– 18:

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ *Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,* ¹⁴ *I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.* ¹⁵ *All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things.*

And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained. ¹⁷ Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.

¹⁸ For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Philippians 3:12–21

13. What does the apostle Paul say about *his* state of perfection (vv. 12–13)?

14. What is Paul's plan of action since he has not yet been made perfect (vv. 12–14)?

Definition: A *mature Christian* demonstrates qualities developed through growth and experience in Christ Jesus. This maturity is revealed through mental, emotional, and even physical characteristics shaped by the Spirit's guidance and leadership. (See 1 Corinthians 3:1–3 for a contrast with immature Christians.)

15. Does Paul consider himself a mature Christian (v. 15)? Yes | No (Underline One)

16. Would you consider yourself a mature Christian? Why or why not?

17. How does Paul describe those who *live as enemies of the cross of Christ* (vv. 18–19)?

18. Who brings everything under His control will transform our lowly bodies into glorious ones (vv. 20–21)?

Believers find forgiveness of sins by trusting Jesus is the Son of God who died on the cross for all of our wrongdoing, including our inherited sin from Adam and Eve. However, even after receiving forgiveness, we still struggle with wrong thoughts, motives, relationships, and actions. Breaking bad habits or addictions can be difficult. Godly perfection is challenging! So, why do we continue to sin?

Why Christians Sin

When we are born again, we become a new creation in Christ. Our sins are forgiven, and God's grace empowers us to live a righteous life (Romans 6:11–14). Scripture teaches that we now have the ability to choose what is right—yet we still sin (1 John 1:8). Even as a new creation, God does not remove the sinful nature we inherited from Adam and Eve (Romans 7:18). Our old

self desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh (Galatians 5:17). God also allows us to retain our free will, giving us the ability to choose between good and evil—sometimes choosing ourselves over God. This ongoing tension between our sinful nature, our Spirit-led desires, and our free will is a significant reason Christians continue to sin.

In addition, we face opposition from Satan and his followers, *who prowl around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour* (1 Peter 5:8). In our flesh, we can be tempted to prioritize our own comfort, desires, and satisfaction above God and others. At times, a lack of spiritual maturity, insufficient time in prayer or Scripture, or failing to rely on the Holy Spirit can make us more vulnerable to sin. We also live in a fallen, corrupted world that continually pressures us, distracts us, and attempts to derail our walk with Christ.

And what could be more distracting or devastating than war? Instigated by Satan and propelled by fallen human nature, World War II officially began on September 1, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland—prompting Britain and France to declare war on Germany two days later. Later, Germany invaded the Netherlands, which surrendered five days later, on May 15.

When Holland came under German occupation, Corrie ten Boom and her family quickly recognized how Hitler, Germany's leader, was targeting Jews. While they did not yet know the full extent of Hitler's extermination plan and death camps, they saw Jewish rights being systematically stripped away. Faced with this growing evil, the family had a choice: focus on their own safety or take a stand and get involved.

Throughout history, Satan has repeatedly attempted to annihilate the Jews (Exodus 1:15–16; Esther 3:6, 13; Matthew 2:13–16). Each time, individuals faced a choice: to fear God or to fear the enemy. The same was true during World War II. Fearing God remains a choice humanity must make, now and in the future, as Revelation 12:1, 6, 13–17 illustrates.

After two years of German occupation, a Jewish woman knocked on the Ten Boom family's door. Corrie, now 50 years old, answered and listened to the woman's plea for help, fully aware of the risks posed by the Gestapo, the Nazi secret police. This encounter marked the beginning of the Ten Boom family's courageous work with the underground, sheltering Jews and hiding seven of them in a secret room within their home.⁴

Eventually, tipped off by an informant, the police raided the Ten Boom home. Although they did not discover any Jews or the hidden room, Corrie and her older sister Betsie were arrested and sent to a concentration camp. Their father, Casper, died after just ten days in prison.

Corrie and Betsie endured immense suffering during their imprisonment—hunger, cold, isolation, and cruelty. In human terms, it might seem that Corrie deserved a few comforts because of her compassion for the Jews. Yet, she did not see it that way, and neither does God (Philippians 2:3–4). Reflecting on her experience, she wrote about the subtle, “sinful” tendency to focus on oneself:

⁴ Corrie Ten Boom and John and Elizabeth Sherrill, *The Hiding Place* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), 78, 83, 97, 108.

And as the cold increased, so did the special temptation of concentration-camp life: the temptation to think only of oneself. It took a thousand cunning forms. I quickly discovered that when I maneuvered our way toward the middle of the roll-call formation we had a little protection from the wind.

I knew this was self-centered: when Betsie and I stood in the center, someone else had to stand on the edge. How easy it was to give it other names! I was acting only for Betsie's sake. We were in an important ministry and must keep well. It was colder in Poland than in Holland; these Polish women probably were not feeling the chill the way we were.⁵

Corrie also reflected on other ways she had been selfish, such as wanting to keep a blanket for herself, and how these tendencies led her to struggle in her relationship with God. When she read Paul's account of his thorn in the flesh and the Lord's response, '*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness*' (2 Corinthians 12:7–10), she realized she was not fully relying on God. She wrote:

The real sin lay in thinking that any power to help and transform came from me. Of course it was not *my* wholeness, but Christ's that made the difference. . . . So I closed the Bible and to that group of women clustering close I told the truth about myself—my self-centeredness, my stinginess, my lack of love. That night real joy returned to my worship.”⁶

Action Step: Active Reflection

19. Have you ever been tempted to rely on your own strength instead of God's grace? How did that affect your relationship with God and others?

20. What areas of your life reveal a tendency toward self-centeredness or withholding from others? How can you surrender those to God?

21. How does the fear of the Lord shape the way you serve others, especially when it's uncomfortable or requires sacrifice?

22. Corrie's realization that her strength came from Christ, not herself, was a turning point. How can the fear of the Lord help you recognize your dependence on Him in all circumstances?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers #10–22 with your discipleship team.

—End Day Two—

⁵ Ibid., 213.

⁶ Ibid., 214–215.

Day Three

Obedience and Thankfulness

When discussing sin, it helps to examine the concept of temptation as Scripture reveals it. In both Hebrew and Greek, the same words are used for “tempt” and “test,” with the meaning determined by context. In modern English, however, we distinguish between the two.

Definitions: *Test* refers to a measure that checks the quality, performance, or reliability of something, particularly before it is fully applied or put into practice. God *tests* people for faith and loyalty. *Temptation* refers to something that provokes a strong urge or desire to do something, especially something bad, wrong, or unwise. Satan *tempts* or entices people to sin.

Even Jesus, in His humanity, was tempted by Satan (Matthew 4:1–11). Satan tempted Him to turn stones into bread when He was hungry, to throw Himself from the pinnacle of the temple to test God’s protection, and to gain all the kingdoms of the world by worshipping Satan. Yet, despite these powerful temptations, the devil was unable to draw Jesus into sin.

God allows Satan to tempt people, but He Himself does not tempt anyone (James 1:13). Instead, God tests our hearts for our own good. These tests reveal our devotion and strengthen our faith.

Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus lives in believers and empowers us to resist temptation. We also have the powerful promises of the New Covenant available to us (see Lesson 6: The New Covenant). Therefore, we must lean into Jesus and pray for Him to work through us daily.

Once we are saved, we begin the process of sanctification—gradually being made holy. We are declared positionally holy in Christ, yet we also grow in holiness through daily obedience (Hebrews 12:14–15). God sets us apart and gradually transforms us into the likeness of His Son.

As new creations in Christ, we should no longer take pleasure in sin but instead recognize and overcome it with God’s help. When we do sin, we are called to confess with genuine, godly sorrow, humbly acknowledging how we have wronged God. He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Scripture also shows that sin against others is ultimately sin against God.

Read Numbers 5:5–8 and answer questions 23–25:

The LORD said to Moses, ⁶ “Say to the Israelites: ‘Any man or woman who wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the LORD is guilty ⁷ and must confess the sin they have committed. They must make full restitution for the wrong they have done, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all to the person they have wronged. ⁸ But if that person has no close relative to whom restitution can be made for the wrong, the restitution belongs to the LORD and must be given to the priest, along with the ram with which atonement is made for the wrongdoer.
Numbers 5:5–8

23. How does God view us when we wrong another person in any way (v. 6)?

24. In what ways might we wrong another person (v. 6)?

25. What is the remedy for unfaithfulness to the Lord—disloyalty or untrustworthiness—in both the Old and New Testaments (vv. 7–8; see also 1 John 1:8–9; Luke 19:8)?

Both the Old and New Testaments emphasize the importance of confession and restitution. For example, if we have stolen goods or money from someone, we should return everything and repay what was taken. However, other wrongs may not have such a clear solution. In these cases, we should seek the Holy Spirit's guidance for both confession and reparation (compensation).

This reliance on the Spirit points forward to the Messiah, whose life perfectly demonstrates the essential role of the Holy Spirit and, by extension, guides the lives of His disciples.

26. Read Isaiah 11:2–3a. The fullness of the Spirit emphasizes that Jesus embodies the complete and perfect manifestation of the Holy Spirit's attributes. What are the sevenfold attributes resting on the Messiah?

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—³ and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:2–3a (“Rest on him” conveys that the Holy Spirit fully and permanently settles upon and empowers the Messiah, Jesus.)

Jesus is the Son of God and equal to God. Nevertheless, He humbled Himself and became an obedient servant in human form (Philippians 2:6–8), displaying and modeling the *fear of the Lord*. Sacred and righteous *fear of the Lord* “dreads God’s displeasure, desires His favor, reveres His holiness, submits cheerfully to His will, is grateful for His benefits, and conscientiously obeys His commandments. Fear and love must coexist in us in order that either passion may be healthy and that we may please and rightly serve God.”⁷

The ten Boom family followed Jesus’ example by fearing God and loving people. Even in the most dire circumstances, Corrie and Betsie remained faithful, showing reverence for God and love for others. They humbly submitted to God’s will, learning to be thankful in all circumstances—even within the hardships of a concentration camp.

They worked long hours with little to eat and were treated cruelly. Every Friday, they were forced to undress and walk past grinning guards for a so-called medical exam. Corrie explains:

How there could have been any pleasure in the sight of these stick-thin and hunger-gloated stomachs I could not imagine. Surely there is no more wretch sight than the human body unloved and uncared for. Nor could I see the necessity of undressing . . .

⁷ R.K. Harrison, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957), 404.

But it was one of these mornings while we were waiting, shivering, in the corridor, that yet another page in the Bible leapt into life for me.

He hung on the cross.

I had not known—I had not thought . . . The paintings, the carved crucifixes showed at the least a scrap of cloth. But this, I suddenly knew, was the respect and reverence of the artist. But oh—at the time itself on that other Friday morning—there had been no reverence. No more than I saw in the faces around us now.

I leaned toward Betsie, ahead of me in line. Her shoulder blades stood out harp and thin beneath her blue-mottle skin.

“Betsie, they took His clothes too.”

Ahead of me I heard a little gasp, “ Oh, Corrie. And I never thanked Him . . .”⁸

Another time Corrie and Betsie were discussing thanking God in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:18), when Betsie got excited and suggested they put it into practice immediately. Corrie later recounted their conversation:

I stared at her, then around me the dark, foul-aired room.

“Such as?” I said

“Such as being assigned here together.”

I bit my lip. “Oh yes, Lord Jesus!”

“Such as what you’re holding in your hands.”

I looked down at the Bible “Yes! Thank You, dear Lord, that there was no inspection when we entered here! Thank You for all the women, here in this room, who will meet You in these pages.”

“Yes,” said Betsie, “Thank You for the very crowding here. Since we’re packed so close, that many more will hear!” She looked at me expectantly, “Corrie!” she prodded.

“Oh, all right, Thank You for the jammed, crammed, stuffed, packed, suffocating crowds.”

“Thank You, “Betsie went on serenely, “for the fleas, and for—”

The fleas! This was too much. “Betsie, there’s no way even God can make me grateful for a flea.”

⁸ Ten Boom and Sherrill, 195–196.

“ ‘Give thanks in *all* circumstances,’ ” she quoted. “It doesn’t say, ‘in pleasant circumstances.’ Fleas are part of this place where God has put us.”

And so we stood between the piers [rows] of bunks and gave thanks for the fleas. But this time I was sure Betsie was wrong.⁹

Corrie and Betsie held worship services and read the Bible in their barracks, with God creating a holy and devout atmosphere. Remarkably, the guards ignored Barracks 28 for reasons unknown—until one day, the Lord revealed why:

“You know we’ve never understood why we had so much freedom in the big room,” she [Betsie] said. “Well—I’ve found out.”

That afternoon, she said, there’d been confusion in her knitting group about sock sizes and they’d asked the supervisor to come and settle it. [The socks were for the German soldiers.]

“ But she wouldn’t. She wouldn’t step through the door and neither would the guards. And you know why?”

Betsie could not keep the triumph from her voice: “Because of the fleas! That’s what she said, “That place is crawling with fleas!”

My mind rushed back to our first hour in this place. I remember Betsie’s bowed head, remember her thanks to God for creatures I could see no use for.”¹⁰

Corrie and Betsie feared the Lord— they dreaded God’s displeasure, desired His favor, revered His holiness, submitted to His will, was grateful for His benefits, and conscientiously obeyed His commandments. Their example reminds us that, as believers, we too are blessed with the gift of fearing the Lord—a gift that shapes our lives and draws us closer to Him.

27. How does Corrie and Betsie’s story inspire you to be thankful in all circumstances?

28. Read Jeremiah 32:39. What is God’s promise, and how can you apply it?

I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me and that all will then go well for them and for their children after them. Jeremiah 32:39

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers #23–28 with your discipleship team.

—End Day Three—

⁹ Ibid., 198–199.

¹⁰ Ibid., 209.

Day Four
Fearing Man

King Solomon, filled with godly wisdom, penned the book of Ecclesiastes. He goes to great lengths to tell us that everything is meaningless outside of fearing God. Fearing God is the purpose of the whole of humanity.

Read Ecclesiastes 12:13–14 and answer questions 29–30:

Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. ¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. Ecclesiastes 12:13–14

29. What are two things all men and women are responsible for (v. 13)?

30. Why should we fear God and keep His commandments (vv. 13–14)?

Sadly, many of us fear man more than we fear God. Instead of being powerful warriors in Christ's army, we become cowards. We are often afraid of those who might cause us physical, emotional, or mental pain. We dread people's displeasure and seek their approval or good opinion more than God's. This fear reveals a lack of trust in God's protection and care according to His perfect will, placing our trust instead in others or ourselves.

There are many ways we fear man instead of God. We might fear bodily harm or care too much about others' opinions of us. Perhaps it is not fear but an excessive concern for our reputation or standing within a community. We may value being liked and popular more than trusting and pleasing God.

Peter, like all the apostles, including Paul, was a Jew. In that time, Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) did not mix socially, especially at meals. Gentiles were considered unclean, and Jews were forbidden even to enter a Gentile's home. However, this separation, initiated by God to protect His people from idol worship, had been taken out of context and misapplied.

The early church faced issues and challenges, much like churches do today. One such challenge came from a group of Jewish believers known as the "circumcision group." They insisted that Gentile believers needed to be circumcised¹¹ and follow other Jewish customs to be fully accepted. This group seems to have been connected to the church in Jerusalem, where James, Jesus' half-brother, was recognized as the leader. However, this does not imply that James himself was part of their departure from the truth.

¹¹ Circumcision is the removal of all or part of the foreskin from the penis. God initiated this procedure with Abraham and his descendants as a sign of His covenant (promise) with them—the Abrahamic Covenant. (Genesis 12:1-3; 17:10–12)

Read Galatians 2:11–12 and answer questions 31–35:

When Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I [Paul] opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. Galatians 2:11–12

31. Why did Peter stop eating and spending time with Gentile believers (v. 12b)?
32. Why do you think Peter was afraid of those belonging to the circumcision group?
33. Did Paul fear man in this particular circumstance (v. 11)? Yes | No (Underline One)
34. Think about your own life. Who or what group do you fear and why?
35. Based on your answer to question 34, what will you do about this particular fear?

Peter was humble and accepted Paul's rebuke. Recognizing the truth, he changed his eating habits to fully embrace Gentiles in God's kingdom. His example encourages us to overcome the fear of man and continue in God's grace to bring Him glory. Peter's faithful witness—even to his death—demonstrates that he no longer feared man.

When we fear man, we are saying that we do not trust in God's plan, provision, or protection. This misplaced fear places more value on the opinions of others than on God's, making others a priority over Him and turning them into idols. Ultimately, fearing man leads us away from God and hinders our relationship with Him.

Instead, we need to trust God, knowing that He wants the best for us and has the power to accomplish anything. We must fear God, *not* man, and make choices that reflect the Lord's character—demonstrating our faith and devotion without concern for the world's approval.

Read Proverbs 29:25 and answer questions 36–37:

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.
Proverbs 29:25

Definition: A *snare* is a trap for catching birds or animals. It is usually made with nooses or nets and hidden under leaves and brush. Figuratively, a *snare* represents a danger or trap that can lead to harm, ruin, or even spiritual destruction, often threatening to derail a person's faith or commitment to God.

36. Why do you think the fear of humans can be a snare or trap?

37. How can we be protected from the snare of fearing others (v. 25b)?

Fearing what others think of us elevates them to the place of God in our lives and wrongly empowers them. God has made us in His image and loves us with an everlasting love. But when we care too much for people's approval, we are making God's opinion secondary.

There are various ways that Satan will seek to trap and hold us captive through fear of others. He might use it to prey on our insecurities and keep us from trying anything new or different. For sure, the devil uses the fear of others to keep believers from sharing the gospel.

Action Steps

38. Read the false words Satan may use against us. Have you ever heard these or other kinds of false words ringing in your ears? Yes | No (Underline One)

False words that Satan may use against us:

"What will people think of you?"

"No one likes you."

"You are stupid and can't do anything right."

"There is something wrong with you."

"You are not a good person."

39. Read the following suggestions to counter Satan's lies. What will *you* do to counter false and destructive words from Satan?

Ways to counter false words and destructive tactics Satan may use against us:

Affirm your identity in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Exercise your authority in Christ (Luke 10:19)

Pray for strength and discernment (Matthew 26:41)

Recognize the lies (John 8:44)

Refuse to listen to the lies (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Seek support from believers (Galatians 6:2)

Speak God's truth to yourself and others (Psalm 139:14; Romans 8:37–39)

Wear the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10–18)

Fear of people may also be an underlying need for love. It can be difficult to say "no" to others because of the fear they will be disappointed with us. If they are unhappy, they might reject us and then we will not get the affection we crave. As a result, we may become people-pleasers

rather than God-pleasers. People-pleasers fail to fully trust in God's love and His purpose for their lives.

The apostle Paul made it clear that we cannot please people and genuinely be a servant of Christ. As Christ's servant, we seek to do the Father's will, which often stands in contrast with worldly pleasures and recognition. Even interactions with other disciples need to be filtered through God's will and plan for us.

Read Galatians 1:10 and answer questions 40–44:

Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ. Galatians 1:10

40. Whose approval should we try to win?
41. How does seeking God's approval free us from the fear of rejection (see Proverbs 29:25)?
42. What do we learn about the cost of being a servant or disciple of Christ?
43. How can trusting in God's love help us overcome the tendency to be people-pleasers?
44. Can you recall a time when pleasing people conflicted with serving Christ? How did you handle it?

There is a healthy way to care about other's opinions. We should desire that our words and actions lead others to praise God. An honorable reputation reflects godly character and should point people to Christ. As Ecclesiastes 7:1 says, *"A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth."* This reminds us that a godly reputation carries eternal significance.

However, we must be *cautious*. What begins as a desire for a good reputation can easily shift into an unhealthy need to impress others, even fellow believers, with our good works or eloquent words. This, too, is a form of fearing humans. At its root, it stems from pride and a desire to be the center of attention. Instead of glorifying God, we may seek admiration or even idolization from others.

45. Read Luke 14:11. What does Jesus say about prideful people who exalt themselves?

"For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." Luke 14:11 (Exalt means to raise oneself in status, importance, or honor, often with pride..)

Trying to impress others is just another way of trying to exalt ourselves. It is a way of trying to take away God's role as "exalter" and putting ourselves in charge. As disciples we are to humble ourselves and depend on God. When and if praise comes, we are to deflect it (change direction) to the Lord where it belongs. Then, any reward or commendation received will be given at the resurrection of the righteous (Luke 14:13–14).

In contrast to fearing people, caring for and loving people reflects God's love in us. Our actions and words should come from a sincere desire to serve others and glorify God, not from a need for human approval. Jesus modeled this perfectly. He loved people deeply but never compromised the truth or sought to win their favor at the expense of His mission. His example challenges us to love others selflessly and to care about their opinions only in ways that honor God.

Action Steps: Active Reflection

46. How can we distinguish between a healthy concern for our reputation and an unhealthy desire for approval?

47. What steps can we take to ensure our words and actions glorify God and not ourselves?

48. How does following Jesus' example teach us to love others without seeking their approval or compromising our focus on God?

49. How can trusting in God's love free us from the need to seek admiration from others?

50. Prayerfully consider the various aspects of fear of humans and confess it as sin. Pray and ask God to help you to destroy the fear of man and replace it with the fear of Him in Christ Jesus. I have confessed any fear of people as sin and prayed for help: Yes | No (Underline One)

51. Read and meditate on the following verses from your Bible for help in fearing God and not people (Psalm 23:4, 118:4–8; 2 Timothy 1:7–9a). How did God encourage you?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers #29–50 with your discipleship team.

—End Day Four—

Day Five

Fearing the Lord Today

Fearing God means that we do not have to fear anyone or anything else. The Bible has many verses commanding or admonishing us not to fear and not to be afraid. Instead, we are to be strong and courageous because the Lord is with us.

51. Read Isaiah 41:10. Why are we not to fear or be dismayed (upset, worried, or agitated)?

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10

Sometimes it is hard not to worry or become anxious. The unknown can be especially unsettling—waiting for results from cancer testing, wondering if you will be hired for a much-needed job, or worrying about family in the path of a hurricane or earthquake. What about being caught in a war-torn country? Or enduring a concentration camp, like Corrie ten Boom?

In such moments, would we remain faithful to fear the Lord, trusting Him with the outcome, rather than succumbing to fear and despair?

Corrie and her sister Betsie learned the foundation of their faith from their father, Casper ten Boom. He was faithful in welcoming Jewish refugees into their home during the Nazi occupation and remained steadfast even after his arrest. Though he died just ten days into his imprisonment, his faith and wisdom continued to guide his family.

Corrie recalled a defining moment from her childhood. She had accompanied her mother to visit neighbors and was deeply disturbed after seeing a lifeless baby in its crib. That night, the thought of losing her own family terrified her. Sensing her distress, her father sat beside her and asked:

“Corrie,” he began gently, “when you and I go to Amsterdam—when do I give you your ticket?”

I sniffed a few times, considering this. “Why, just before we get on the train.”

“Exactly. And our wise Father in heaven knows when we’re going to need things, too. Don’t run out ahead of Him, Corrie. When the time comes that some of us will have to die, you will look into your heart and find the strength you need—just in time.”¹²

When Corrie was in the concentration camp, she recalled this conversation with her earthly father. Though she had many questions, she knew that her heavenly Father would give her the strength she needed—for whatever lay ahead.¹³

¹² Ibid., 29.

¹³ Ibid., 119. (Taken from photo caption on unnumbered page prior to 119.)

Corrie's father imparted a timeless biblical truth: the uncertainties we face—whether in our daily struggles or in unimaginable trials—call us to steadfast faith. We must choose to trust in God's timing and provision, confident that He will supply what we need when we need it.

Trusting God does not mean passivity. Faith demands action. Abraham exemplified this truth when he obeyed God's command to leave his homeland and later trusted Him fully by offering Isaac as a sacrifice (Hebrews 11:8–9, 17–19). Like Abraham, we too must be ready to act when God calls.

Action Required

The Bible teaches that faith requires action, affirming our God-given ability to respond (James 2:14–23). Similarly, we are instructed to be self-controlled, which implies that we have the capacity to exercise control over ourselves (Titus 2:11–12). This, however, does not minimize the role of God's grace. It is by His grace that we are empowered to act and to grow in self-control. God's grace equips us to live upright and godly lives, teaching and enabling us to align our actions with His will.

Nevertheless, we have free will to act, and our actions lead to specific results. Christianity is *not* a form of fatalism. Fatalism is a philosophical doctrine that asserts all events are predetermined or prearranged leaving us powerless to change our destiny. A fatalistic mindset assumes we cannot influence our decisions or their consequences, weakening our sense of responsibility and hope in God's guidance.

When faced with difficulty, a fatalist may refuse to put forth any effort or act. For instance, an addict with a fatalistic mindset might not attempt to address their destructive behavior, believing change is impossible. This attitude also hinders the understanding of prayer—a fatalist sees no value in prayer because they assume it cannot affect outcomes. They fail to grasp that God desires us to pray and promises to respond to requests that honor Him (James 5:16).

God, who is in control of everything, created us with the ability to think and make choices. This God-given ability in no way diminishes His authority or power. He remains the Creator, and we remain His creation. Scripture clearly defines this relationship, emphasizing that it is not an equal one—God has no equals. He is the absolute, Supreme Being, and we are entirely dependent on Him for life and guidance.

Fearing the Lord requires holy action. We are called to live in ways that align with the truth of the Bible. This means our actions must be rooted in reading, studying, and following God's Word, striving to reflect His holiness in every area of our lives.

Read Psalm 111:10 and answer questions 53–54:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise. Psalm 111:10 (Precepts are laws and instruction.)

53. Where does true wisdom begin, and why is recognizing this important (v. 10a)?

54. What specific action demonstrates proper fear of the Lord (v. 10b)?

True wisdom is rooted in fearing the Lord. Recall our definition from day one: Fear of the Lord is a profound blend of reverence, awe, and wonder, rooted in a deep awareness of God's holiness, power, and authority. This fear compels us trust, obey, and worship God wholeheartedly, recognizing our accountability to Him

Obedying God means living in alignment with His commandments, which include His truth and purpose for humanity: to love God and love others—even our enemies. Jesus commands His followers to not only love their enemies but also pray for those who persecute them (Matthew 5:44). Those who fear the Lord will embrace and adhere to Jesus' teachings, even when they challenge our natural inclinations.

This brings us to a powerful example of love in action—Corrie ten Boom and her sister Betsie's unwavering faith and commitment to forgiveness during their time in the Ravensbrück concentration camp. Betsie's remarkable vision for love and reconciliation vividly illustrates how the fear of the Lord moves us beyond mere feelings into transformative acts of love, even in the face of unimaginable suffering. Corrie writes of her conversation with Betsie:

“Corrie, if people can be taught to hate, they can be taught to love! We must find the way, you and I, no matter how long it takes.”

She went on, almost forgetting in her excitement to keep her voice to a whisper, while I slowly took in the fact that she was talking about our guards. I glanced at the matron seated at the desk ahead of us. I saw a gray uniform and a visored hat: Betsie saw a wounded human being.

And I wondered, not for the first time what sort of a person she was, this sister of mind . . . What kind of road she followed while I trudged beside her on the all-too-solid earth.¹⁴

Even as her strength weakened, Betsie's faith and vision for love shone brightly. Though barely audible as she lay dying, Betsie urged Corrie to share their story:

“. . . must tell people what we have learned here. We must tell them that there is no pit so deep that He is not deeper still. They will listen to us, Corrie, because we have been here.”¹⁵

After the war, Corrie began speaking about forgiveness and reconciliation. One of her most poignant experiences occurred in a German church. Corrie shared about God's love and forgiveness, emphasizing how former enemies could become like brothers and sisters despite their nationality.

¹⁴ Ibid., 175.

¹⁵ Ibid., 217.

At the end of her talk, a tall man approached her. As he drew closer, Corrie's heart froze—she recognized him as one of the SS guards from Ravensbrück. Memories of her sister Betsie and their father flashed before her eyes.

“Thank you for your talk,” he said. “It is so wonderful to know God forgives all our sins, isn't it?”

Corrie looked at the man standing in front of her. Instead of seeing his smiling face, she saw the faces of Betsie and her father. The man thrust out his hand to shake Corrie's, and as he did so, hatred filled her heart. She would not and could not lift her hand to shake his.

“Oh God,” she prayed silently, “help me to live my message.”

As she prayed those words, it was as though a strong jolt of electricity had run through her body. Her arm stretched out as though she had no control over it, and she shook the man's hand. As she did so, all the hatred she felt melted away, and she knew she had forgiven him.¹⁶

Corrie's response mirrored the early believers, living in the fear of the Lord with trust, obedience, and reverence, even in great challenges.

55. According to Acts 9:31, how did the early church or Christians live?

Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers. Acts 9:31

The early Christians lived in the fear of the Lord, striving to honor Him by turning from sin and pursuing godly character. Their lives not only pleased God but also inspired others to follow Christ. Encouraged and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the church grew in strength and numbers.

This healthy fear of the Lord guards us from presuming on, or taking God's grace for granted. While we trust Him through prayer and action, we recognize that we are called to serve Him, not the other way around. Living in the fear of the Lord means approaching Him with a grateful heart, honoring Him as our Master and King, and depending on His guidance daily.

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers #51–55 with your discipleship team.

—End of Day Five and Lesson 14—

Next—Lesson 15: The Word of God, Unit 4: Disciple of Christ

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¹⁶ Benge, *Corrie Ten Boom: Keeper of the Angel's Den*, 191–192