

“Fearing God” Lesson #2

Fearing God

Various Scriptures

Dr. Bruce Bickel

August 11, 2020

Bruce: Okay. Let’s ask the Lord to go before us and pray. Would you be kind enough to turn off your speakers? Mute yourself, please.

Gracious heavenly Father, it’s with a deep sense of reverence, awe and anticipation that we come to sit at Your feet. Father, there is so much going on in this world to distract us from getting to know who You are. And we’re so grateful that we never leave Your presence. We never leave Your well-doing. And Father, we just never want to leave You in the daily activities of our lives. And so we are very dependent upon Your Holy Spirit to teach us. We’re not smart enough to figure this out ourselves. So Father, would You please be pleased to open our eyes, that we might behold You for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

This is lesson #3 in our study :Fearing God.” I’d like to do a little review if I can at the very beginning here to help us give the right context for what we are studying.

Fearing God is an everyday activity. It is very unique to the individual. Now we’ve seen that before when we saw in our introduction the various names that God was giving, and one of them is Fear. There is terror, there is fear, there is admiration. Many of those are individualistic.

And let me tell you, if I can explain why. Fearing God is something that is our personal responsibility just like repentance. Repentance is a daily activity that we have on an everyday basis. We continue to repent. We continue to fear God. Fearing God is not something you just do once in your life, or once on Sunday. It’s part of our motivation for pleasing God.

If you remember what Jesus said in John 5 and John 8, Jesus said, *“I do nothing on My own initiative; I only do those things that are pleasing to the Father and the things that the Father tells Me.”* And so Jesus gives us a marvelous example of the motivation to please God. And one of the ways in which God does that is that He gives us His own fear of Himself in a covenant relationship so that we will not leave Him.

And I take you back to Jeremiah 32, verses 38-41. *“They will be My people, and I will be their God.”*

Now in the Old Covenant, it was “if you obey I will be your God.” Notice that in the New Covenant because of the Person and work of Christ, *“they will be My people and I will be their God.”*

And this is what God is going to do in His relationship with us in our regeneration. *“I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear Me for their own good, and the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them. I will never stop doing good to them. And I will inspire them to fear Me so that they will never turn away from Me. I will rejoice in doing them good, and will surely plant them in this land with all My heart and My soul.”*

“Fearing God” Lesson #2

We need to understand, friends, that fear of God is not something you and I achieve; it is something that we receive. We receive it when we have a regenerated relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. God gives us His fear.

Now why does He give us fear? How do we define fear? There are many ways that we looked at it in our introduction. But basically my definition that I’m using for fear is this: reverence for, awe of, and a holy trembling of who God is.

Now that becomes very individualistic, as we saw in our introduction. Various people had different responses to the holiness of God and the revelation of God based upon where they were in their circumstances and who they were individually.

Now let me try to explain why that still applies to us today, that fearing God is highly individualistic. Now granted, there are certain things that we do corporately that we only do together. But basically speaking, fearing God is something that you and I must develop because God has given that grace to us so that we will not depart from Him.

Let me take you to Hebrews chapter 1, please—Hebrews chapter 1, verses 1-3. *“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory, and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word. After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”*

Now the last days is that period between the birth of Christ and Christ’s Second Coming. So we are in the last days. And here is what the Scripture says. *“In these last days He has spoken to us by His Son.”*

Previously He spoke to us through the prophets. Now what that means, friends, is that God deals with us through the Person and work of Christ. He speaks to us through His Son.

Now that doesn’t mean that He’s not going to use other means. But I think we have to be careful that whenever you say that God is speaking to me, or that God is leading me, we must be sure that we’re confirming that with the Scripture.

Let me show you why that is so important. Go to John 1, verses 1-5, John 1:1-5. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”*

Now that’s a reference to the Person and work of Christ. *“The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”*

Now what’s the significance of that? We see that God now speaks to us through His Son, through the Person and work of Christ. We see that the light shines in the darkness, but the darkness did not understand it. We see that *“in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* We see that an explanation of that can be found in Revelation chapter 19.

The point that I’m trying to make for us is to help us to understand that God speaks to us through His word. I want us to be cautious not to think that He speaks in dreams and

“Fearing God” Lesson #2

other activities and things like that. If He does, He certainly can do that if He wants to. But we must confirm that with the Scripture.

Go to Revelation chapter 19, verses 11-14. Now this is a description of the sixth of the judgments that God is going to impose on the world at the Second Coming. In verse 11 of chapter 19 we see this.

“I saw heaven standing open, and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice He judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on His head are many crowns. He has a name written on them that no one knows but He Himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and His name is THE WORD OF GOD.”

Now that’s a reference to Christ. His name is THE WORD OF GOD. So when you and I develop a relationship with the living Lord Jesus Christ through the Scripture, we’re developing a relationship, not just gaining information. We’re developing a relationship through the Word. And when the Scripture says that He speaks to us through His Son that means that He speaks to us through His word, because His Son is the Word. *“And His name is THE WORD OF GOD.”*

Now how does that apply to us individually? I said that worshiping and fearing God is an individualistic activity. Well, let me give you some insight on this one. Turn to 2 Timothy 3:16.

We’ve seen that in the last days God speaks to us through His word, not through prophets. We’ve seen that *“in the beginning was the Word,”* and that Jesus is the Word. We’ve seen in Revelation that His name is the Word of God. So how does that apply to us on an individualistic basis?

2 Timothy 3:16 says this. *“All Scripture is inspired by God, and profitable for teaching, rebuke, correction and training in righteousness.”*

“All Scripture is inspired by God.” So that means that any time you and I are studying the Scripture that we’re developing a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ because He is the Word. And this means it’s going to be highly individualistic. Sometimes when you’re studying the Scripture God might reveal doctrine to us. Doctrine means “the standard.”

It may be that when you’re studying the Scripture and developing your relationship with Christ that you may be rebuked, which means that there’s an error in your standard. The third possibility of what God might do in your life is correction. And that means exposing you to the error and returning you to the standard. And fourthly, *“training in righteousness”*, training you so you won’t make the same mistake again.

So whenever you’re studying the Scripture, you’re developing a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. We’re developing that relationship. We’re not just reading words; we’re developing a relationship. And in that relationship when you’re studying the Scripture, there are four possibilities of how God might deal with you personally: through doctrine; that’s revealing the standard. It may be that you did not know that until the Holy Spirit revealed that doctrine to you. It may be that you’ll be rebuked because you have an error in your standard. I didn’t know that I was wrong. Over the years I’ve corrected myself many times because I realized I was wrong in my doctrine.

“Fearing God” Lesson #2

Thirdly, there’s correction. That means that you find a mistake in your doctrine and correct it. And then lastly training in righteousness, which means that He’ll train you so you won’t make the same mistake again.

Now my point in all this is this, folks: that fearing God becomes very individualistic, because how God deals with us personally is through the Person and work of Christ. And that means He’s going to deal with us through the Word.

Go to your outline, please. What I’m trying to do there is just review for us in our introduction that there were many descriptions of what it meant to fear God. We can conclude with the fact that Jesus is going to deal with us through His word. And that means that our fear may be expressed in different ways. Granted, there will be times when we do it collectively in the same way. But more often it implies that it’s going to be individualistic.

How is it that we’re going to fear God? And how am I defining fearing God? My definition that I’m using for this study is reverence for, awe of, and a holy trembling before who God is. In other words, God gave us the gift of fearing Him so that we would not depart from Him. He gave us the gift of fearing Him so that we would pass this on to our children. Fearing God is a gift that God gives us; it’s not a one-time activity. And as we learn to develop a saving relationship with the Person and work of Christ, working out our salvation with fear and trembling, one of our motivations that will lead us to please God is having this reverence for, this awe of, and a holy trembling before who God is.

So the more we learn the characteristics of God, the more we’re going to be pleasing to Him. And Jesus said, “I only do those things the Father tells Me, that the Father shows Me, in order to please Him.”

Now one of the things we need to look at is *the concept of names*, because the Scripture says that His name is dreadful. You see in your outline that our fear is God Himself. And that’s because, as we’ve seen in our introduction in Lesson #1, it’s because of the majesty that is in Him--In other words, His character, His being, His attributes. That’s why it’s so important for us to understand the attributes of God.

Sometimes it’s very helpful to have that list of 28 attributes of God on the handout that we gave you. As you’re studying the Scripture, identify which of those attributes God is choosing to reveal to you. One reveals His majesty that’s in Him. It’s also because, as we’ve seen, His presence is dreadful.

The word *dreadful* there means awe-ful. His presence is awe-ful. We need to be honoring Him because we are always in His presence. And His presence is full of awe.

Thirdly, it’s because of His own greatness and majesty. We’ve looked at those verses in the past and the examples where we see His greatness. It ought to create a sense of reverence for and awe of Him in all of His being.

And lastly it’s because of His mercy. So His majesty, presence, greatness and mercy are what we looked at so far as reasons for our cultivating our reverence for, our awe of, and having a holy trembling before God and who He is in all of His attributes.

Now one of the other things that we need to look at is His name. The Scripture says that His name is full of awe. Let me remind you that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not have a Bible that gave them the names of God or the attributes of God. Instead God

“Fearing God” Lesson #2

revealed Himself directly to them, and at times gave them names by which He was to be worshiped. In other words, the names described His character. The names described His attributes. Now we have those attributes listed for us in the Scripture for us to study. But Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not have that.

They also developed other names for God which brought into view important aspects of His Person and His work. The names of God in the Scripture always reveal His character, His attributes and His glory. When the patriarchs thought about God and their relationship to Him, they often chose the word Fear as one of their names for God because they feared Him above all things in this life and in the life to come.

They addressed God as “Fear.” Let me give you an example. Look at Genesis chapter 31 verse 42. *“If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac.”* The word “Fear” means God. *“If the Fear of Isaac had not been for me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed.”* So they sometimes chose names to describe a specific attribute of God, and one of those words was the name Fear.

Also Genesis 31 verse 53 is another example for you. *“The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.”* *“And Jacob swore by the Fear of His father Isaac.”* We can substitute the word God: “by the God of his father Isaac” in Genesis 31.

“And Jacob made an oath in the name of the Fear of Isaac.” Why would he do that? Isaac’s fear of God was so central in his life that it became a name for God. Like Isaac our greatest fear should be the frown of God, and our greatest joy should be the smile of God. As we think about the attributes of God, that ought to bring a holy trembling, a reverence for and an awe of the character of who God is in all of His glory.

Now take a look at your outline. He is teaching us that His name is full of awe. Now we studied that in the New Testament, where we’re told to pray in the name of Jesus. Now praying in the name of Jesus does not mean that I just add an appendage to my prayer to make sure that it’s correct. What it means is, I’m invoking all the attributes and all the characteristics of the Person whose name I’m invoking. So when I say that I’m praying in Jesus’ name I’m essentially saying this: that I’m praying exactly what Jesus would pray if Jesus were in my shoes and in my situation, because in His name I’m invoking all the characteristics and all of His attributes.

So the name of Jesus is very, very critical for us to understand. And the name of God is something that should not be trivialized, because His name is full of awe. Any time you mention the word God, it’s full of awe, and that is what it ought to remind us of. So we don’t take it lightly.

Let me give you some examples of what I mean. Go to Deuteronomy chapter 28, please—Deuteronomy 28 verse 58. There we see that obedience is to fear His name. *“If you do not carefully follow all the words of this Law,”* (that’s obedience), *“which are written in this book, and do not receive this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God.”*

In other words, the law is teaching us this: that obedience is to fear His name. When we fear His name we are demonstrating our obedience, because we’re distinguishing our

“Fearing God” Lesson #2

conduct from everybody else who use other possible names when people worship. We’re now saying that using the name of God is my motivation for obedience.

Psalm 119:

*“He provided redemption for His people;
He ordained His covenant forever.
Holy and awesome is Your name.”*

Here again you see that there is an attribute described whenever you use the word *name*. And this particular time it’s *“holy and awesome is His name.”* So we should never treat the name of God lightly.

Go to Exodus chapter 34, verses 3-6. Here there are certain attributes, certain qualities. Notice this in the example with Moses.

“And He passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, ‘The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, transgression and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished; He punishes the children and the children’s children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.’”

Now this example of the name *“The LORD, the LORD,”* is revealing certain attributes. We see that in those verses—the attributes of compassion, the attributes of graciousness, controlling His anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. That’s all wrapped up in the word LORD. And so whenever we see the word LORD or the word God we ought to think of the attributes of God. That’s why it’s so important that we understand what those attributes are, because whenever the name of God is used, in the situation in which you find it in its context, He’s revealing part of His character and His attributes.

Notice how David prayed and feared His name in Psalm 86 verse 11.

*“Teach me Your way, O LORD,
And I will walk in Your truth.
Give me an undivided heart,
That I might fear Your name.”*

Again the name symbolizes His attributes and His characteristics. Oftentimes we fear what He might do rather than fearing who He is. And here again David asks God to give him afar for His name, because he knew that would reveal His attributes to him.

I call your attention also to the fact that nonbelievers and heathen people will also fear His name, but for a different reason. Psalm 102 verse 15:

*“The nations will fear the name of the LORD;
All the kings of the earth will revere Your glory.”*

Also from Isaiah 59: *“From the west men will fear the name of the LORD, and from the rising of the sun they will revere His glory. For He will come like a pent-up flood that the breath of the LORD guides along.”* God exercises judgments so that other people might see and fear His name. That’s Isaiah 59:19. In the exercising of god’s judgments He does that so that people might see the magnificence of the character qualities that are named and displayed in that activity and judgment, and come to fear Him.

“Fearing God” Lesson #2

Malachi 2:5 is another verse that describes the same thing. *“My covenant was with him, a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him. This called for reverence and he revered Me and stood in awe of My name.”*

They began to see the response. *“He revered Me and stood in awe of My name.”* That’s defining fearing God. And again I’m trying to share with all of you that this is something we do on a daily basis; it’s a matter of our lifestyle. It means that I’m discovering through His word, when God speaks to us and reveals Himself to us, that our response is to revere His name, to have an awe for His name, and to have a holy trembling because of who He is. And that’s a daily activity, friend; it’s not just something that you do once in your life.

Now Christ will reward those who fear His name. Let me call your attention to Revelation chapter 11 verse 18. *“You were angry, and Your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding Your servants the prophets and your saints and those who revere Your name, both small and great.”*

Now there is an illustration of the fact that fearing God is an activity that generates rewards in our lives. *“Rewarding Your servants the prophets and Your saints and those who revere Your name, both small and great.”*

Now fearing God’s name is something that the Holy Spirit gives in our relationship with Christ. He exercises judgments so that others might see and revere His name. Isaiah 59:19.

And the fear of God is the sign of a gracious heart. *“And you will go on and leap like calves released from the stall. The Sun of Righteousness shall rise with healing in His wings.”*

Go back and read Malachi 4. And you’ll notice that the response to God dealing with them is that they will go out like calves released from the stall. Fearing God is something that is the sign of a gracious heart. It’s the sign of a gracious heart. When we fear God we’re basically saying, “I understand Your graciousness, and I’m like the calf who was just released from the stall.” We’ve been released from our sin and its punishment. “Because of Your graciousness, I now fear Your name.” And so our response is from a gracious heart when we fear God on a daily basis.

In Revelation 11:18 we saw that Christ will reward those who fear His name. There is reverence in worship when using God’s name. Look at 2 Timothy 2:19.

Transcriber’s Note: 2 Timothy 2:19, ESV. *“Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.”*

Bruce: Depart from iniquity before you worship God. There is reverence in His name.

Well, we see that the name of God is full of awe and deserving of our worship. So in our conversation how do we refer to God? Do we think of God in terms of reverence? Or do we change the wording of who God is to something like the great Dodger in the sky or the great Steeler in the sky, trying to make Him relevant? God is relevant in Himself, folks. And we don’t need to do anything other than to honor His name, because fearing His name is one of the motivations that we have. So whenever you use the name of God it ought to come with a sense of reverence and a sense of awe because of who He is. So

“Fearing God” Lesson #2

we need to be careful about how we use the name of God. And we’ll talk more about that next week.

The reason that God uses fear of Him in worship is because worship and service for Him is also full of awe. At least our worship should be full of awe and reverence.

Notice Psalm 5:7. In fear David worshiped.

*“But I, in Your great mercy,
Will come into Your house;
In reverence I will bow down toward Your holy temple.”*

Note the description of David worshiping, coming into the temple. And notice:
“In reverence will I bow down toward Your holy temple.”

Now there is much that we can talk about corporate worship in today’s culture. There is so much orientation toward entertainment, as opposed to revering who God is in all of His glory. So much of the time people don’t come with reverence; they come with their coffee cups and their doughnuts, as opposed to coming with reverence.

*“I will come into Your house;
With reverence will I bow down before Your holy temple.”*

One of the ways in which we exercise our fearing of God is in the way that we worship. Look at Psalm 2:11.

“Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling.”

We serve the Lord in worship; we fear Him with trembling.

2 Corinthians 7:1 is good for your worship. *“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”*

That’s why we need to prepare ourselves for worship, friends. I don’t know about you, but it seems to me that Satan attacks families on Sunday mornings when you have kids. Kids whine and don’t want to go to church. They don’t want to get dressed; they don’t want to eat. You’re ready to go and worship God with the grace and holiness that He gives us, and all of a sudden your family is coming apart. It just seems to me that oftentimes Satan will use opportunities to disrupt the family worship schedule by just interfering with the relationships they have with each other.

And so in my mind I think we need to make some preparations on Saturday night. What do we do on Saturday night before we go to worship on Sunday? I’m not prescribing anything. All I’m saying is that I do believe that some preparation needs to be done before we go to worship because of the importance of worship and the expression in which we are fearing God. Are we really showing our reverence for Him? Are we showing our awe for Him And do we have a holy trembling before Him when we go to worship? The design of worship is the continual activity of expressing our reverence for and awe of Him in our worship.

So I think there’s a lot that we can do to improve our worship situation that might help people understand the magnificence of who God is in all of His glory. We’re told that worship is to be conducted with fear and trembling because of who He is.

Now we need to understand that He is present in our worship. Notice Revelation 1:13, the seven churches of Revelation. *“And among the lamp-stands was someone like the Son*

“Fearing God” Lesson #2

of Man dressed in a robe reaching down to His feet, and a golden sash around His chest.” In other words, Jesus is present in our worship. We know that one of God’s 28 attributes is His presence, so we’re always in His presence. And Jesus is present in our worship.

How is He primarily present in our worship? Through His word, because He is the Word of God. Oftentimes I get a little bit frustrated when I see a church bulletin. It will say “worship and praise,” and all we do is sing and have a prayer. And then the next thing it says is “the word of God.” It’s almost like saying that preaching is not part of our worship. Worship is what we give.

The focus of our worship is the Scripture because Christ is present in our worship. If He is present in our worship, that means the emphasis of our worship service needs to be the Scripture presentation. Certainly we do our singing and our prayers. But those are expressions of how God is dealing with us through His word.

In my judgment and my experience I think that we need to do a lot of improving in our worship services. They need to be more biblically centered, more God-centered, because we realize the correlation that when we’re preaching the Word we’re teaching about Christ. And Christ is present in our worship.

Matthew 18:20 also says that when two or three are gathered together, Christ is among us. But notice the context of those verses. The context of those verses is church discipline. When you’re exercising church discipline for the sake of the body and the glory of Christ, Christ is with us where two or three are gathered together.

Now that doesn’t mean that He’s not present otherwise. But all I’m saying is that with the context of that particular phrase and the emphasis on the exercising of church discipline, Jesus is with us. And that’s because we’re doing that which is pleasing to Him because it’s what the Scripture would have us do to purify the body of Christ.

So we need to realize that in our worship services Christ is with us. But He is also among us in His presence. Does our worship really center around the Word? Because that reveals Christ.

Again I go back to the introduction we had, that Christ is the Word of God. So from my perspective (and I know that others hold a different perspective, which is their prerogative), the center part of our worship services should be the Word.

Now a church I pastored in Chicago was a church plant between two congregations. It was a congregation between a Presbyterian church and a Baptist church. And they came together and asked me to form it and to be the lead pastor of this church. And so we had the opportunity to create new and different perspectives on worship.

And so the first thing I did was that I had my sermon. Acts 2:42 says that *“they gave themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the breaking of bread and to prayer and to fellowship.*” I just took that and said, “All right. The first thing we’re going to do is the apostles’ doctrine, which is preaching.” So we had a word of invocation. And then the sermon was the very first thing we did.

The next thing we did is let people ask questions about the sermon. And we had fellowship; we had discussion about the sermon; we made application. And then we had Communion and we had prayer.

“Fearing God” Lesson #2

But the point we tried to explore was that the center of our worship is the proclamation of the Word, and everything else is a response to that. And so I directed people to pick a hymn that they were aware of that reflects the ministry of what God just gave us in His word. So if we were talking about love, one of the girls said, “Jesus Loves Me.” That’s a response to the message. Worship music became a response to the message because the center part of the worship was the word of God. And then people asked questions.

And we did that for about six months. We started out with about a hundred people when we started that emphasis with the center being the Word. And after about six months of that people came up to me and said, “Our service is too short. Can we go longer, because we need more time to talk about this message and sing hymns and worship?”

So my whole point is that we just tried that out. And it was very, very instrumental in trying to create a more godly worship.

Now I’m not suggesting that everybody do that. Please understand that. I’m not suggesting that. All I’m saying is that we tried that and it was very, very positive because we made Scripture the center part of our worship. One of the reasons we did that is because God is jealous of His worship.

Look at Exodus chapter 20 verse 5. *“You shall not bow down to them or worship them.”* This is false gods. *“For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me.”* We need to take our worship seriously because God is jealous of His worship. He exercises His judgments during worship.

Let me give you a couple of examples. My point is this. God exercises certain judgments when we think that worship is what we want it to be. Worship is God-centered. And when we do not have God-centered worship God exercises judgments on that.

Let me give you a couple of examples. And I encourage you to go back and read these. First of all, Leviticus chapter 10, verses 1-3.

“Now Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire on them and added incense. And they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to His command.”

Now this is the illustration that there is such a thing as unacceptable worship. And I encourage pastors to really study the doctrine of Biblical worship because there are certain kinds of worship that are unacceptable. Just because we like it doesn’t mean that it’s acceptable. Oftentimes we choose worship to be that which we want it to be as opposed to what it should be biblically.

Go back and read Leviticus 10:1-3. *Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense. And they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to His command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.*

“Then Moses said to Aaron, ‘This is what the LORD spoke of when He said, ‘Among those who approach Me I will show Myself holy; in the sight of all the peoples I will be honored.’” Aaron remained silent.”

“Fearing God” Lesson #2

Notice, Aaron couldn't say anything. And what God basically said was, “Your sons offered unacceptable worship.” Do we understand what acceptable worship is? We have a tendency to think it's whatever I offer. I think we need to give a better illustration of understanding what worship is based upon what the Scripture says.

A couple of other examples I would give you for your consideration. Look at 1 Samuel chapter 2. Unacceptable worship. Eli's sons were slain because they lacked fear in worship. Go back and read 1 Samuel chapter 2. Another example would be 1 Chronicles chapter 13, verses 9 and 10.

Transcriber's Note: 1 Chronicles 13:9-10, NKJV. *“And when they came to Chidon's threshing floor, Uzza put out his hand to hold the ark, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzza, and He struck him because he put his hand to the ark; and he died there before God.”*

Bruce: This is the transporting and the carrying of the ark of the covenant. And it was being carried by the priests and it came off its rockers and was about ready to fall into the mud. And a man named Uzza touched the ark and was instantly killed. In God's eyes the man who touched it was more polluted than the mud.

My point of all these illustrations, friends, is not that I'm saying that God is going to strike us dead; that's not what I'm saying. All I'm saying is that there is such a thing as acceptable worship. And do we really understand what that is? It's based upon the name of God and all His attributes and glory.

And the last illustration of what I would give you as unacceptable worship would be Acts chapter 5. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the church elders. And they were slain because they lied about how they handled their wealth and their money.

Now again I'm not saying that God is going to strike us dead. Please understand what I'm not saying. All I'm trying to do is give you illustrations of the fact that worship needs to be taken seriously because God is present there; Christ is present there. And there is such a thing as unacceptable worship. May God give us the grace to discern the difference between the two so we can find out how God can be honored in our worship services.

Now I would conclude with this. Next to God's nature and next to God's name, the institution of corporate worship is the most dreadful thing under heaven, dreadful meaning “full of awe.” Next to His name and His nature, instituted worship is the most awful thing under heaven, because His name is in all of the ordinances, His eyes are upon the worshipers, and His wrath and judgment are upon those who worship Him without fear.

We need to take our worship very seriously. Now I'm not saying we don't. All I'm saying is that there is such a thing as unacceptable worship, and we need to know the difference. It's all based upon the fact that God's name needs to be feared because God's name is the development and focus of our worship. Again fearing God is a daily activity, highly individualized. And it's based upon the fact that we have a reverence for, an awe of, and a holy trembling before God. And that's something that should be a motivation for us in our lives to be obedient and to please Him. May God be pleased to direct us to worship Him correctly in order that we might see His glory. Amen.

“Fearing God” Lesson #2

Well, I hope that wasn't too disjointed. I have all kinds of papers in front of me, so it's hard for me sometimes to find my place. But thank you for bearing with me. Any comments or questions, please? Can I entertain or explain something differently?

Group Member: When you gave the examples of the definition of the Lord, in reading the Bible I see the word Lord used towards different people. How can you determine the difference or who it's directed towards?

Bruce: You have to look at the context. Ask yourself the question. To whom is he speaking? What is the context of what he is speaking about? And we have to discern it through the context of the passage in which it is used. Sometimes the word *lord* can mean an earthly master. So we have to examine the context and how it's used. Anyone else, please?

Don Maurer: Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, Don?

Don: It's interesting that you talked about God's name being awful, full of awe, because in our culture awful means bad. But that's not how the Puritans meant it. It's like you said, full of awe. And the term *awesome* is not adequate to describe God's name and attributes. We say, "That dessert was awesome," or "My girlfriend is awesome." I think *awful* is a better term. It conveys the nature of God.

Bruce: Well said, Don; thank you. Any other comments?

Nancy: Bruce, it's Nancy. I would just really thank you for this series right now at this very time. There are just so many things that are awful. And yet we need to keep our eyes focused on the One for whom we have reverence and for whom we are filled with awe. And this is just an amazing series, and I really want to thank you right now at this time.

Bruce: Well, thank you very much; much appreciated. Anyone else, please?

Well if not, let's pray, please. Gracious heavenly Father, we thank You for Your word. We thank You that we can understand Your word because we get to know the Person and work of Christ. We thank You that You speak to us now not by the patriarchs or by the prophets, but you speak to us very clearly through Your word. And Father, we just pray that Your word would deeply embed us, that Your word would penetrate our hearts and our minds and create a gracious spirit in us with a desire to be obedient to please Your name. We just ask this in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen.

Group: Amen.

Bruce: Thanks, folks, for putting up with all my limitations; I appreciate it.

Group: Thank you, Bruce.