

The Scandalous Notion of the Fear of the Lord

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[0 : 00] Father, we confess before you that we like to divide the world up between good people and bad people. And so we're confused about ourselves and confused about people and confused about your word.

And we confess before you, Father, that some of the things that you want to give us in your word are things that we have absolutely no interest in. And so either, Father, we ignore these things or, Father, we just try to make them look like it's things we already want.

Father, we give you thanks and praise that you know how confused we are and still you love us and still you sent your son Jesus to die upon the cross to redeem us. We ask, Father, that you would gently but deeply and powerfully pour out your Holy Spirit upon us this morning as we open your word and think about your word.

We ask, Father, that Jesus would be present amongst us to open our minds to understand the scriptures. As your Holy Spirit falls upon us, may our hearts burn within us as your son opens your word to each one of us and to us as a congregation.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your son and our savior. Amen. Please be seated. Amen. So I was saying to Daniel before the service that I've had a hard time with this sermon this week.

[1 : 29] And part of the reason I've had a hard time with this sermon, apart from the normal reasons I have hard times with sermons, is that the Bible here, the text that I'm going to preach on today, is something that basically nobody wants.

You know, if you listen to Christian radio, it doesn't matter if you're in Vancouver, if you're Sirius Radio or different parts of the country, it seems as if the church is addicted to encouragement. They like to say things in their advertisements of, come to this radio station, it's a family radio station, it's a place of encouragement, and it's safe. And you never hear anybody saying, come and listen to this radio station because we're square, or come listen to this radio station because we'll teach you and help you to fear God.

And in fact, if you just think about it for a second, if we were to advertise with a big sign, you know, hoping to track people, and the sign said, come to us and we'll help you be square, that probably wouldn't be, I mean, people might actually come out of curiosity about why you would have such an odd sermon title, but it's not actually much of a draw today, just as it would not be much of a draw to say, come here and help to know how to fear the Lord.

And the Bible passage today is going to talk about the virtue of being square. At the 8 o'clock service this morning, there's just eight of us gathered, 1662 Book of Common Prayer service, quiet, meditative service, I love doing it.

[2 : 58] And by coincidence this week, it was a bit of an older crowd. I think everybody there was older than me. And I said to them, you folks, some of you folks are old enough to remember when to say something was square was a compliment.

But one of the things I could suggest is that some of you folks who are younger might ask some of us who are a bit older, older than me, by the way, were you square when you were young? Or do you remember when actually to say that something was square was a good thing? But it's hard to believe now. Our culture's changed so much that that would hardly ever be a compliment to say that somebody's a real square.

They're a square person. And that's what the Bible's going to talk about. It's going to encourage us about being square. It's going to talk about the fear of the Lord. And so I've been having a hard time thinking how I could get us to even want to be interested in a text like this.

That's maybe why I prayed so hard that the Father would pour out his Holy Spirit upon us. But let's look at the Bible and see how it is that it encourages us to be square. So if you have your Bibles,

Proverbs chapter 1, verse 1 to 7.

[4 : 02] That's what we're looking at today. We're beginning a series of sermons that will go through to Labor Day inclusive. Ancient Book of Proverbs, Ancient Wisdom for a Postmodern World.

And so it's my honor to sort of give you the opening to the book, the gateway to the book, the introduction to the book, so that when you read it, you won't read it with amnesia and hopefully you have some type of skill in understanding how to read and understand the book of Proverbs.

So Proverbs chapter 1, verse 1. And here's how it goes. The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel. Now, I'm going to do a really geeky thing here.

Proverbs, you know, it's a bit of a grammar moment. So I know as soon as I said a grammar moment, I've lost 90% of the crowd and 10% of you, your ears picked up because you thought, wow, I love grammar moments.

And we all know who's who. So, but there's a grammar moment here. And the book of Proverbs begins actually in a really geeky, technical, structured way that's not as obvious in the English.

[5 : 07] That verse 1 is a really, it gives you the, it tells you what type of book you're going to read. It's going to be a book full of Proverbs. And it tells you, it actually, in a very sly way in the original language, it makes a bit of a pun because in Hebrew, Proverbs and Solomon sound very, very similar.

And then it just, to give you a bit of a context, it helps you to say, it says, it's going to be a book of Proverbs. It's put together by Solomon. And Solomon is the king of Israel and the son of David.

And for a person reading it, they should be thinking, okay, this is going to be then something that implies the covenant and something that implies the coming of a Messiah someday.

In other words, it implies that the readers are going to have thought of Genesis and Exodus and Leviticus and Numbers and promises made to David that there would be a great David's greater son will someday come to redeem.

And that's all put together just in a tiny number of words. And then in the very, very next verse, if we were doing it nowadays, if we had a modern editor, if it was like being done by a newspaper, there'd be a big word in capital with maybe underlined, the purpose of this book.

[6 : 19] And then the first line of verse two would be what's underneath it. In the original language, that's what the writer has done. In these two know wisdom and understanding, in those five words, is the writer gives the purpose of the entire book.

Anything you read later on, if you want to know why he's writing it, you just go back to verse 2a and it'll tell you why he wrote the book. Why did he write the book? To know wisdom and instruction.

In fact, actually, before we go any further, any further in my reading, Andrew, could you put up the scripture passages? The first, verse 2a. One of the things I'm going to do today is, I really only have a two-point sermon.

I'm going to have like a variety of things that go up on the screen, but really, I only have a two-point sermon. And the first point is verse 2a, and the second point, which I'll explain later on why it's important, is verse 7.

And so I'm going to have you keep reading them points over and over and over. And by the end of the service, if nothing else, you'll have partially memorized the purpose of the book and sort of the main way to wonder how to read the book.

[7 : 25] And so could you just read this with me? To know wisdom and instruction. I caught you by surprise. Could you read it with me again? To know wisdom and instruction.

And Andrew, could you put up verse 7 and read it, and we'll all read it together? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Fools despise wisdom and instruction. Andrew, could you put 2a back up again?

Okay. So here's this odd verse, to know wisdom and instruction. And in English, it looks like, well, that's pretty simple. But the first thing to understand about the word know is that it doesn't mean something like, know what LeBron James basketball statistics were this year, or know how many goals Sidney Crosby scored in his rookie season, or know the first five people drafted in the NHL draft the other day.

It doesn't mean that type of knowledge. Although it doesn't deny it, but it has a far bigger understanding of knowledge. It's saying, the word to know is to say, it's talking about experiential knowledge.

And it's talking about relational knowledge. And it's talking about, which goes along with experiential and relational, it's talking about practical knowledge. So it's not talking about the type of knowledge that will allow you to win trivial pursuit.

[8 : 48] I don't know if people still play that game. It's not talking about that type of knowledge. It said, the purpose of the book is if you read the book of Proverbs, and you study it and you pray the book, what I hope you happen, I've written the entire book, I've put the whole book together, with the purpose that you will have an experiential, relational knowledge of wisdom and instruction.

That's why I've written the book. And what does the word wisdom mean? Well, wisdom translated in English here is a pretty good word, and we have a bit of an idea about it. But it also has some deeper meanings in what the writer is trying to get at.

It includes skill. Skill in living a good and moral life that will end up being fruitful.

That's at the heart of this word wisdom. So he wants you to know, have an experiential, relational knowledge, and he wants you to have, the author and the editor and how the book was put together, he wants you to end up being able, by reading the Proverbs, to end up having a life that's characterized by wisdom, which is characterized by a skill in living your life in a good way, living a good life that's fruitful.

That's what he's trying to get across with wisdom. And then the final thing is, to know wisdom and instruction. So he's written the book, so you have an experiential, relational knowledge of the skills required to live a life which is fruitful and good.

[10 : 21] And also for this word instruction. And instruction's a pretty good word. If you have different translations of the Bible, it's translated different ways because it's sort of a very rich word in the original language. And sometimes some of your versions might say discipline.

And that's a little bit about what it is. What it isn't, just so you have a relief, about a year ago, I think this was the last time my wife and I bought anything from Ikea. We were trying to get our house ready for a sale about a year ago.

And so we tried to buy an Ikea bed, one of those beds that have drawers underneath the bed because we thought it would help to deal with some organizing issues. And so we bought this bed from Ikea.

And of course, Ikea has all these instructions. And we both labored at this for an hour. And after an hour, we completely and utterly gave up. Either the instructions were wrong or the pieces were wrong or something, but it was completely and utterly impossible to follow the instructions and put the Ikea bed together.

In fact, we actually weren't able, we just gave up, we were going to return it, but you couldn't even get the stupid pieces back in the box the way that it originally come from Ikea. So it meant that eventually the box is sort of like this with lots of tape around it to try to scrunch everything in and we returned it to Ikea and they were very good and gave us our money back.

[11 : 38] But it's not talking about instructions like this. It's talking about something more. It's talking about instructions. It's talking about what we need to know to have the habits or the discipline of a skilled and moral life.

And it's also talking about training. Training. And let's be honest, for most of us, training is what is missing in the Christian life, which is one of the reasons the book of Proverbs is so important.

I'll give you an example because this is what happens to us most weeks. You know, let's say, we're going to pray more or something like that or you're going to love God more. And I try to do my best to preach that and to make it clear and to exhort you and try to get you all fired up.

And I'm not very good at it. One of the wonderful things about Daniel Gilman is that he's way better than me at exhorting people. Okay, so maybe I would get you all primed and then Daniel would come up and he'd top it and we'd all feel like we're going to go out there and love God and that will maybe, nothing wrong with Daniel or me, it would maybe last half an hour or an hour and then we're back to where we were before.

Would be a little bit like if I said, we're all going to go out as soon as the service is over, we're going to go out, we're going to run 10 kilometers, we're all going to do it together, we're going to do it in less than 50 minutes. Are you with me?

[12 : 51] Are you with me? Are you with me? Because I'm trying to channel my inner, you know, exhorter, my football coach, soccer coach and maybe I'm really good at it and you get all fired up. Yes, we're going to go out there, we're going to run 10 kilometers, we're going to do it in less than 50 minutes.

And I don't want to insult you but maybe nobody here in the room could do it, right? No matter how much I exhort it. And in fact, many of you are so hip, not square, that you wouldn't even bother going out the door because no amount of exhorting from the stage would make you even want to try to run 10 kilometers today in under 50 minutes, right?

Just wouldn't happen. But often with spiritual things, and this is probably one of the reasons why so many people prefer bars to churches because they just think, oh, they're just going to lay a whole pile of things on me, I get all fired up, all excited, then I go out and I fall on my face like this.

But you know, if I was to say, you know what, and maybe my exhorting would be really good, I'd say, you know what, I think it's really possible that this time next year on Canada Day, you know, I think almost all of us here in the room could do 10 kilometers in 60 minutes.

And we make a commitment that we're going to meet together every day, we're going to, you know, and we get the doctor's checkups and some of us start walking, some run, and we encourage each other and we train, we break down what would be required so that in a year's time we could do 10 kilometers in 60 minutes.

[14:20] Unless, you know, it might be very possible that 95% of the room could do that. You see, the difference is training. Training. And that's, that's this instruction word here.

That's this instruction word. That's at the heart of it. It's connected to it. You can go on and read it later on. There's a wonderful passage in 1 John chapter 4 verse 10.

1 John chapter 4 verse 10. And in it, John says, how can you say that you love God whom you can't see but you don't love your brother or sister who's beside you who you can see?

Like, how is it that you think you can love, oh, I love you God, I love you God, I love you God, and then you go out the door and you, you know, the person doesn't let you in in the car and you yell and swear at them and then your wife or your boyfriend or your best friend doesn't respect you and you're filled with resentment and here you've gone from, oh, I love you, I love you, I love you, to not, and that's what 1 John chapter 4 verse 10 says and it's very true psychologically, isn't it?

It's that, those of us who go to church should probably meditate upon that a lot more and in a sense then what the book of Proverbs is saying is we're going to help you with your training and so what we're going to do, we're going to have Proverbs about, okay, how does a parent love the little, how does a parent love his kid?

[15:44] How do a husband and wife talk to each other? How do you relate with your boss? How do you, how do you relate to the government? How do you, how do you speak the truth to another person?

Like, let's give you little examples, Proverbs that can be thought-provoking because the book of Proverbs isn't about laws and rules, it's about insights that help us to train so that we will have a skilled way of living life that's good and bears fruit and that's the purpose of the book.

Want to say it with me again? To know wisdom and instruction. I surprised you, we'll say it again.

To know wisdom and instruction. Verse 7, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

Fools despise wisdom and instruction. You go back and so I put my first point up, Andrew, my first point and we're gonna, I'm gonna look through, I'm gonna explain something else to you but just to give you a bit of a sense.

So remember, if you get, you know, these are long points. Some of you say, good grief, George, these are really, really long points. My point is verse 2 and my point, 2a and my point is verse 7.

You memorize those, those are the points.

[17:03] These are just ways that hopefully, and if later on they're on the computer, you can look them up on our webpage. Maybe it'll help you understand a little bit about what verse 2a means and this is a way to help us understand what verse 2a means, to sort of bring it out a bit.

The Lord wants me to have an experiential, relational knowledge of the training, skills, and insight needed to lead a good and fruitful life in the world that the Lord has made and sustained.

That's, that's, God is showing the desire of his heart for you and me in this book. That's what verse 2a is trying to communicate.

The Lord wants me to have an experiential, relational knowledge of the training and skills and insight needed to lead a good and fruitful life in the world that the Lord has made and sustained.

And so the way the book is, remember I said there's a bit of a geeky moment? So that verse 1 is the geeky moment, the title, and it gives you a bit of a clue about how to understand that we need to understand the Messiah and the covenant and the law.

[18 : 12] And verse 2a is to know wisdom and instruction. That's the main purpose. And then he teases it out by giving you a couple of other purpose statements to try to unpack that a little bit before we get into the book.

So if you have your Bible still and so in verse 2b, so 2a says to know wisdom and instruction and then it says to understand words of insight. In other words, what we're going to do is I'm going to write put together these are words of insight.

They help you to have a bit of an insight about what's going on with life and about yourself and how people are like and that's what's going to happen as I try to help you to know wisdom and instruction.

And verse 3, I want to help you to receive instruction in wise dealing in righteousness, justice, and being a square, which is really what equity means here.

In other words, part of the other purpose, okay, so what does to know wisdom and instruction mean? Well, it's going to also involve that I'm going to give you some instruction, training, in how to deal wisely with people. And what that will mean is that as you listen to these Proverbs, as the Proverbs get into your mind and into your heart and into your will and they're before your eyes, what will happen is that you're going to have wise, a skilled way of living that's good.

[19 : 27] And what that means is that you're going to live a good life, a righteous life. And the word righteous there, I mean, they still have it. I don't know quite how, I think the NRC has something like this, but there's somewhere in Canada that has an official kilo or whatever.

Back in the old days, there would have been maybe the king had the official weights. And if you came to a merchant, in a sense, the hope would be that the merchant's weights would be the same as the king's weights.

If you put them on a scale, they'd be the same. They'd be righteous. It matches with the official standard. And here the idea is that there is a God who's created and sustained all things and that there's a way of living that matches the standard, God.

And just means justice, that what characterizes our life is that we are very fair, that as you read, as you come to the end of the book of Proverbs, you will not grow in cynicism and you will not grow in despair, but you will grow in a sense of how to treat people justly.

Justice will matter to you more by the end of Proverbs than it will when you begin the book. And then there's this word square. You know, it used to be that you could say, what I want are three square meals a day.

[20 : 41] It might be that after you've gone to make a deal with somebody and you come back and you talk to your friend, your dad, or your mom, or your wife, or your husband about it, you say, it's a square deal. You know, you go and there's somebody who's going to give you some help and there was a time when you would have said, it's a square guy.

I'm sure we can count on it. That when you maybe went away to travel and you arrived where you wanted to travel, what you wanted to do is you wanted to be squared away. They were all compliments.

They were all compliments. Now we want to be hip and cool and not square. It's a big cultural shift, actually, if you think about it, to lose that word square.

And what it means is that it's just, it's fair, it's dependable, it's honest, it's efficient, it's filling, it's what I need, it's, that's, that's what the word equity is.

You read the book of Proverbs, by the time you're finished, you will be a square. That'll sell, right? I should have a Twitter account. By the time you finish reading the book of Proverbs, you will be a square.

[21 : 48] And, and that's what it's trying to communicate. And then in verse four, this is really important, to give prudence to the simple knowledge of discretion and knowledge and discretion to the youth. Prudence here, it's a very, very good word.

But what it means is that, what it means is that you will be, you'll be crafty.

You will be, it's the opposite of gullible. It's the opposite of gullible. That, but it's, in other words, it means that you will be shrewd about life.

But you will be shrewd about life in a way that isn't cynical. You will be shrewd about life that doesn't feed your despair. You will be shrewd about life in a way that does not make you feel superior to other people.

But if you read the book of Proverbs, by the end, you will be less gullible than when you began. You will have a type of shrewdness about life that, you know what, if that salesman says, oh, I'm losing my shirt on this deal, I'm losing everything on this deal, if I tell the manager about this deal, she's going to stop the deal, he's probably lying.

[23 : 04] Like, I mean, that's how it is really, right? And so the end of this book, the book will help us to be shrewd about life without being cynical. And the simple here in this particular, in all the way through the book of Proverbs, the word simple is never a compliment.

It means naive. It means gullible. It means easily led and easily misled until you become wise. Verse 5, let the wise hear and increase in learning and the one who understands obtain guidance to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles.

So, put up, Andrew, could you put up verse 2a again? Want to say it with me, folks? What's the book all about? To know wisdom and instruction.

And we'll get to this in a moment. What's the key to understanding every proverb? Verse 7, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

For a variety of reasons, I was just able to watch Interstellar for the first time last night and it's a very, very good movie. and it would be a really interesting movie to have, you know, some discussions around actually.

[24 : 20] But one of the things which was very, very interesting about the book Interstellar is it talks a lot about our fear of death. It talks a lot about our fear of extinction. It talks a lot about the fear of the planet just going south in terms of ecological disasters that could lead to the death of the human race and hence the fears of extinction.

yet at the same time, you know, our fear of death and our fear of extinction and what it leads us to do but at the same time, it encourages lying and encourages murder.

I don't think I've given any spoiler alerts for those of you who haven't seen the movie but it's a very, very, you know, it's a very, very puzzling thing sort of maybe reflected upon in the movie, maybe unreflected upon the movie that, you know, our fear of death and our fear of extinction and what it will lead us to try to do and what it leads us to try to accomplish it, it seems almost in the book, the movie, sort of the movie is a bit ambiguous about it but it leads to murder or attempted murder and lying and lying appearing to be a wise type of thing and it's a very, very curious thing about how these very powerful fears that human beings have and we might not think we have a fear of death and what we would do to stay alive but the movie tries to communicate what would happen to many of us if that actually became not an abstract thing but a real thing and an imminent thing and what we might try to do to survive and so in light of that can you put up 2A again

Andrew want to say that with me to know wisdom and instruction that's the purpose of the book and what's going to be the key in terms of understanding the book let's say it the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge fools despise wisdom and instruction and what we see is that in our church culture we have a terrible fear of talking about the fear of the Lord it's a profoundly unpopular topic in our culture in fact for many people it would be even to be brought up it would be a sign of one of the things which is fundamentally wrong about the Christian faith but one of the things is if you actually read the Old Testament you see that you can't read very far in the Old Testament where the fear of the Lord isn't actually presented as a positive thing that we should pray for that we should desire and many

Christians will just quote 1 John chapter 4 a perfect love casts out fear and therefore that Christians shouldn't be characterized by the fear of the Lord but they should be characterized by perfect love but apart from whatever that verse means C.S. Lewis says all sorts of things cast out the fear of the Lord alcohol sex gambling money but you can't read the New Testament do a word search and you'll see that in the New Testament as well the fear of the Lord is considered a positive thing in the book of Acts one of the things that characterizes the growth of the church is at the same time as the church is growing by leaps and bounds it's also growing in the fear of the Lord that the New Testament has this idea here as a positive thing yet as I said earlier so called you know sorry I shouldn't have said that Christian radio would never advertise this as a selling point it would never maybe I'm wrong maybe there's some places in Mississippi or Arkansas or something like that that advertise we're not like those other Christian radio stations come here to listen to the fear of the

[28 : 26] Lord maybe that happens there I just haven't been in Mississippi or Arkansas or someplace like that or North Dakota or something and maybe there's some places on the prairies or some place that us sophisticated people in Ottawa would think is the backwoods fly over country

but you know there's a real culture gap between passages like this and the way the book of Proverbs is structured is verse 1 gives you the title verse 2 gives you the purpose and verse 7 here is the key to understanding every proverb that's how it's set up at a literary structure Andrew could you put up my second point the second point is that the fear of the Lord is the first steps the foundation the north star or true north and the ever present factor in living a good and fruitful life in the world that the

Lord has made and sustains that's the claim of the book of Proverbs that's the claim of the book of Proverbs that whether we're going to be reading later on if you're going to be reading a proverb about you know husbands and wives or but you know moms and dads and their children or how to deal with a boss or how to deal with how to be a witness or how to deal with messengers or how to be prudent or how to help the poor or any of the different Proverbs at a literary level it's assuming that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge fools despise wisdom and instruction that that's to be that is if we understand this then this is like the very first step of entering into an experiential relational knowledge that involves skills that this is not only a first step but it's the foundation for everything else that we do it's not only that but you know maybe some of you have heard that one of the things that like having virtue or values is it helps you understand where true north is so that you can navigate the complexity of life and the book of Proverbs is saying that the fear of the

Lord is the beginning of knowledge fools despise wisdom and instruction that that's that type of true north principle that helps us to understand how to read the different Proverbs and that as well as that that verse 7 is it is a ever present factor in every one of the Proverbs so that we can live a good and fruitful life in the world that the Lord has made so what does it mean?

Well first of all some of your translations have probably translated fearing the Lord but in the original language it's two nouns the fear of the Lord it's two nouns put together in the verb in the sentence is that is is sorry another grammar moment but that the verb is the is not the not that it's not fearing and the word the fear of the Lord first of all the word Lord is very significant and you'll notice in my points that I put them all in caps and I did that in purpose I know it's shouting nowadays but it's it's the in the original language it's the great I am it is from Exodus 3 the God of the covenant I am that I am has sent you perfect being it is the God of the covenant it is the God who desires to call to himself a people to be in relationship with it's not the other words for God that the Old Testament has English really only has one word for God but Hebrew had several words for God it's not the abstract word for

God it's not a deist word for God of a God who is absent and distant and far off it's not the word for God that that emphasizes just his power or his standing in judgment or sovereign over us it is the intimate it's both an exalted mysterious description of God but it's an intimate the intimate covenant name for God in the Old Testament and and the word fear has a range of meaning and and it captures a little bit about what's going on here in this this word the fear of the Lord as a virtue as a positive thing is something that people if they were wise will want to enter into and and the range of meaning is on one hand it does mean abstract abject terror that's one end of the range of meanings but it also means respect and it means reverence and it means a willingness to listen and to submit and it means gobsmacked jaw dropping close intimate adoration and that includes that whole range of meaning the type of being in the presence of the good the true and the beautiful that just cause your jaw to hit the ground either your hands to go to your side or your hands to go like this and to be caught up in complete and utter loving adoration and the Hebrew word for fear captures that whole range and at the very very heart of this idea is that at the heart of the fear of the Lord is a profound experiential relational knowledge of the difference between you and God which we're always confusing like we we might not think about it much but we one one hand we see it all the time we we see a boss and we're worried about our boss because she thinks like she acts like she's God right we have a kid in our family or a husband or a wife and they act like they're God we we have it you know it might be that there's a you know a a a dad who I just finished reading a John Grisham novel Grey Mountain and the the heroine of the novel one of the things which she wrestles with apart from wrestling with the the drama of the story is that her dad was so completely and utterly consumed with himself and with his career he was so consumed with that that it was as if he ignored his wife and family his wife and daughter and that they were just in a sense sucked up in his all-consuming concern with money and his own career in other words he'd lost a clear sense of the distinction between him and his wife and the distinction between him and his daughter and

and the need to relate to them not as just some little part of himself which is all part of his huge process to become rich and and to become powerful but that there there is a place where he begins and ends and the other person is a real person who has a beginning and end and real boundaries and and the daughter has real boundaries and and and we know that in families and in marriages and in schools and in workplaces and in governments when you have a person who starts to treat other people as if they almost don't exist they're just an epiphanomenon just they're just something that can get sucked up in their own project that those are completely and utterly destructive and the Bible says that that's the common human problem with every single human being in the relationship with God that we are always blurring the distinctions between ourselves and God that we lose sight of where we begin and end and hence we don't even really know ourselves and we lose sight of where God begins and ends and we lose sight of the differences between the two of the things it's one of the reasons why one of the great insights of the

[36 : 08] Bible is that the more we know God the more we know ourselves because the more we know how we are different from God and where we in fact begin and end and the fear of the Lord is all about coming into a relational experiential novel not knowledge of the living God who desires to be in a covenant relationship with us to be our sovereign in our king our great deliverer our great delight our great protector and it's called it's been entering into a relationship with him where as we deepen in this relationship of the fear of the Lord we will come to an ever greater knowledge of who we are who I am and where I begin and end and where God is and how God is different and that difference is good and that difference sometimes will make me want to fall on my face in repentance for the things that I have done that are wrong and sometimes I will want to stand with jaw dropping God's God's smacked awe and wonder at the beauty of God that the cry of our heart that the end of it the cry of my heart will be that my soul desire will be to dwell in the house of the Lord to behold his beauty it's all encapsured in this phrase the fear of the Lord it's all encapsured in this phrase the fear of the Lord which is why to know Jesus doesn't mean that you stop fearing the Lord could you put it up to a and to put up to a gain for me Andrew remember I just really have two points let's say this together to know wisdom and instruction that's what the book of Proverbs is about say it with me again to know wisdom and instruction and what's going to help us understand every

Proverbs verse 7 the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge fools despise wisdom and instruction now some of you might say okay George are you saying that only Christians only Christians are going to live a good life and are going to be wise and have a skill of living oh that's what you're saying you're on drugs have you seen the lives of lots of Christians George be honest aren't there lots of Christians if you had a choice between having some of your non-Christian neighbors or a Christian as your neighbor you'd pick the non-Christian be honest George are you saying that this is what the book of Proverbs says that only Christians are wise isn't that what sort of this text is implying that this whole fear of the Lord thing that you just talked about and it's connected to wisdom and instruction and knowledge are you saying that George well there are many

Christians who talk and act like that and what happens is we end up having a religious or spiritual reading of the text not a reading of the text that God intends Andrew could you put up my third point the Bible teaches that every human being is divided and at war within themselves you see a religious or a spiritual person wants to take a text like this and divide the world and on one hand there is a division here this is one of the many many places in the Bible that says at the end of the end of the end we either end up in heaven by grace or we end up in not heaven by our own deserving and it's one of many many texts that say at the end of the day there's only two paths but if we read this text to think that it divides congregations that it divides churches that it divides us from our neighbors then we are reading it in a in a way that does not fear the Lord ironically the line between the fear of the Lord and fools does not separate people it separates me and it separates you it goes right down the center of who you and I are every human being is at war and divided amongst themselves this text is for self-awareness not to divide nations and congregations and denominations and political parties and individual people it describes the division and the battleground of every human being say 2a again put up Andrew let's say it to know wisdom and instruction that's the purpose of the book and and what's going to help us understand that verse 7 the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge fools despise wisdom and instruction you see the problem you know here's the thing the very common belief in our culture is that what we just need is

that we just need to know what has to be done and then things will be fine but the fact is that works for some of us sometimes a little bit for but for a lot of us it just doesn't work you know maybe it works for us all right with money but it doesn't work with diet or maybe it works all right with us for relations but it doesn't work with us for money or you know a whole range of things and and one of the things that happens is that you know many many people is so we continue though to be almost addicted to this idea that all we need is more information and once we have the information we can do the things that we're supposed to do yet empirical observation will tell us that that never happens and that it rarely happens that it never happens in any one person all of the time and and then the the other thing that we start to do in our culture is that we start to try to we you know we we don't want to acknowledge that there's this great division that goes right down the center of who we are so we want to say that we're a good person that we're really a good person and when we we want to emphasize that we're a good person then it's almost as if some other person does those bad things it wasn't me I'm a good person I wasn't the one who swore at that person called them names and slandered and gossiped about them I'm a good person couldn't really have been me and then one of the things that that happens in our relationships is we don't really have we can't really apologize because how can a good person apologize for what they really didn't do which was wrong and there's a way of explaining all the bad things we do and that's what goes on in our culture because there's this inability to accept that verse 7 describes something that goes right down the center of us this is a very very long point and I don't expect

you to write you know what and if you want to write it down you can you can look at it you can look at it later but and remember I'm writing this long talking thing down because I just want to get the idea out for you but my two points this morning are 2a in verse 7 and if you go back and you know those verses all I'm trying to do here with this verse 7 is try to help you to understand what verse 7 is saying to us Andrew if you could put up my exceptionally long point for because of the Lord's common grace every human being has some knowledge of and desire for the training skills and insight needed to live a good and fruitful life in the world that the Lord has made and sustains because of common grace because we're made in the image of God and when we fell and rebelled against God God did not remove his image from us it got bent but not removed and that's why people can be wise about money and some people who are very far from God can be very wise about relationships it's why some people who are very very far from God they can be absolutely spectacularly good neighbors because it's not the case that we live our lives in complete and utter defiance against these things most people there's some it's part of common grace that there's some desire for skills and wisdom and living well and living justly and being square however it is also true that by nature our fallen nature some part of every human being despises the training skills and insight needed to live in good and fruitful life in the world that the Lord has made and sustains see the richness of the Christian faith the richness of this proverb and some of you might be bothered by this word despises

Andrew could you put up verse 7 again let's read this together the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge fools despise wisdom and instruction you know I sent my sermon notes to Bishop Charlie and I said one of the things is about my two sermon points is that if people don't like them they can take it up with God and and I had to put in my explanation this word despise I don't want to let us off the hook sounds extreme doesn't it but here's the thing imagine that I came home and gave my or my wife gives me a gift and that'd be more likely because I'm more forgetful and so my wife gives me a gift and you know it's a book book that I want and I said well thank you for the book and then she you know she leaves and she's doing other things and then she comes back and over the next few days or weeks she sees that the book is just left on the couch well might bother her a little bit she knows

[46 : 04] I'm forgetful might not bother her very much but now let's say that unbeknownst to the press it's kept a secret from the world but Louise discovers that she actually is the owner of the Mona Lisa painting and she decides to exercise her right of ownership over the Mona Lisa painting and she has it taken out of the museum and one day she says George I haven't wanted to tell you that this it hasn't been released in the press but I this is the Mona Lisa I own it and I'm giving it to you as a gift and I'd say wow and I put on the couch three weeks later it's still on the couch the grandkids have come to visit every time the grandkids come to visit you know they're spilling things and spewing crackers and all that you know just little kids right they're not being mean they're being three-year-olds and two-year-olds and toddlers and Louise would say George despises that gift you see what it is so what if you think about it for a second if God is actually if the

true and living God is the creator of all things and sustains all things if he is actually speaking to us if he is actually in a sense providing the power of salvation for all who believe in the death of his son and we we just put it on the couch or we turn our back from it we think that's stupid or we think that's foolish then we're despising it it's the context of the greatness of the gift that reveals whether we are despising and that's why this is such a powerful verse to us so some of you might say okay George you know you said earlier that left to your own devices it's very very hard to follow advice so it's just book of

Proverbs just going to give me a whole pile of like George is it going to be like okay George you said that you know maybe most of us in the congregation if we waited if we tried really hard for a whole year at the end of the year we could do 10k in 60 minutes George there is no way that I'm ever going to do 10k in 60 minutes maybe when I was 20 years younger 30 years younger maybe if the television and the couch weren't as popular in my life or whatever it is or my health problem or my age or whatever it is never gonna George I'm just the Proverbs just going to give me a whole pile of other things that I can feel guilty about and that I just can't do and I just can't accomplish like is that all the book of Proverbs is going to be it's just you know it might be wise and it might it might really be good and I'm going to really try to read it and I'm going to really try to memorize it I'm really going to try to live it but is it just is it just advice put up put up verse 2 again let's say together again to know wisdom and instruction that's my first point what the book's all about purpose of the book second thing let's read it together the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge fools despise wisdom and instruction a couple months ago in my devotions it was as if God really had a passage from Isaiah jump out at me if you want to turn to it those of you have Bibles if you don't have Bibles you can listen to me while

I read it it's it's Isaiah chapter 11 and in fact actually it's been a part of my prayer life actually ever since I sort of stumbled upon it at the beginning of April and not just stumbled upon it because I'd read it before but it really spoke to me in some way and and so it's part of my every day I actually try to prayerfully meditate upon part of this verse because it really struck me and and it's it's a passage in Isaiah that talks about the Messiah who's going to come this is how it goes there shall come forth verse 1 there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him the spirit of wisdom and understanding the spirit of counsel and might the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord and his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord and that just jumped out me Jesus's delight was in the fear of the Lord and his delight could be in the fear of the Lord my delight could be in the fear of the Lord and so I have been praying every day Lord take my heart so my soul desire is to delight in the fear of the Lord Lord take my heart so my soul desire is to delight in the fear of the Lord and if you could put up the fifth point it is because by nature I cannot fully know the fear of the

Lord that I need a Savior I'm divided I'm at war within myself I need a Savior I don't keep instructions very well not well enough it is because Jesus Christ delighted in the fear of the Lord that he died for me and by grace he will walk with me into a skilled trained insightful fear of the Lord you see it's not only that Jesus paid the penalty of the fact that I am divided and that I don't fear the Lord and that there's many ways that I really mess up it's it that it's that's important deeply deeply important that because of that Jesus dies on the cross to pay for the price of my sins the price of my incompleteness but I'm also clothed with his righteousness in a sense I am clothed with his perfect delighting in the fear of the Lord I don't have to accomplish this completely and utterly by myself to measure up before he will receive me I am clothed in the

Lord's delighting in the fear of the Lord that's what clothes me when I come on to a to a faith in Jesus and it means that I can pour out my heart to Jesus and say Jesus help me to what you delighted in the fear of the Lord and and you you died for me and you love me and you care for me so Jesus please walk with me help me pour out your Holy Spirit upon me help me to delight in the fear of the Lord just as you have delighted in the fear of the Lord that's that's the promise of the scripture it's a promise of the scripture it's why the book of Proverbs when we read it we we don't have to just read it thinking that it's going to be completely and utterly up to us to accomplish it but as we read this we can say oh Lord that's not the way I deal with my kids or Lord that's not the way I deal with my boss or Lord that's not the way I deal with my employees or Lord that's not the way I deal with my tongue and and and on one hand because of the fear of the Lord we can our conscience can be stricken that we need to repent but at the same time we can thank Jesus that he's paid for the price of that we can we can thank him that we're clothed with his delighting in the

fear of the Lord and we can pour out our heart to Jesus that this proverb would become real in us that it would be part of our training in the fear of the Lord it's the promise of the gospel it's the promises we read the book of Proverbs Andrew could let's put up to verse 2 again we'll say it one more time 2a first point what's the book all about friends to know wisdom and instruction and what's going to help us read every proverb all the way through the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge fools despise wisdom and instruction just as we're leaving three things we can pray the first thing is I was really convicted by this I have to pray Lord help me to know the ways that I am a fool not be cynical not filled with despair in the comfort of who Jesus is and what he's done for me I can pray Lord help me to know the ways that I am a fool and second thing if you could put it up Andrew I can pray this Lord I am divided and at war within myself please be my Savior and my Lord so that I will be free and whole in you it's it can be profoundly freeing to not have to put up a front but we can say to God Lord I am so divided some days I want to be I'm wishing like I'm imagining that I'm LeBron James and then I'm imagining that I'm like Mother Teresa and then I'm imagining like I'm Billy Graham and then I'm imagining like I'm John Calvin and then I'm imagining like Bill Gates and then I'm imagining you know maybe I'm the only one who goes through completely and utterly unbelievably stupid combinations and

[54 : 50] I'm divided within myself and now I've just confessed it before all of you but I suspect it's a more common more common problem than we all are willing to acknowledge because of Jesus because of the fear of the Lord because of the book of Proverbs I encourage you to consider praying a prayer like that's also the prayer that you pray to enter into the Christian faith and to walk the Christian faith and finally if you could put up the final one I encourage you to consider praying a prayer like this Lord please fill me with your Holy Spirit and grant me to walk with Jesus and grow in the fear of the Lord that I'm going to ask you to stand right now and if the Holy Spirit has convicted you would you join with me in praying that prayer right now let's pray Lord please fill me with your Holy Spirit and grant me to walk with Jesus and grow in the fear of the Lord Father pour out your Holy Spirit upon us pour out your Holy Spirit upon us help us to read the book of

Proverbs help us Father to accept that you desire that we will know wisdom and instruction Father pour out your Holy Spirit upon us we thank you that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and we ask that you grant us a deep fear of the Lord and Father you know how much each one of us are fools and we despise wisdom and instruction we ask Father that you bring that to us make us aware of the ways that we are fools that I am a fool and Father as you convict me of my foolishness at the same time turn my eyes to Jesus who died for me who clothes me with his delight in the fear of the Lord that I might repent to you and love you and adore you and walk with Jesus all this we ask in the name of Jesus your Son and our Savior amen