

3 Steps to Becoming Wise

I had one high school teacher I didn't learn squat from. Granted, I was not a good student in those days because of poor study habits (that is, when I chose to study). I can't blame my teachers for my grades, but in my eyes, this one teacher was the exception.



I did not like him. I can give you multiple reasons why I thought he should not be teaching, but the bottom line is that I had no respect for him. I didn't think he could teach, and therefore, I learned nothing from him.

Can we learn anything from those we have no regard for?

Let's carry that to the nth degree. If we have no respect for God, no fear of Him, we will not learn anything from Him. That's tragic, too, because all wisdom and all knowledge flow from God. Unlike my one teacher whom I tried to blame for my lack of learning, we have no reason not to respect God and listen to Him. The all-powerful sovereign Lord over all is also good, just, merciful, and gracious to us.

Why would we *not* fear Him? Yet, in our sinful state, we repeatedly ignore God. We can put on a good show and try to impress others with our own wisdom, but when we disregard God, we're nothing more than fools.

"For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:21-22).

The wisdom literature of the Old Testament repeatedly tied wisdom to fear of God.

- "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Prov. 9:10).
- "The fear of the Lord is what wisdom teaches, and humility comes before honor" (Prov. 15:33).



When we come to the realization that God is God and we're not ... when we acknowledge that the all-powerful Creator of the universe could flatten us like a

bug hitting a windshield ... when we realize that God, in His mercy, does not give us what we deserve, but in His grace gives us what we do not deserve, we come to a place of reverent awe and submission before Him.

But how does a fear of God lead to wisdom?

When we possess a proper fear of God, we rightly understand who He is, and we submit ourselves to His lordship. Submitting to His lordship means obedience to His loving commands and guidance, which means we listen to Him. And when we listen to Him, we are drinking from the Fountain of wisdom: God Himself.

Gaining wisdom is as simple as 1-2-3.

1. **Fear the Lord.** This is not an abject terror of God, but a reverent recognition that He is far greater and far mightier. Fear of God is an all-consuming respect for God because of His greatness, justice, and holiness.
2. **Submit to Him.** The only valid response when we fear God is submission to Him, a joyful surrender to His lordship.
3. **Listen to Him.** Submission to the lordship of Christ carries with it a willingness to listen to Him, to learn from Him, and to obey Him in every way—and that is the wisest thing we could do. Living under His lordship makes us wise because we are obediently following the lead of the One who is the Source of wisdom.

Fear of the Lord dissipates all other fears. We may still face difficulties and hardships, but we need not fear them when we're walking with God. We see a good example of this in Mary, the mother of Jesus. When the angel Gabriel came to her with the announcement of her pregnancy and role as the mother of the Messiah, she was deeply troubled (Luke 1: 29). Yet as Gabriel explained further what would take place, her fear turned to trust.

"See, I am the Lord's servant," said Mary. "May it happen to me as you have said" (v. 38).

We may not understand what we are experiencing in a given moment. We may wonder, "God, why is this happening to me?" But we can trust. We can recognize that God is God, surrender our will and circumstances to Him, and trust Him to give us the wisdom needed in how to respond and how to move forward.

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