# Belief - Part 2

Fearing God

(Genesis 22:1-12)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. Today we’re on part two of our message series entitled “Belief” and we’re going to talk about those who believe in God, but don’t fear him. Those who take the doctrines, the teachings, the Bible verses they like but reject the rest, because they don’t really fear God. And you know, it’s really sad in our church culture today, because so many people have grown accustomed to having options that we find ourselves falling into the trap of treating God like Starbucks. You know, you’ve got 30 different flavors, so many different options, and we pick and choose what we want.

In fact, in our culture today, this is become so prevalent, so common, that our opinion has been elevated above God’s. And yet it’s really nothing new, it’s just that over the past hundred years our culture has lost an understanding of what it is to fear God, and so we’ve seen it before. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, “What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). And so, there have always been people who believe in God, but don’t fear him. The Bible tells us this in Psalm chapter 36. Here’s what David said,

“Concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes. For in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or even hate his sin” (Psalm 36:1-2).

It’s sin that deceives us, it flatters us, it gives us a false assurance that our rebellion will go unpunished. Maybe you’ve even heard the phrase lately, “Listen to your heart,” because people often say that, forgetting that the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. It’s for this reason that the Bible warns us about this type of self-confidence, this arrogance, because it brings about tragic consequences. When we don’t fear God, we flatter ourselves and that flattery gives us more confidence to sin. We begin to think things like, “Well, it’s my body and I can do what I want with it, nobody’s going to impose their values on me, nobody’s going to tell me what to do.”

And so, not only will we all stand before God’s judgment seat (Rom 14:10), but the problem is that within the church when we have no fear of God, there’s nothing to restrain us, nothing to change us, nothing to conform us to the image of Christ, and the church becomes lame, handicapped, and powerless, because we’ve quenched the Holy Spirit, we’ve shut down our Guide, and we’ve quieted the Counselor. But when we walk in the fear of God we’re complete knowing that God is just and he’s also full of grace.

Therefore, it’s important that we embrace this truth as John’s gospel tells us, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth…” (John 1:14). When Jesus came, he was a revelation of the Father, he was full of grace and truth.

Later, John recorded these words of Jesus as he was in a conversation with his disciples. Thomas asked him, “Lord… how can we know the way?” Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough...” And Jesus replied, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

You see, it’s knowing the Father, having the fear of God, that brings balance into our lives, keeping us from legalism on one hand, and license to do whatever we want on the other. This is the message of the gospel, this is what Paul preached, he said, “I have declared to (everyone) that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus” (Acts 20:21). It’s the fear of God that balances that tension in our lives as we understand his love, while still maintaining a reverence for God. So, the first idea I want to share with you this morning is the blessings of the fear of God.

## The Blessings of the Fear of God

Pastor Craig Groeschel stated well what I think is the simplest description of what it means to fear God. Of course, this is just a basic idea so that we can begin to grasp what it means to have a reverent fear of God. It’s not a deep theological definition, but a simple statement, and pastor Craig said it this way, he said,

“Loving God, plus respecting God, equals fearing God” (Craig Groeschel).

And so, let’s break that down and take a deeper look at what that means. First, “God is love” and we love God because of who he is. The Bible says in first John, “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:16,19).

The apostle Paul tells us in Romans chapter 5 that, “God demonstrates his own love for us in this; that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

It’s important that we have a foundational, biblical understanding of God’s love. He loves us, not because we deserve it, but because that’s who he is and what he does. It’s God’s nature to love and because of that we love him in return. Our only reasonable response is to love him, to respect him, and to honor him, because he first loved us.

Therefore, since he chose us and called us, the Bible tells us in Hebrews chapter 12, “Let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:28-29). Can you repeat that with me? Our God is a what? He is a consuming fire!

And so, we love our God who’s full of grace, but we also respect him, because he’s full of truth. We love him and desire to have a relationship with him just like he desires to have a relationship with us, but we also acknowledge as Isaiah tells us, that his thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are our ways his ways (Isaiah 55:8-9). And even though God may ask us to do things that are not comfortable, things that will stretch us and challenge us, because we love him and respect him we obey him and give him the reverence that he’s due.

Therefore, the fear of God is not a bad thing, but it’s an honorable thing, and as you read the Bible you find that the fear of God results in promises and blessings. And so, I want to share a few promises with you; for those who fear the Lord.

The first one I want to share with you is found in Proverbs chapter 9, and King Solomon wrote,

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10).

Skipping ahead a few chapters, chapter 14 tells us,

“The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death” (Proverbs 14:27).

And then again in Proverbs chapter 22,

“Humility and the fear of the Lord bring wealth and honor and life” (Proverbs 22:4).

Certainly not an exhaustive study, but quickly we notice that the Scripture tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. That’s where wisdom starts, with understanding, loving, and respecting God. But not only that, the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, gushing out, moving you, and turning you away from that which destroys you, and bringing you into the blessings that God has for you in this life and in eternity. And so, the fear of the Lord is not something that we run from, but we step into it, we embrace it, because we love God, he’s given us access to himself, and therefore we can enter boldly just as Hebrews chapter 4 tells us,

“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

Now, the grace given us in Christ doesn’t exclude the respect and honor that God deserves, just because he allows us to have this relationship which we don’t deserve. And so, the fear of the Lord is a good thing, it’s love, it’s respect, and it leads to blessings because when I fear God, I’ll obey God.

One of the best illustrations of this in all of the Bible is found in Genesis. In chapter 22, we find recorded the greatest test Abraham ever faced and it’s summarized by the great text found in Habakkuk chapter 2, “The righteous will live by his faith” (2:4). You could say that Abraham’s life was characterized by soul stretching experiences and here in chapter 22 we find him now over 100 years old. His greatest desire had been to have a son, for decades he had waited for the promised son, now his son Isaac had grown up and become a young man, and God told him:

"Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." (Genesis 22:1-2).

Now watch Abraham’s obedience, he doesn’t argue, he doesn’t question, but verse three says,

“Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." (Genesis 22:3-5).

Abraham demonstrates faith in God, teaching us that we’re never too old to face new challenges, fight new battles, and learn new truths. Because he loves God, he obeys God. Because he respects God, he obeys God. And because he fears God, he obeys God. In verse six,

“Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together” (Genesis 22:6-8).

“When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son…" (Genesis 22:9-11).

Now Abraham had tied his son to the altar, his son whom he loved with all of his heart, the object of his prayers, and he takes a knife raising it over his son preparing to fully obey God when the angel of the Lord stops him. Verse 12,

"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son” (Genesis 22:12).

## The Evidence of the Fear of God

For you and I today, the story of our lives is being written one day at a time as we listen to God and obey his directions. Be assured that the greatest evidence of the fear of God is complete obedience to God. Not partial obedience, not delayed obedience, but it’s quick and immediate. It’s a state of mind, a condition of the heart that trusts God, and will do whatever he calls you to do. The fear of the Lord moves us to obey God when it would be easier to do anything else. It’s for this reason that the Bible asks us,

“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?” (James 2.14).

James answers his own question in verse 20,

“You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did” (James 2:20-22).

As we reflect on this amazing illustration, this demonstration of Abraham’s love, respect, and fear of God, I want you to remember that the greatest evidence of the fear of God is complete obedience to God. I’m reminded of Jesus on that fateful night of his arrest. He had gone out with his disciples to the Mount of Olives to pray just as he normally did; and it was there in the garden that he demonstrated his love and respect for his Father. Luke records this in chapter 22,

“On reaching the place, he said to (his disciples), "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:39-42).

Jesus modeled submission to the will of his Father in Heaven, because of his love, because of his respect, and because of his reverent fear. In love he honored the will of his father above his own and he obeyed. And therefore, in the same way, it’s because of God’s goodness that I want to serve him with all of my heart. Because of the grace of Jesus, my only reasonable response is to love him as my Heavenly Father and to respect him as the Lord of Creation. Therefore, I fear him and because I fear him I want to obey him.

It’s unfortunate, that today in America many people believe in God, but they don’t fear God. It’s a tragedy that’s crept into many churches and it’s really a form of disbelief that’s far from truly knowing and following Christ. It’s a pick and choose type of faith where we create our own God to worship. And maybe you’ve seen it yourself, where someone has said, “I believe in God, but I’m still going to play house with my girlfriend. I want to serve God, but I’m not going to stop looking at those pornographic images. I’m going to come to church faithfully, but I just can’t tithe. You know, I love God, but I just can’t surrender every area of my life.” And so, you could say in other words, “I believe in God, but I don’t fear him.”

What I’d like to do right now is to ask you to get really serious, to make application of the Word of God, and apply it to your heart by the Spirit of God. This honestly, is the most important part of the message, and I want you to consider what area of your life are you not fearing and obeying God?

Now I don’t know what that looks like for you, I don’t know what that is, but I believe that God is going to work in your heart, because you want to love him and deep down when you think about who he is, you do respect him. And so, because you love him and respect him, you fear him and want to obey him. Therefore, you’re not going to allow that sin, that rebellion, to continue to haunt you. And so, this morning if you’re living with unconfessed sin, it is time to confess that to God, and to confess it to others so that it doesn’t continue to dwell in your life. You’ll want to deal with it, because you know that it’s not God’s best; you love him, you respect him, and you want to obey him.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, the Bible tells us, “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Starting today, you’re not going to continue in a lifestyle that’s not God honoring. You’re going to move on, because God has something way better for you. The fear of the Lord is the fountain of life. The fear of God is going to move you to do the right thing even when it would be easier to do something else. In a culture where it’s normal for people to pick and choose what part of God they like; we’re going to choose all of God. Because we want his best knowing that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, it’s a fountain of life, and it brings blessings that only God can give. And not only that, but our God is so good that he is worthy of all of our lives. We can come to him in worship because it was he who first gave himself for us, he gave his all for us through Jesus Christ. Let’s pray.

Pastor John Talcott

Christ's Community Church

303 West Lincoln Avenue

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

October 08, 2017

[www.cccemmitsburg.org](http://www.cccemmitsburg.org)

Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, Preaching Library, and PC Study Bible.

Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.