



## What Should Every Smart Person Know?

*“His mercy goes on from generation to generation to all who fear him.”*  
(Luke 1:50, NLT)

A minister asked a young man who had just graduated at the top of his class from a prestigious school, “What is the beginning of wisdom?” (Wisdom is using facts you have learned and truths you understand to make right decisions in your daily life.) The young man thought and thought but did not know the answer. Amazed, the minister asked, “How is it that you have just graduated at the top of your class from this great university and don’t know that important truth?”

### ***Becoming wise***

What should this young man have known? You will find the answer in Proverbs 9:10 (NIV): *“Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in understanding.”* It is the “fear of the Lord” that is the starting point of wisdom and knowledge. Think about it. Your attitude toward the Lord affects every decision you make! For example, if you do not fear the Lord, you will use his name disrespectfully.

You may be thinking, “What do you mean, ‘Fear the Lord’? Am I supposed to be frightened and scared of the Lord? I thought God loved me unconditionally, forgave me, and is my friend.” Since the word “fear” in our culture usually means “feelings of threatened danger, trouble, or pain,” it is natural to think that way. However, this fear of the Lord does not make you afraid to approach God but draws you to him.

### ***Defining fear of the Lord***

**What is the fear of the Lord?** Fear can mean awe, reverence and even dread or terror. It springs out of love. It is a love so deep that you dread God’s displeasure and deeply desire his favor. It is an attitude that gives honor and respect to God for who he is. It is thinking of him with awe and wonder because of his great power and majesty. It is acknowledging that he is not only your Creator, but also your Lord. You are eager to submit cheerfully to his will and are grateful for his benefits. It is a healthy, holy fear. In a very small way, it is like having a healthy fear in sports. You may “love” to swim or water ski in the ocean, but you have a deep respect for the riptides, storms and thrashing water. You may “love” climbing a snow-covered mountain, but you never lose sight of the danger and awesomeness of the cliffs and the possibility of an avalanche. How much more should you love, reverence and respect your holy God who created the oceans and mountains!

### ***Developing a fear of the Lord***

**How do you develop this fear of the Lord?** God the Holy Spirit produces it in your soul (mind, will and emotions). God says, *“I will teach you the fear of the Lord.”* Psalm 34:11b, NIV) He often teaches you through experiences as he did the disciples. One evening Jesus and his disciples started across the lake. Jesus was asleep in the back of the boat. Suddenly, a fierce storm arose. High waves began filling the boat with water. Some of these men were veteran fishermen, but they were scared. Frantically, they yelled at the sleeping Jesus, “Teacher, don’t you care that we are about to drown?” Awakened, Jesus rebuked the wind and spoke to the water, “Quiet down!” Immediately the wind stopped, and the water was calm. Jesus asked them, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still not have any faith in me?” *“And they were filled with awe [fear] and said among themselves, ‘Who is this man, that even the wind and waves obey him?’”* (Mark 4:41, NLT) In the middle of the storm, the disciples were full of fear lest they drown. However, after the miracle, a different awe or fear of the Lord overwhelmed them. When have you been in circumstances that caused you to be in awe of what God has done?

The Holy Spirit also teaches you to fear the Lord through the Scripture. In the book of Proverbs, God gives you steps that will help you learn to fear him properly. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a spirit of understanding. Underline all the verbs in the passage. Write in your journal what you need to do to fear the Lord.

*My child, listen to me and treasure my instructions.  
Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding.  
Cry out for insight and understanding.  
Search for them as you would for lost money or hidden treasure.  
Then you will understand what it means to fear the Lord,  
And you will gain knowledge of the Lord. (Proverbs 2:1-5, NIV)*

### ***Right thinking and rewards***

God promises great rewards to his children who have the proper attitude toward him. As you read your Bible, why not underline them and claim the promises?

- *Fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing. (Psalm 34:11, NIV)*
- *He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cries for help and rescues them. (Psalm 145:19, NIV)*
- *The Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love. (Psalm 147:11, NIV)*
- *He will bless those who fear the Lord, both great and small. (Psalm 115:13, NIV)*
- *The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and he delivers them. (Psalm 34:7, NIV)*

For those who treat him with disrespect and do not fear him, he has harsh words.

- *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools [morally deficient] despise wisdom and discipline.*” (Proverbs 1:7, NIV).
- *Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD, since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.*” (Proverbs 1:28-31, NIV)

### ***Changing your behavior***

Do you want to be wise in making the right decisions in your life? It all begins with the proper attitude toward God. When you fear the Lord, more and more you will want to act in a way that will please God. The Holy Spirit will help you to re-think and change your attitude about some of the things you say and do. You will learn that *“To fear the Lord is to hate evil.”* (Proverbs 8:13, NIV) What habits might God want you to change? What changes in the use of your time do you need to make? What things do you watch or read that might not please God? What words do you say that might offend your holy God? Think about it! With God’s help, you can outsmart the college graduate!

#### **Attitude Check:**

- How would you describe your attitude toward God? What action do you need to take to have a proper fear of the Lord?

#### **Explore:**

- Read Romans 3:18. What was the main criticism God made of the human race?
- Read O.T. promises in Proverbs 19:23, Psalm 115:11 and Psalm 147:11. What new characteristic did you learn about God? Write in your journal.

#### **Talking with God:**

- Father, I want to always honor and respect you. Thank you for the promises you have made to me when I love and fear you.