

(A Spiritual Leader) 3. Fearing God

Zac Poonen:

A spiritual leader will fear God greatly.

The more we get to know God the more we will fear Him. We won't be afraid of God, but we will reverence Him.

In Psalm 34:11, David says, "Come you children listen to me, and I'll teach you the fear of the Lord."

It's not an easy task to teach people the fear of God. It's far easier to teach them how to analyse Romans and Ephesians!

If we are to teach others to fear God, we must fear Him ourselves first. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. A man who fears God can teach his flock far more than a man who merely knows the Bible. Those who do not fear God can only communicate knowledge, not wisdom. Knowledge makes a man proud - as we read in 1 Corinthians 8:1. But wisdom makes a man mature and teaches him how to apply his knowledge to the problems of daily life. Only men with wisdom can build the church of Jesus Christ.

The fear of the Lord is the ABC of the Christian life. If you haven't taught your flock the fear of the Lord first, then however much you may have taught them other subjects, you've failed in your primary task. You would then be like a teacher who tries to teach his students geography and history before they can even read! No teacher in the world makes that mistake.

To learn the fear of the Lord is like learning how to read. But most elders in churches don't teach their flock the fear of the Lord first. Here is the proof that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.

Let me ask a question of those of you who have graduated from a seminary. Did you learn the fear of the Lord there, or did you merely get a degree-certificate?

Let me ask you a second question: Why did you join that seminary? Was it to get a job or was it to learn the fear of God? Why did you choose one seminary in preference to another? Was it because it was a more prestigious one? And did you join it even though you knew it was not evangelical in doctrine but liberal? Can you imagine Jesus sending His disciples to such seminaries to prepare them for His service? How many of you can honestly say that you chose a seminary to learn the fear of God? Probably none. Isn't that tragic?

I know that many people join a Bible school here in India only as a first step to go to the United States, to make money. Some apply to Bible-schools in America in order to settle down there. How can such people ever serve the Lord?

Can you acknowledge today that you joined a Bible-school with wrong motives? If you're willing to be honest, then there's great hope for you - for God loves honest people. Now, make sure you warn others not to repeat your mistake. Teach them the fear of the Lord first. Our children don't have to repeat the mistakes we've made.

In Proverbs 24:3,4, we're told that a house is built by wisdom and that by knowledge its rooms are filled with many precious things. Notice the contrast here between wisdom and knowledge. I'm not devaluing Bible-knowledge. Not at all. I've spent more than 40 years studying the Bible and I think I know it as well as anyone else.

But what I seek for most of all is wisdom. Divine love is the greatest thing in the world. But Divine love is always guided by Divine wisdom. Love without wisdom is dangerous.

Love can be likened to the petrol in the tank of a bus, and Wisdom to the driver of the bus. You certainly need love to lead your flock forward. But you need wisdom to decide which way you're going to lead them.

Wisdom is fundamental. It is possible for you to get 100% in Bible-knowledge and zero for wisdom! That would be like a student getting 100% in Physical Training and zero in mathematics. It would be better if he got 100% in maths and zero in Physical Training, because in the long run, maths is more important than P.T. And in the long run, wisdom is more important than knowledge.

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We saw that knowledge fills the rooms. Knowledge is like the furniture – chairs, tables and beds - that we put into our rooms. So if you have knowledge without wisdom, you’d be like a man who puts out all his expensive furniture on an empty plot of ground! Many expensive tables and sofas are there. The only thing missing is the house! You can well imagine that such a man will be the laughing stock of everyone around him. But that’s exactly what we see among most leaders and preachers in Christendom today. They have knowledge but no wisdom – because they do not fear God.

We hardly hear any preacher preaching these days about the fear of the Lord. And that’s why most believers are not wise and have so many other fears.