



A Well-Defined
FAITH

[fāth] (noun)

Biblical words used in church...
Discover what they really mean.



Sunday
June 28, 2026

Psalm 103:1-14
Proverbs 1:7

Example Teaching Rhythm

Welcome and Connect: 10 Minutes

This helps people feel connected and more comfortable participating in the study and discussion.

Look Forward: 5-10 Minutes

Share any important church events, service opportunities, or upcoming group plans. Keep this brief but clear.

Look at Scripture: 25-35 Minutes

This is the main focus of Community Groups. Read the selected scripture together and guide the group through discussion questions and observations.

Prayer: 10 Minutes

Invite members to share prayer requests and praises, then pray together as a group. This is a time to support one another.

Explaining the H.E.A.R Method

The acronym **HEAR** stands for **Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond**. Each of these four steps aims to cultivate an atmosphere to hear God speak.

Highlight - After praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance, read the passage of scripture, and highlight each verse that speaks to you.

Explain - Explain what the text means. Ask questions like:

- Who wrote this, to whom, and why? What does this reveal about God? What do the key words actually mean? What did this call the original audience to, and what does that reveal for me?

By asking questions, with the help of God's Spirit, and by using helpful study resources, you can understand the meaning of a passage or verse.

Apply - This application is the heart of the process. Everything you have done so far culminates under this heading. As you have done before, work to uncover the significance of these verses and the implications they have. Ask questions like:

- What does this passage reveal about God, yourself, or the world that you need to embrace or sit with? Does this passage challenge an attitude, assumption, or habit that needs to change? Is there something to do? Is there someone to love?

Respond - Your response to the passage may take on many forms. Ask: Is there something to pray? - Let the passage shape your prayer, not just inform it. Use the "Five Daily Prayer Prompts" to guide you in your response.

“Fear of the Lord” An Ever-Deepening Sense of The Godness of God

Introduction

Fear of the Lord is one of the most misread phrases in the Christian vocabulary – and the misreading usually goes in one of two directions.

The first is too small. Somewhere along the way, the word fear gets quietly translated into respect – a kind of reverent appreciation, the feeling you might have toward a distinguished elder or a breathtaking landscape. Warm. Appropriate. Entirely safe. The problem is that what the Bible describes is not warm or safe. It is overwhelming. It reorganizes the person who encounters it. It doesn't leave things the way it found them.

The second misreading is too dark. The word fear lands as dread – the cringing, cowering posture of someone before an unpredictable and punishing authority. The person prays at a distance, measures their words carefully, and relates to God primarily as someone who can take things away. That is not the fear of the Lord either. It is a portrait of someone who does not yet know who God is.

Both misreadings share the same root problem: they begin with a human emotion and try to fit God into it. The fear of the Lord works the other direction. It begins with God – with who He actually is, with the full weight of His character – and it describes what happens to a person who truly sees Him.

That is what Psalm 103 and Proverbs 1 are after together. The psalmist does not command you to feel afraid. He invites you to look – at what God has done, at who He has shown Himself to be, at the distance between what you deserve and what you have received. And Proverbs says that the person who has looked clearly at that God, and been changed by what they saw, has found the beginning of wisdom itself.

Before we go further: Is your relationship with God more characterized by familiarity or by awe? And if you are honest, which direction have you drifted – toward a God who is too small to be truly feared, or too distant to be truly loved?

Discussion Questions + Illustration

Select a question or two below to open up discussion.

- Have you ever had a moment of genuine awe that made you feel small in a way that was, unexpectedly, good? What was that like?
- Is there a difference between respecting God and fearing Him in the biblical sense? Where have you experienced the second rather than the first?
- The psalm lists specific things about who God is and what He has done. Which one lands with the most weight for you right now – and why?
- "The beginning of wisdom" – does your life show evidence that this kind of fear is the foundation of the way you make decisions? Where is the gap clearest?

In 1990, NASA turned Voyager I's camera back toward earth from nearly four billion miles away. The photograph showed our planet as a pale blue dot – barely a pixel – suspended in scattered sunlight. Carl Sagan described it as a corrective of scale: the moment a thing is seen at its true size and you are seen at yours.

- That is what the fear of the Lord does. It is not a threat. It is an accurate proportioning. The person who genuinely encounters the Godness of God doesn't feel crushed – they feel, for the first time, correctly located. And that location is not desolate. It's precisely where mercy is found.

Highlight | Psalm 103:1-14, Proverbs 1:7

Psalm 103 is one of the most comprehensive descriptions of God's character in the entire psalter – structured to do something specific. The psalmist does not begin with commands or requests. He begins by commanding his own soul: bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. This is deliberate remembering – holding God's character in view so that the soul orients rightly toward Him.

The benefits he lists are not abstract: forgiveness, healing, redemption, steadfast love, renewal. At the center comes the theological core: God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love – and He does not deal with us according to our sins. The distance between what we deserve and what we receive is measured explicitly: as high as the heavens, as far as east is from west.

Verse 14 is the hinge: He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. Not resignation – tenderness. The God beyond all comprehension bends toward what He has made and does not expect it to be something it is not. Proverbs 1:7 places this God at the origin of all understanding: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom – the foundational orientation from which everything true and good and wise proceeds.

- What does it mean that the psalmist must command his own soul to bless the Lord – and what does that reveal about how naturally the soul turns toward awe?
- Verse 14 says God knows we are dust. Does that feel like an excuse He is making for you, or like genuine compassion? What is the difference?

Explain | Consider the Context

The psalms were Israel's communal liturgy – repeated in the presence of others, shaped by years of lived experience with this God. Psalm 103 was not written in uncomplicated joy. It was written as deliberate reorientation: the soul turned back toward what it knows and tends to forget.

The Hebrew *yirah* carries both terror and reverence – the sense of being undone and the sense of being held. The God of Psalm 103 is both the one before whom dust is rightly silent and the one who removes transgressions as far as east is from west. The fear He evokes is not the fear of someone who might hurt you. It is the fear of someone so far beyond your category that encountering Him changes the shape of everything.

Proverbs places this encounter at the beginning of wisdom – which means a person navigating life without it is not missing one ingredient. They are starting in the wrong place entirely.

- God is described as "slow to anger" – which implies He does experience something like anger. What does it tell you about His character that the same passage holds both His anger and His compassion without contradiction?
- Proverbs says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. What does it suggest about knowledge gained without it?

Apply | Discuss as a Group

The fear of the Lord is not an emotional state you can manufacture. What you can do is look – at who God actually is, at what He has done, at the gap between what you have received and what you would have deserved without His mercy.

Psalm 103 is itself a practice in that looking. The psalmist doesn't generalize. He names. Iniquities forgiven. Life redeemed. Steadfast love placed over him like a crown. The accumulation of the specific is what produces the awe that generalizations never can.

Most people's relationship with God loses its edge not because they stop believing but because they stop looking. The God of Psalm 103 is simultaneously more vast than anything you can hold and more personal than anything you have yet experienced. That combination – immensity and tenderness together – is what produces the fear of the Lord. The practical question is not what you say you believe about God, but where your attention actually goes when you have a quiet moment – and whether what you find there produces anything like what the psalmist describes.

- Is there a specific thing God has done for you – forgiven, redeemed, renewed – that you have stopped actively remembering? What would it cost you to name it specifically before God this week?
- Where are you still relating to God primarily through performance rather than through awe? What would change if the fear of the Lord were actually the foundation?

Respond | How should I live/pray?

Psalm 103 does not end with awe as its destination. It ends with blessing – the same word it began with. The soul that has looked clearly at God, named what it has received, and been reoriented by the distance between deserving and receiving, does not collapse. It worships. And worship, for the psalmist, is not a performance. It is the natural movement of a person who has seen something true.

The fear of the Lord, received rightly, does not make you smaller in a way that is crushing. It makes you smaller in a way that is accurate – and accuracy before God turns out to be the place where you find the most freedom. You are not performing for a God who may or may not approve. You are dust before the God who already knows that, already factors that in, and whose steadfast love toward you does not depend on what you offer Him.

The invitation this week is not to feel more afraid of God. It is to look more carefully at who He is – to let the psalmist's practice of deliberate remembering become your own. What has He done? What has He forgiven? What did you deserve, and what did you receive instead? The person who asks those questions honestly, and sits with the answers, does not usually end up anxious. They usually end up, quietly, in awe.

And awe, Proverbs says, is where wisdom begins.

- What would it look like to begin each day this week not with what you need to accomplish but with a deliberate moment of looking at who God is – and what would you actually say?
- Is there a decision, a relationship, or a season of your life where you have been trying to find wisdom without first returning to this foundation? What would it look like to start there instead?

Response Tool: Five Daily Prayer Prompts

As you leave today, let these five questions carry the weight of your response into the week ahead – not as a checklist, but as an ongoing conversation with God. Introduce the five daily questions as a simple spiritual practice that can help us intentionally live out our faith in our workplaces, homes, families, and communities.

- God, where do you want me to go?
- God, who do you want me to see?
- God, what do you want me to say?
- God, what do you want me to pray?
- God, how do you want me to serve?

After this time of reflection, transition into a time of prayer requests. Allow time for members to share and, if appropriate, allow others in the class to pray for each other.

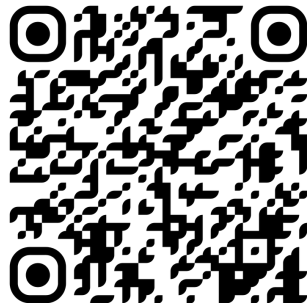
Additional Commentary

- On yirah – "fear of the Lord": The Hebrew carries a semantic range English cannot hold in one word – reverent awe, the recognition of something vast and holy, moral weight that reshapes behavior, and genuine trembling. What it does not reduce to is dread of an arbitrary or malicious God. Where the character of God is rightly understood, yirah produces not paralysis but orientation.
- On "forget not all His benefits" (Psalm 103:2): The verb is a command – significant because the psalmist does not assume the soul remembers naturally. He knows it forgets. Recounting what God has done is not sentiment; it is the correction of a bias in the human heart toward the ordinary and immediate. Memory of God's character is a spiritual practice, not a passive state.
- On "slow to anger" (Psalm 103:8): The Hebrew idiom is literally long of nose – a face that does not flare quickly. It is paired with hesed – covenant faithfulness, the love that binds itself to you and does not release. These are not in tension. They are the portrait of a God whose emotional reality is vast enough to hold both.
- On "He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14): The word frame (yetsar) is the same used for the forming of Adam – something shaped from the ground. God remembers what He made us from, and this memory is not an indictment. It is the basis of His compassion.
- On reshit – "beginning" (Proverbs 1:7): The word means both chronological start and foundational principle. The fear of the Lord is both where wisdom starts and what wisdom is made of throughout. Knowledge gained without it does not yield partial wisdom – it produces something that resembles wisdom but is built on different ground entirely.

Community Group Resource Page

Visit our website to view our **leadership resources**.

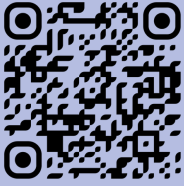
From Community Group training and resources to Discipleship Group starter guides, we want to equip you to make disciples.



Additional Study

Watch/Listen

Bible Project - Psalms



See a collection of videos, classes, and articles that dive into **Psalms**.

Bible Project - Proverbs



See a collection of videos, classes, and articles that dive into **Proverbs**.

Overview

Enduring Word - Psalm 103



Text commentary, written materials, and audio/video recordings over **Psalm 103**.

Got Questions - Fear of God



Biblical Q&A, articles, translations, audios, videos, apps, podcasts and more on **Fear of God**.

Expand

Bible Reference - Psalm 103



Explore chapter and verse commentaries to deepen your understanding of **Psalm 103**.

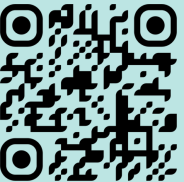
Bible Hub - Proverbs 1:7



Parallel translations, language tools, commentaries, and much more on **Proverbs 1:7**.

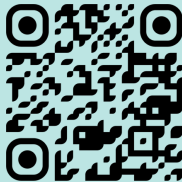
Deepen

Logos Factbook - Fear of God



Logos Factbook shares information resources and articles about **Fear of the Lord**.

Blue Letter Bible - Fear of God



Original texts, Translations, Cross-Refs, Commentaries, Dictionaries + more on **The Fear of the Lord**.

