

What to do when you don't know what to do?

WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

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Prov 1:7 *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.*

THE MESSAGE: *Start with God — the 1ST step in learning is bowing down to God; only fools thumb their noses at such wisdom and learning.*

The FEAR OF THE LORD. If we get this fear right, we'll not fear anything else. This is the starting point. We begin with the "fear of the Lord." In the OT, this phrase was virtually a salvation phrase. The term shouldn't be "fear" as in "I'm afraid" or "paranoid" but awe and respect. I have "fear" of an airplane. I'd not want to pilot a 747. If you were a passenger and I was the pilot, "fear" would be an appropriate response for you, but that sort of "fear" isn't the same as "the FEAR OF THE LORD."

That the God of all Creation has an interest in me and wants a relationship with me is amazing. I had a "fear of my dad." He never spanked me, but I had tremendous respect for him. I listened to what he said. I tried, for the most part, to please him. I wanted to help him. I remember going to restaurants when I was a kid and looking on the menu and ordering the cheaper of the foods so he'd not have to pay as much. (My sister, on the other hand, always ordered the shrimp ☺.) In many ways, "I am my father's son." That relationship has proven helpful to me in numerous ways – of relating to leaders and authorities; teachers and police, and the President. His attitude about showing respect to older people, family and the poor. I remember a family that rented "the Thornton place." It was a house in rural Arkansas that my dad owned. Among other things, it had no indoor plumbing or heat/AC. I think it had electricity, but it may not have. My dad would get rent money – sometimes – of about \$10 a month. If they couldn't pay, it was okay. He always seemed to treat that family with respect. He also had an impact upon me spiritually and in the church. Those who don't have such an image of a dad have something to overcome. They have to learn how to be blessed in another way.

On the one hand, the Bible says: "The fear of the Lord = beginning of knowledge." On the other hand the Bible says: "**There is no fear in love. Perfect Love casts our fear.**" (1 John 4:18)

The fear of the Lord is the BEGINNING of KNOWLEDGE

A.) We must **BEGIN** somewhere. We can't finish the race if we never start it. When did you begin your relationship with God?

B.) **KNOWLEDGE** is essential. It's personal. When I have knowledge, I "get it." Without it, we are in the dark. It's a major key to life

Psalm 111:10 *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of WISDOM; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.*

Wisdom is the proper **application** of knowledge. No one is completely wise or completely foolish, as good/bad mixed in all of us. But, a "**WISE**" person is on a different path than a foolish person. Jesus told a parable about the "Wise person building upon rock and a foolish person builds upon sand. A wise person takes one road; a foolish person takes another. They are "intelligent, learned, enlightened, smart, astute, canny, and knowing. They can be trusted!

Synonyms are: sensible, prudent, discerning, discriminating, sophisticated, judicious, perceptive, insightful, rational, logical, sound and sane.

15:16 *Better a little with the fear of the Lord than great wealth with turmoil.*

19:23 *The fear of the Lord leads to life: Then one rests content, untouched by trouble.*

Knowledge about how to do some task isn't the same thing as wisdom. It's important to be wise about matters of great importance.

Without the Fear of the Lord/Wisdom = **FOOL**. A fool despises, or thumbs their nose at wisdom and discipline. **Prov 1:7 THE MESSAGE: *Start with God — the 1ST step in learning is bowing down to God; only fools thumb their noses at such wisdom and learning.***

The **NOUN** "fool" = have these synonyms: **bozo, birdbrain, peabrain, blockhead, chump, dope, dunce, dimwit, dipstick, dingbat, dullard, dumbo, doofus, goofus, flake, goober, goon, jerk, klutz, lamebrain, meatball, mouth-breather, moron, simpleton, nitwit, ninny, nincompoop, twit, twerp, turkey**

The **VERB** "fool" = bamboozle, bluff, cheat, deceive, defraud, delude, double-cross, dupe, hoax, trick, mislead, hoodwink, sucker, and swindle.

Not only do we not want to be labeled any of these terms, we don't want to live in a culture where they are primary and operative.

Romans 1:18-23 *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their*

thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

When I do something wrong, I'm faced with a decision – either I take responsibility or I shift responsibility to someone else. That may be God or that may be you. If I take responsibility for it, however, it loads me down. I'm guilty. Sin is a heavy burden to carry. That's why we need forgiveness. That's what the gospel is all about.

Wisdom's Response:

1.) Wisdom begins with the knowledge OF GOD It doesn't begin with me. It begins with God. The core dilemma we must resolve: am I going to be autonomous and do my own thing or am I going to come under the authority of God? We always do much better when we are held accountable. We have parents who are supposed to raise us as adults (not as children). We have teachers who monitor our progress. We have doctors who are poking, prodding, and asking personal questions. We have police officers who hold us accountable. Now all of these authority figures have flaws. There are no perfect parents, teachers, doctors or police officers. Some can be apathetic and indifferent, some can be absent and some can be abusive. That's why we can't depend upon another human being for our ultimate source of wisdom. That comes from God.

2.) TRUST God. Trust is a personal application of knowledge. There's a difference between knowing that an elevator can take me upwards and actually getting into it and going to a new destination. How do I know God? In 14:5-7 *Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."*

3.) Build relationships with OTHERS who are also pursuing wisdom

A.) Some are with fellow believers. This assembling together with other believers is essential. Try to live your faith w/o accountability will lead to apathy.

B.) Others aren't yet believers. I'm convinced that life is very much about "Helping Others Follow Jesus." Jesus offers to us the gift of eternal life. Jesus offers to us the gift of abundant life.