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## **FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD**

A classic book by Joy Dawson is entitled, INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD THROUGH UNDERSTANDING THE FEAR OF THE LORD. That is an amazing title, putting together two subjects that you and I would never think of combining. Following are some of her insights (and I have paraphrased and juxtaposed some of her thoughts in order, hopefully, to clarify, and I have also used numbers to separate and identify some of her major points). **If you don't read anything else, please read (5) True repentance.:**

(1) When we hear the phrase, "the fear of the Lord," we are apt to think it means to be afraid of God. But we are not to be afraid of God because He has created us for loving, intimate friendship with Himself. God's Word clearly defines the fear of the Lord for us. Proverbs 8:13 says, "**The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil.**" That means having God's attitude toward sin at all times. God has no tolerance toward sin; therefore, He will not compromise with it. Sin is abhorrent to His very nature. God says, "You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy." If we are going to fulfill that command we must understand what it means to hate sin. We must also know that God would never set us a standard without making full provision for us to attain it.

Psalm 33 gives us another dimension of the fear of the Lord: "Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood forth." This means we are to stop and consider with awe and wonder the limitless power and supreme authority of one who, by His spoken words alone, has brought the universe into being. And by that same word of power the universe is being upheld. (Hebrews 1:3)

(2) The fear of God is directly connected with obedience. When Abraham was about to slay his son, Isaac, in obedience to the voice of the Lord, the angel said to him, "Now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your only son from me." The story of Jonah is noticeably different. When the ship's crew asked Jonah who he was, he replied: "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." But his lack of the fear of the Lord was evident by his deliberately going in the opposite direction from Nineveh where God had told him to go. (Abraham became the father of nations as God had promised him, while Jonah ended up inside a whale until he repented.)

Often, I have heard testimonies that go like this: "God spoke to me, but I did not obey, then God spoke to me again, but I still did not obey." Or, "A year later, God came and spoke to me again, but I was afraid to obey." Or, "After a week of arguing with God, I finally gave in and said, 'Okay, God.'" These testimonies reveal the lack of the fear of God. The fear of God is evidenced in our lives by instant, joyful, and whole obedience to God. Delayed obedience is disobedience. Partial obedience is disobedience. Doing what God has asked with murmuring is disobedience. (Note: But remember Jesus' parable of two sons: one said he would go but did not, the second said he would not go but later changed his mind and obeyed. Mt. 21:28.)

(3) The fear of the Lord is the only way to be released from the fear of man - - which is to be more impressed with man's reaction than with God's reaction. That is bondage. To be freed from the concern and control of what people think is real freedom and rest.

(4) There are four distinct levels of attitudes toward sin:

**Level One** - The person who does not sin because the consequences are too great. This person lusts after someone in his or her heart but doesn't commit adultery or fornication for fear of the consequences. Or he may hate someone and wish him dead but does not murder him because of the consequences. Obviously there is no hatred of evil and therefore no fear of the Lord.

**Level Two** - The person who lives by the Golden Rule, realizing that this is the path of peace and tranquility in life. He may be an atheist, or he may be a church-goer, tither, and doer of good deeds, but he may be full of selfishness, self-

righteousness, prayerlessness, and complacency. He lives by rules but has no conception of a burning love for God and people. He does not hate sin, in fact he does not understand the concept of sin, and therefore he has no fear of the Lord.

**Level Three** - The sincere Christian who truly desires to please the Lord. He does not want to sin but continues to fall into sin. Perhaps the sins of criticism and judging others; the sin of pride, always drawing attention to himself; the sin of unbelief in not trusting God, as manifest in fear, doubt, and disobedience. Or maybe it is the sins of lust, jealousy, or resentment toward God or man. Or perhaps the sins of destructive addictions. He confesses over and over again the same sins and longs for freedom.

Consider this absurd but graphic illustration of life lived on Level Three. Suppose there was a large deposit of cow manure on the carpet in front of the pulpit at the start of the service. The normal reaction would be to either immediately leave the church or to get a bucket, shovel, disinfectant and soap and start cleaning up. True?

Now imagine if I were the guest speaker, and I said to the minister, "I am embarrassed to tell you this, but I have a secret sin. I have a love for cow manure and one whiff of it makes me want to roll in it. I know it's not right, and I should not be like this. I see other people who hate the very idea of rolling in that stinky stuff, but I confess I don't hate it. It is a strong temptation to me. I see that there is some manure on the carpet and I need your prayers so that I can don't fall into temptation and make a fool of myself."

If I would ask that minister to pray for me like that, it would be as absurd as what is going on in the Body of Christ continuously. People are requesting prayer regarding their besetting sins and character weaknesses instead of coming to God in honesty and humility and saying, **"I am constantly tempted to commit this sin because I love this sin. I do not hate it. I need the fear of God. O God, give me a hatred for what I now love. I receive it by faith in Jesus' name."** God will always answer that prayer. Remember that "desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death." (James 1:14)

**Level Four** - The person who has fear of God. He hates sin; therefore he seldom sins. If he does, there is a quick awareness, immediate repentance, and a willingness to humble himself before others.

We have chosen to sin because we love sin. The only way to be free of it is to have God's attitude toward it, which through the fear of the Lord is to hate it. If the deepest desire of our lives is to know God and to make Him known to others, then we have to make holiness a way of life. "The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him." (Ps. 25:14).

**(5) True repentance. The level of our repentance of sin will depend upon the degree to which we see sin as God sees it and hate it as God hates it. We may confess sin, shed tears of remorse, and weep over the mess it has gotten us into, but we may never really repent of it.** Repentance means a change of mind, a change of heart, and a change of life toward sin. It is being prepared to humble ourselves and make restitution to anyone *as God directs us*. Paul describes this in Acts 26:20: "...That they should repent and turn to God and perform deeds worthy of their repentance."

In Exodus 9, we find in Pharaoh an example of someone who confessed sin but did not repent because he lacked the fear of God. Vs. 27: "Then Pharaoh sent and called Moses and Aaron and said to them, 'I have sinned this time; I am in the wrong.' Vs. 30: Moses said, 'But as for you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear the Lord God.'" Vs. 34: "But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his heart, he and his servants."

Another example is King Saul in 1 Samuel 24. After David had asked Saul why he was trying to kill him, Saul wept as he realized how wrong he was, but he never repented of the sin. He confessed to David that he had done wrong. But it wasn't long before Saul committed exactly the same sin again, as we see in 1 Sam. 26. Later David challenged Saul about it and Saul confessed again. (Vs. 21) But there was still no real repentance because there was no acknowledgment of the root cause, which was the sin of pride being manifest in jealousy and repeated attempts of murder. Saul still had love for the sin in his heart.

If sin holds any fascination or enjoyment for us in any form, we must realize we need the fear of God in that area of our lives so that we can repent of it. Following is a letter written to me (Joy Dawson) by a woman who gave me permission to include it in this book: "I was a student at a Baptist College for four years. I worked in the Co-op store where books, supplies, coffee, etc., were sold. Occasionally, I would take a dollar or two here and there without keeping an account of it. After leaving college the Lord convicted me regarding this sin. I would worry over it, confess it to God, ask His forgiveness, yet do nothing to settle the account. Listening to your teachings aroused a deep desire to know Him better. So I prayed repeatedly, 'Lord, show me your ways that I may know you.' God reminded me again about my sin of stealing the money when I was in college. I sought the Lord as to the amount to send, with interest, for 36 years. I was shocked when He clearly revealed the amount of \$377! I couldn't believe it! But I asked for confirmation. This morning God spoke to me clearly through a devotional I read that started with Proverbs 28:13 - 'He who conceals his transgression will not prosper,

but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.' \$377 is a lot of money to me! But I couldn't have peace until I obeyed, so I purchased a money order for that amount and sent it to the President of the college with a letter of restitution. Now I am free from that one ugly, dark pressure for the first time in years. I am so happy. What a wonderful Savior we have and how He loves us to obey. Praise God!"

Joy also warns that we should not seek to make restitution without seeking God's will and timing about it. She tells the story of a married man who was having lustful temptations toward a single woman in his office. He prayed a prayer of repentance, but then, without seeking God's directions, he went to the single woman and confessed the temptations he had been having. The result was not good! His words planted some evil thoughts in the woman's mind, she began flirting with him, and they fell into adultery!

The following verses tell us how we are to study the subject of the fear of the Lord from God's Word: "My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." (Prov. 1:1-5) Few people casually look for lost money! Our finding something of much greater value, the fear of the Lord - which leads to intimate friendship with God - depends upon our pursuit of it with diligence!

## **THE DANGER OF WORM HOLES**

A recent program on the History Channel reported that dark energy comprises 75% of all matter and energy in the universe. (Scientists don't know what "dark energy" or "dark matter" is, but this theory sort of explains things that are unexplainable otherwise.) The universe is expanding at an accelerated pace. Dark energy is causing this. (I don't know why this is so, but if a scientist said it we have to believe it if we are patriotic Americans.) It is very possible that a **worm hole** will open up at any time and suck us all into a parallel universe! Oh, my gosh! Yikes! Holy cow! We have no idea what the implications would be for human life if this should happen, or even if human life would be possible. But it may happen at any moment! ("Worm holes" and "parallel universes" are brilliant theories by brilliant scientists to explain how the universe came to be without God.)

Isn't it interesting that many well-educated people scoff at the idea that God created the universe, but they are always ready to swallow any bizarre speculation that "scientists" come up with?

## **OUR OPINION OF GOD**

What is your opinion of God? Can you really trust Him? Regardless of what happens to you or your loved ones, are you steadfast in your conviction that God is good and dependable?

The Bible's opinion of God is always, irrevocably good. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all!" "Every good and perfect gift comes down from above, from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning!" "God is love." Reflect on these statements. Do you really agree with them?

Adam and Eve did not agree. A certain slimy character made a suggestion to them: "God is holding out on you. He doesn't want the best for you. The best thing that could happen is if you could decide for yourself about right and wrong. Then you would be like God. You wouldn't be 'creatures,' you would be 'gods!' You would be free! God is not really on your side." They thought it over and decided that made sense. Big mistake! Are we making the same mistake in our lives?

Our being "church-going" people does not mean that we necessarily believe that God is good and trustworthy. Let me relate to you the history of a certain family who lived in Texas about whom I have personal knowledge: This was a large farm family with eight children. They were pillars in a certain church in their community. One of the daughters, a beautiful girl, was the apple of her mother's eye. At age 22 this young woman developed a fast growing type of cancer, and within a few months she died. The mother in this family, I will call her Athalia, instantly changed from being a church-going God-worshiper to being a bitter hater of God. She vowed that neither she nor any in her family would ever enter a church again. She lived into her 90's, and for the rest of her life she spewed venomous hatred and contempt at the very idea of a "loving God." All of her children became contaminated with this hatred, and the family, as you might imagine, was a mess.

What do you and I really believe about God? As one who has been in ministry for over 50 years, I know very well that our faith in God will not be revealed until it is tested. Will you believe in the goodness of God if you or your mate develops Alzheimer's? If you have a mongoloid child? If your child becomes autistic, or develops a particularly loathsome form of cancer? If a family member dies or becomes brain-damaged in an accident? Does God send these things to test our faith? Absolutely not! But these kinds of things happen in our fallen world, and our only defense against spiritual destruction is to

come to know our God.

## **BIG BIBLE QUIZ AND AUTOMOBILE GIVE-AWAY!**

I know that the people who receive my newsletters are Bible experts, and here is your chance to win a new car of your choice. Here is the test (and we will operate on the honor system):

**The Gospel of John is built around seven miracles that are called "signs."**

- A. List the seven miracles.
- B. Why did John call them signs?
- C. What did each miracle demonstrate about Christ?
- D. Which of these signs has spoken to you most powerfully? (This is, of course, subjective, and will not be a part of the test.)

Send your answers post-haste, and I will announce the winner next month. (The new car of your choice will be your choice of a new Studebaker or a new Hudson, if we can find any 2010 models.)

## **MINISTRY**

Last month I reported on a ministry trip to northern Minnesota with my two friends, Lynne Cumming and Fred Feller. Thought I would share about two of the healings we saw. We prayed for a wonderful business-woman for deep emotional wounds. She has testified to being healed and set free emotionally and spiritually, and also of being healed of a chronic stomach problem that had tormented her for years. We prayed for a man with chronic back pain. This man had worked as a logger and was proud of his extraordinary strength. About ten years ago he picked up a log by himself and put it on his shoulder. He felt something pop in his back, and the doctors found that he had literally broken his back and it was being miraculously supported only by his musculature. His back became functional but the pain was a constant. He walked in a sort of hunched position. As we prayed for him he felt something "slip" in his neck and back, and his shoulders seemed to settle down about two inches. The pain left! Glory be to God.

The two photos are of me in an old-growth forest.



In one I am embracing a 400-year-old tree. (Since visiting Minnesota, I have seen the light and have become a tree-hugger.)



The second photo is of me spitting in Moose Creek. This is very significant. About a half-mile from that point Moose Creek divides. One creek flows east and south into the Mississippi. (The headwaters of the Mississippi are located a few miles above Moose Creek.) The second creek flows west into the headwaters of the Columbia River. So my spit divided and flowed both east and west into the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans! Wow! I don't know what that means, but it made me feel very important.

God Bless,

Glenn

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