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THE FEAR OF THE LORD: THE FORGOTTEN FOUNDATION  
OF FLOURISHING LEADERSHIP

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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by  
David Michael Cook  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

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For Jesus the Lord.  
In you there is forgiveness,  
that you may be feared.

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## PREFACE

This work has its beginnings at a peat mine where I used to wipe my forehead under the Florida sun. The men I worked with there would talk about their boss, my father, with a refreshing reverence that I took for granted. I could tell they valued his leadership not because of his charisma or cleverness, but because he did right by them and looked out for them. Then he would drive me home, probably unaware of what his employees were saying about him, to quietly teach me how good Jesus's ways were and show me what it looked like for a man to humbly lead his family. My mother would echo it all, living the same teachings in her own life.

Looking back, I do not think I would recognize the fear of the Lord in the Scriptures if it had not been demonstrated to me by parents who took God's commands seriously and worked to raise my sister and I in the fear of the Lord. Mom and Dad, may your retirement years bring long happiness from the fruits of your labor and continued fruitful ministry. I am so proud to tell people that you are my parents.

This pride is only matched when I introduce my wife, Emily. She is, as the sage writes, a woman who fears the Lord, who should be praised, who is most excellent among women. In relation to this work, she has managed to show our children that dad's going back to school, writing for countless hours, is a good thing. They look back on my school years fondly because of her influence. In that time, she has taught to our children the same fear I have endeavored to learn. My dear, may you find more reward than you ever hoped for when we receive our inheritance together. Until then, may our children rise and bless you.

My doctoral supervisor, Dr. Shane Parker, and second reader, Dr. Danny Bowen, are listed on the approval sheet of this document. But that cannot begin to credit



the influence and help they have given to pages that follow. Thank you both for the emails, phone calls, and lunch meetings full of pearls. More than that, thank you for modeling what it means to lead people in the fear of the Lord. May you both spend years raising up God-fearing leaders of whom the world is not worthy—men and women like you.

Marsha Omanson's careful style reading and enforcement, along with her patient teaching, have helped me overcome several long-standing writing weaknesses to present this work with much more polish than I was capable of on my own. In skilled hands, a red pen turns to gold. Mrs. Omanson, may you enjoy your retirement years as publications and writers you have strengthened bless coming generations.

Finally, I owe so much to the friends who have listened to me muse on topics in these pages (or sometimes loosely tangential to them). Each of them helped me see the importance of this message, embrace my unworthiness to spread it, and write it as well as I could. Maegan Clark, David Ferguson, Ross Kearney, Jay Strother, and Jonathan Teague, may God bless your continued learning and your courageous leadership.

Dave Cook

Greenwood, Indiana

May 2020

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

A neglected foundation will collapse even the most regal cathedral. Leaning on a crumbling foundation, the strongest pillars must fall, the sturdiest beams must snap, and the most beautiful stained-glass windows must shatter. A building is only as strong as the foundation upon which it rests.

A poor foundation is as disastrous to a leader's life as it is to a building's architecture. Pillars like wisdom, integrity, and vision decorate and support the cathedral of leadership; but those pillars must rest on a solid foundation to prevent collapse.

Leadership faces collapses, frustrated plans, and eroding trust because leaders have forgotten the biblical foundation for leadership: the fear of the LORD. Leaders may devour endless books, conferences, and TED talks,<sup>1</sup> picking up values along the way. But adding more pillars to a crumbling foundation cannot solve their problems. Leaders must build their values on a foundational fear of Jesus the Lord.

Yet, while some address the concept indirectly, both Christian and secular leadership literature neglect this foundation. The fear of God lies forgotten or assumed through a prolific history of leadership literature, while the church's few works on the fear of God scarcely make the biblical connection with leadership. Generations trained without this foundation can only be expected to fall with a great crash, like a house built on sand,<sup>2</sup> when lumbered with the weight of fame and power.

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<sup>1</sup> Though the media have changed, the principle of endless literature competing with God's teaching is not new (Eccl 12:12).

<sup>2</sup> This imagery is, of course, borrowed from Jesus (Matt 7:24–27).

This study calls the church to lay again the ancient, forgotten foundation of flourishing leadership. Flourishing leadership is grounded in the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord produces within a person at least three qualities that God and cultures all over the world highly value in leaders. The fear of the Lord is also presented in 1–2 Samuel as the key difference between David and Saul. This foundation offers profound implications for leadership training and uncovers further research opportunities.

### **Familiarity with the Literature**

Literature relevant to the fear of God in leadership falls neatly into three categories: work on the nature of the fear of God, work on leadership values, and work on the connection between the fear of God and character. Work on leadership values is further divided between Christian and non-Christian works.

### **Works on the Fear of God**

While great gaps in the literature show that the church has assumed or forgotten the fear of God through much of her history, noted Puritans once taught thoroughly on the subject and current authors show renewed interest. Authors differ in few aspects of the doctrine, like whether obedience is a result of fear or part of fear itself. This difference appears greater than it is because archaic Puritan language can mislead modern readers on the extremity of the Puritan perspective.

This misreading is possible because Puritan writings could sound to modern readers as if they equate the fear of God with being afraid of him. Their perspective is perhaps most thoroughly represented by John Bunyan in *A Treatise on the Fear of God*.<sup>3</sup> Bunyan uses phrases like “our dread and fear,” in such a way that may mislead modern readers who equate dread with terror. To be sure, Bunyan sees the fear of God as the awe,

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<sup>3</sup> John Bunyan, “A Treatise on the Fear of God; The Greatness of the Soul; A Holy Life,” in *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan*, ed. Richard L. Greaves, vol. 9, Oxford English Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

fear, and dread that God's presence and name invoke in the hearts of mankind. Chapter 2 will interact more with his perspective.<sup>4</sup>

A similar understanding surfaces in the sermons of Jeremiah Burroughs.<sup>5</sup> Burroughs uses strong images to teach that to fear God is to tremble at the Word of God, "the greatest fear that swallows up all other fears."<sup>6</sup> The tender heart that trembles at God's word runs to God, delightful in God's eyes. So, for Burroughs, the inward experience of fear leads to a right relationship with God.

Puritans taught that the fear of God led to a life of obedience, but they did not consider that obedience to be part of the fear of God itself. Bernard J. Bamberger initiated a shift in this understanding by including the resulting obedience in the very definition of the fear of God, a shift which is followed in this thesis. For the Puritans, one obeyed God's word *because* one feared God; for Bamberger, to obey God *was* to fear God.<sup>7</sup> His short 1929 article titled "Fear and Love of God in the Old Testament" is probably the single most influential work on the subject for this reason.<sup>8</sup>

Bamberger examined Hebrew references to the word group translated "fear," concluding that to fear God is not necessarily to be afraid of God but is equal to obeying God. Fearing God is not just something one experiences; it is something one does.

The works that follow Bamberger, often citing him, continue to insist that

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<sup>4</sup> Bunyan, "A Treatise on the Fear of God," 16.

<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel Fear, or, The Heart Trembling at the Word of God Evidences a Blessed Frame of Spirit: Delivered in Several Sermons from Isaiah 66:2 and 2 Kings 22:19*, ed. Don Kistler, 4th ed. (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Burroughs, *Gospel Fear*, 32.

<sup>7</sup> Though fearing the Lord does lead to obeying the Lord, the following chapter shows that obedience should still be included in the definition of the fear of the Lord.

<sup>8</sup> See Bernard Bamberger, "Fear and Love of God in the Old Testament," in *Hebrew Union College Annual* 6, accessed August 14, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.2307/23502784>.

fearing God must involve more than affect. But they balance his emphasis on a way of life with the Puritans' emphasis on experience. Modern papers on the fear of God began searching for that balance in the 1980s, which led to a few books in the early twenty-first century exploring its connection to wisdom. These books may have led to some popular-level sermon video series that this thesis does not interact with.<sup>9</sup> All this has led to what could eventually be looked back upon as a recovery of the doctrine.

Paul C. Stock's 1986 thesis "Fear of the Lord: An Investigation into Its Meaning and Relevance for Christianity Today" represents well the modern view of the fear of God.<sup>10</sup> He concludes that the phrase refers to a submissive or "servile" fear, echoing Bamberger's idea that the fear of God includes obedience. Stock also offers a helpful and painstaking historical sketch, summarizing the views of several historic theologians, especially Reformers, buried deep within their work. While not the bulk of the thesis, this historical section helps readers see how the doctrine sat in the background of the church's mind during the Reformation, more assumed than forgotten.

A few decades after papers like Stock's began surfacing, they were joined by popular books on the concept. Jerry Bridges, in his book *The Joy of Fearing God*, applies the academic and historic work on the fear of God to the Christian life.<sup>11</sup> Though the fear of God "is better described than defined,"<sup>12</sup> he does offer a short definition: "reverential awe."<sup>13</sup> Balancing both historic emphases of experience and a way of life, Bridges writes that a life lived in awe of God's greatness is necessarily a life of obedience. Bridges

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<sup>9</sup> For a popular example, see Francis Chan, *Fear God* (DVD video), Basic, vol. 1 (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Paul C. Stock, "Fear of the Lord: An Investigation into Its Meaning and Relevance for Christianity Today" (ThM thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> Jerry Bridges, *The Joy of Fearing God* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> Bridges, *The Joy of Fearing God*, 10.

<sup>13</sup> Bridges, *The Joy of Fearing God*, 18.

considers quite deeply how the fear of God affects the Christian life. But, true to his genre, he does not apply the concept particularly to leadership.

While Bridges gives the concept practical treatment, Tremper Longman gives it scholarly treatment. In his recent introduction to the biblical wisdom literature, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, Longman says that even the idea of awe does not completely capture the concept.<sup>14</sup> The fear of God is “not the fear that makes us run, but the fear that makes us pay attention and listen.”<sup>15</sup> Expressing such teachable listening, it leads to wisdom and a wisely lived life. Because the wisdom literature of the Bible is so practical in nature, a reader could easily draw applications from Longman’s ideas to leadership. Yet, because Longman is not writing particularly on leadership, he does not make those applications.

Albert Martin goes a step farther than the general Puritan sense of dread by saying that “the fear of God involves being afraid of God.” While many Puritan writers discuss terror toward God in the same works as they discuss the fear of God, they tend to treat the concepts separately. Martin writes that both reverent awe and terror are “included in the biblical notion of the fear of God,” joining concepts that Puritans and most other writers keep separate.<sup>16</sup>

Since the Puritans have contributed much to the church’s thought on the fear of God, two more recent books revive the concept through the discipline of historical theology. Arnold Frank summarizes the broader puritan understanding of the fear of God, while Joel Beeke and Paul Smalley focus more acutely on John Bunyan.<sup>17</sup> By introducing

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<sup>14</sup> Tremper Longman III, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom: A Theological Introduction to Wisdom in Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Longman, *Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Albert N. Martin, *The Forgotten Fear: Where Have All the God-Fearers Gone?* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2015), 27.

<sup>17</sup> Arnold L. Frank, *The Fear of God: A Forgotten Doctrine*, exp. 2nd ed. (Ventura, CA: Nordskog, 2008); Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *John Bunyan and*

readers to the historical teaching, these two volumes have both demonstrated and generated renewed interest in the topic.

The church thinks slightly differently about the fear of God than she did during the Puritan era. While Puritan thought emphasized experiential reverence, Bamberger emphasized the way of life brought forth by the experience, and Martin brings the concept closer to terror. A consensus could be forming that balances experience and way of life, with one foot on Bunyan's shoulder and the other foot on Bamberger's.

### **Christian Works on Leadership Values**

To discern if the fear of God is foundational to leadership, this study must understand what God and the church expect from leaders, looking for overlap on the core competencies of leadership within Christian publications.

J. Oswald Sanders's classic *Spiritual Leadership* is still widely read, revered, and referenced today. While it does not particularly list core competencies for leadership, it slowly sketches the sort of person a Christian leader ought to be.<sup>18</sup>

Aubrey Malphurs's *Being Leaders* casts clearly in its first chapter the distinctiveness of a Christian leader. This description gives an answer to the oft-asked question "is there a fundamental difference between Christian leaders and other leaders?" If fearing God does indeed change one's leadership, Malphurs's description could show a useful contrast between the leader who fears God and the leader who does not.<sup>19</sup>

*Christian Leadership Essentials*, edited by David Dockery, gives a comprehensive outline of the skills necessary for Christian leadership. Though geared somewhat toward educational institutions, its listed core competencies apply neatly

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*the Grace of Fearing God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2016).

<sup>18</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, Commitment to Spiritual Growth Series (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994).

<sup>19</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *Being Leaders: The Nature of Authentic Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003).

across all Christian contexts. This volume is especially useful because its chapters are written by several different authors, allowing readers to find overlap between the authors' perspectives.<sup>20</sup>

Don Howell's influential biblical theology of leadership, *Servants of the Servant* sketches profiles of eighteen biblical leaders. Howell paints pictures of faithful (or unfaithful) leadership through one filter: all the leaders are servants of God and servants of their people. This portrait/profile format presents a unique opportunity to observe the role the fear of God played in the development of biblical leaders.<sup>21</sup>

Useful in a similar way, Robert Clinton's *The Making of a Leader*<sup>22</sup> argues for a pattern in the development of great leaders, based on study from "hundreds of lives" of "historic, biblical, and contemporary" leaders.<sup>23</sup> Clinton found that leaders tend to go through a "generalized timeline" of six phases: foundational, inner-life growth, ministry maturing, life maturing, convergence, and afterglow.<sup>24</sup> Such a thorough study of the patterns of leadership development may shed insight into the role of the fear of God in that development.

Of course, the Bible does give clear criteria for deacon and elder leadership within the church—criteria summarized and outlined in many volumes. One particularly accessible volume is Thabiti Anyabwile's *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons*.<sup>25</sup> Like many other works, Anyabwile walks through the leadership criteria mentioned in 1

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<sup>20</sup> David S. Dockery, ed., *Christian Leadership Essentials: A Handbook for Managing Christian Organizations* (Nashville: B. & H. Academic, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Don N. Howell, *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003).

<sup>22</sup> J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988).

<sup>23</sup> Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 8.

<sup>24</sup> Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 37.

<sup>25</sup> Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons*, IX Marks Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).



Timothy 3 and Titus 1, giving clear exposition on their meaning.<sup>26</sup>

While these works lay out the biblical criteria for ministry, D. A. Carson's *The Cross and Christian Ministry* teaches a biblical approach to ministry. Correcting the church's tendency to focus on show and glamor, Carson paints from several chapters in 1 Corinthians a picture of ministry that knows "nothing . . . except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). While not directly connecting these concepts with the fear of God, Carson shows what God-fearing church leadership might look like.<sup>27</sup>

Michael Wilder and Timothy Paul Jones also demonstrate God-fearing leadership without quite naming it in their volume on pastoral leadership, *The God Who Goes before You*. Treating leadership first as followership of Jesus, Wilder and Jones look to God's word, presence, power, justice, and faithfulness as foundations for strong leadership, touching on themes that certainly intersect with the fear of the Lord, even mentioning at one point "leaders who fear and follow God."<sup>28</sup>

Timothy Witmer paints similar pictures of God-fearing church leadership in *The Shepherd Leader*. Witmer points out that shepherding (knowing, feeding, leading, and protecting God's sheep) is "the fundamental responsibility of church leaders," because the word "pastor" means "shepherd" and because the acts of shepherding are central to the biblical picture of leadership.<sup>29</sup>

Timothy Laniak points to shepherding not only as the *responsibility* of church leaders, but as the fundamental *identity* of church leaders in *Shepherds After My Own*

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<sup>26</sup> Anyabwile's perspective also represents well the influential IX Marks teaching on church leadership, which is concisely explained in Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, *Understanding Church Leadership*, Church Basics (Nashville: B. & H., 2016).

<sup>27</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons from 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> Michael S. Wilder and Timothy Paul Jones, *The God Who Goes Before You: Pastoral Leadership as Christ-Centered Followership* (Nashville: B. & H., 2018), 138.

<sup>29</sup> Timothy Z. Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P. & R., 2010), 2.

*Heart*.<sup>30</sup> A biblical theology, Laniak's book looks at the many occurrences of the Bible's extended leadership/shepherding metaphor through different biblical genres. Because metaphors are meant to paint a holistic picture, to give "perspective" to "praxis," the study is meant to paint a whole picture of pastoral leadership.<sup>31</sup> Witmer and Laniak both show the necessity of shepherding to leadership, but neither connect the concept or work of shepherding with the fear of God.

Although much has been written on vision, enough to show its prominence as a key value leadership, little clarity has been reached on what it means. Bill Hybels defines it helpfully as "a picture of the future that produces passion,"<sup>32</sup> while Will Mancini and Warren Bird outline the work of vision helpfully in *God Dreams*, walking church leaders through the process of crafting and communicating a compelling vision for their churches. While Mancini's "horizon storyline" tool gives some help, the twelve templates in the middle of the book provide clearer examples, which churches can easily use to craft their own vision.<sup>33</sup>

### **Non-Christian Works on Leadership Values**

To discern if the fear of God is foundational to leadership, this study must also summarize what the broader culture expects from its leaders.

Peter Northouse gives an excellent summary of twentieth-century and twenty-first-century approaches and the research behind them. Among many approaches, the Trait Approach looks for qualities commonly found in people whom others consider to be

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<sup>30</sup> Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 20 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 27.

<sup>32</sup> Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> Will Mancini and Warren Bird, *God Dreams: 12 Vision Templates for Finding and Focusing Your Church's Future* (Nashville: B. & H., 2016).

good leaders. Summarizing six major studies from 1948 to 2004, Northouse finds five factors that appear consistently: intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability. The conclusion, then, is that someone with these five traits would be considered by others as a natural leader.<sup>34</sup>

If the Trait Approach tells readers who tends to rise to the top, a 2004 survey by Suzanne Bates tells them who they wish would rise to the top.<sup>35</sup> Bates, a CEO coach, has unique access to American business leaders and the people who work for them. Her survey asked, among other things, what professionals wanted in their bosses. From the results, Bates “identified ten key dimensions of leadership,”<sup>36</sup> the most valued of which were integrity, vision, and listening.

Bates’s specific findings concur largely with a major global study of the world’s leadership values conducted the same year. The Global Leadership and Organizational Effectiveness Program (GLOBE) looked into sixty-two countries and, based on their findings, divided those countries into ten unique clusters with their own set of leadership values. Though the study is sometimes relied upon to help discern differing leadership values between cultures, one chapter also found a few universally desirable attributes sought after in all ten country clusters. This research claims that nearly every culture in the world would see someone with integrity, a value-based charisma, and interpersonal skills as an exceptional leader.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 7th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2015).

<sup>35</sup> Suzanne Bates, *Speak Like a CEO: Secrets for Commanding Attention and Getting Results* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005).

<sup>36</sup> Bates, *Speak Like a CEO*, 208.

<sup>37</sup> Peter W. Dorfman, Paul J. Hanges, and Felix C. Brodbeck, “Leadership and Cultural Variation: The Identification of Culturally Endorsed Leadership Profiles,” in *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies* ed. Robert J. House et al. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004), 669–719. These findings are summarized helpfully in Northouse, *Leadership*, 448.

## Works that Connect the Fear of God to Character or Leadership

Many listed sources value integrity, a concept closely connected with character. Interestingly, a few resources do connect character with the fear of God in ways that carry meaning for leadership. Others touch briefly at the connection but do not develop it.

Neuroscience continues to explore the relationship between religious belief and character. Andre Newberg and Mark Robert Waldman spent four years studying how human perceptions of God affect the mind and character, reporting their findings in *How God Changes Your Brain*. They concluded that contemplative religious practices lead to “peacefulness, social awareness, and compassion.”<sup>38</sup> This finding shows from extra-biblical data that the fear of God would improve the character of a leader over time.

President Theodore Roosevelt hints at the role of the fear of God in leadership in his small work titled *Fear God and Take Your Own Part*, a title he borrowed from a nineteenth-century novel.<sup>39</sup> Though he does not write particularly to leaders, his presidential words read like a modern leadership book. His application of the fear of God echoes Deuteronomy 17:19–20 and 2 Samuel 23:3–4, extending quickly to just treatment of one’s countrymen: “When we fear God we do justice and demand justice for the men within our borders.” Upon this first duty of men, Roosevelt builds the second duty of answering the calling of the hour, referred to in his title as “take your own part.” Though Roosevelt wrote to a general audience without applying his words to leadership, his words show how the fear of God was foundational to his own leadership.<sup>40</sup> This whisper

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<sup>38</sup> Andrew B. Newberg and Mark Robert Waldman, *How God Changes Your Brain: Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist* (New York: Ballantine, 2009), 7.

<sup>39</sup> Roosevelt credits the title as a line spoken by the lead character in George Henry Borrow, *Lavengro* (McLean, VA: IndyPublish, 2002).

<sup>40</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *Fear God and Take Your Own Part* (New York: George H. Doran, 1916), 15.

provides another hint that the fear of God may be quietly assumed rather than long forgotten.

Beeke and Smalley touch at the connection between the fear of God and leadership, though they do not explore it. While summarizing how Bunyan teaches that the fear of God makes one more useful to God, they take the point further.

If we desire to be useful to God in the home, church, or state, then we should cultivate the fear of the Lord. Ministers who walk in the fear of God are blessed by God to "turn many away from iniquity" (Mal. 2:5–6). Pastors who fear the Lord keep watch over themselves and their doctrine, saving themselves and their hearers (see 1 Tim. 4:16). Nor is this principle limited to those who hold an official position of leadership. Housewives whose chaste lifestyle is "coupled with fear" are the kind of women whom God uses to convict and convert ungodly husbands (1 Peter 3:1–2).<sup>41</sup>

In these words, Beeke and Smalley make perhaps the strongest connection between the fear of the Lord and leadership. For them it is a general connection, the fear of the Lord strengthening leadership because it increases overall usefulness in life.

Another connection between the fear of God and leadership comes from Martin. When speaking of the selection of judges in Exodus 18, Martin directly notes the necessity of the fear of God for administering justice. In contrast with the general application of Beeke and Smalley, Martin focuses on one aspect of leadership enhanced by the fear of God.<sup>42</sup>

### **Void in The Literature**

Though the subjects of the fear of the Lord and leadership have each been studied individually, literature on each subject makes only an occasional cursory connection with the other. It is the connection between them that remains to be explored. While that connection is strong in the Bible, it is almost non-existent in the literature. Thus, research is needed to develop the biblical connections between leadership and the

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<sup>41</sup> Beeke and Smalley, *John Bunyan and the Grace of Fearing God*, 83.

<sup>42</sup> Martin, *The Forgotten Fear*, 3.

fear of the Lord, particularly research that applies those connections to ministry.

Works on the fear of God either include lifestyle in the definition or insist that the fear of God affects one's lifestyle. Of course, lifestyle has implications for leadership. But only a few of those works touch on those implications while none develop them.

Christian works on leadership often appeal to character, integrity, and a relationship with God. But these appeals stop short of teaching that the fear of God is important for leadership or foundational to those values.

Non-Christian works on leadership appeal to similar values. But, because they usually do not connect these values with God, there is no reason they would connect these values with the fear of God.

Even when Roosevelt does connect the fear of God with values and character, making implications for leadership, he does not directly connect the fear of God with leadership. Newberg and Waldman also make the connection between lifestyle and fear of a god but do not specify the God of the Bible and do not connect the fear of god with leadership.

By contrast, the Bible unmistakably ties leadership to the fear of God. David rejoices in the king who “rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth” (2 Sam 23:3–4). Kings ascending the throne must “learn to fear the Lord” (Deut 17:19, cf. 1 Sam 12:14). Learning to fear God will cause the king to walk in God's ways, the standard by which the king will be judged after his death.<sup>43</sup> Nehemiah, unlike the governors before him, treated his people fairly because he feared God (Neh 5:9–10, 15). Solomon, training his sons to rule the kingdom after

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<sup>43</sup> See the many summaries of kings' lives written during their lives or more often after their death, including 1 Kgs 11:6, 14:22, 15:26, 15:34, 16:25, 16:30, 22:43, 22:52; 2 Kgs 3:2, 8:18, 8:27, 13:2, 13:11, 14:24, 15:9, 15:18, 15:24, 15:28, 17:2, 21:2, 21:6, 21:16, 21:20, 23:32, 23:37, 24:9, 24:19; 2 Chr 20:32, 21:6, 22:4, 33:2, 33:6, 33:22, 36:5, 36:9 and 36:12.

him, teaches them, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7). In the parable of the persistent widow, readers learn that the judge is wicked by reading that he “neither feared God nor respected men” (Luke 18:2).

This thesis develops the biblical connections between leadership and the fear of the Lord, a connection made explicit in the Bible but rarely made in other works. Thus it aims to fill an important void in biblical and leadership literature.

### **Thesis**

Leadership that helps flourish others is grounded in the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord develops within a person the prized leadership qualities of integrity, wisdom, and strong values, bringing about the flourishing of those being led. The Bible teaches this foundation of flourishing leadership by requiring leaders in several levels of authority to fear the Lord, by connecting the fear of the Lord with several core leadership competencies, and by contrasting David’s fear of the Lord with Saul’s lack thereof. This foundation requires a fundamental change in the way the church teaches and understands leadership.

### **Outline**

Because the concept of the fear of the Lord is so central to this thesis but is understood only loosely by many Christians, chapter 2 provides an overview of the Bible’s teaching on the fear of the Lord. It summarizes the nature of fearing God, the resulting way of life, the way one learns to fear God, the consequential benefits, and its centrality to Christian discipleship. It will also give two clarifications, (1) that the phrase “fear of God” can sometimes refer to neighborliness in the Bible, and (2) that fearing God does not mean being afraid of God.

Once the concept of the fear of the Lord is established, chapter 3 makes the central argument. This chapter shows that the fear of the Lord leads to core leadership virtues by drawing upon the highly influential *Culture, Leadership, and Organization:*

*the GLOBE Study Into 62 Societies*, to show that nearly every culture in the world values integrity, wisdom, and strong values in its leaders.<sup>44</sup> This chapter then surveys the biblical teaching on God's requirements of leaders, finding that the same three qualities (integrity, wisdom, and strong values) are essential to leadership and are rooted in the fear of the Lord.

Chapter 4 explores the theme of the fear of the Lord through the narratives of 1–2 Samuel. After arguing that the writer of 1–2 Samuel points readers back to the Law's criteria of a God-fearing king (Deut 17:18–20), this chapter measures both David and Saul against those criteria. Its conclusion further solidifies the role of the fear of the Lord in leadership.

Chapter 5 begins the work of rethinking leadership atop a better foundation, turning concepts from previous chapters into practical suggestions. These suggestions range from general church practices to specific leadership development strategies. The chapter also calls for further study and for the development of a new model of leadership based on the fear of the Lord.

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<sup>44</sup> Dorfman, Hanges, and Brodbeck, *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations*, 677–78.



## CHAPTER 2

### AN OVERVIEW OF THE FEAR OF THE LORD

Ever difficult to define, the fear of the Lord combines boot-shaking thrill, eye-covering awe, holy reverence, humble teachability, glad obedience, and growing vitality. These elements do not straightforwardly come together into a clear and concise definition, especially when the concept of divine fear already sounds foreign to modern ears. Writers looking to synthesize the Bible’s teaching on the fear of God have no easy task before them. But this challenge has not stopped recent publication.

These studies into the fear of the Lord have reached similar conclusions that combine concepts of awe, teachability, and obedience. The *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* says the phrase refers not to terror-filled fear, but to awe and reverence.<sup>1</sup> Tremper Longman, an editor of that dictionary, refers to it elsewhere as an emotion of awe that “makes us listen up and pay attention” to God’s teaching.<sup>2</sup> Jerry Bridges hesitantly defines it as “reverential awe,” noting that the whole concept is broader.<sup>3</sup> Arnold Frank adds adoration to that reverence, comparing it to the disposition of the angels before God in Isaiah 6.<sup>4</sup> These understandings echo those of earlier theologians like John Owen, who defined it comprehensively as “not that gracious affection of our

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<sup>1</sup> Leland Ryken et al., “Fear,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 277, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>2</sup> Tremper Longman III, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom: A Theological Introduction to Wisdom in Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 12–13.

<sup>3</sup> Jerry Bridges, *The Joy of Fearing God* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2004), 18.

<sup>4</sup> Arnold L. Frank, *The Fear of God: A Forgotten Doctrine*, exp. 2nd ed. (Ventura, CA: Nordskog, 2008), 16. This volume clearly summarizes and synthesizes Puritan perspectives on the Fear of the Lord.

minds which is distinctly so called, but that whole worship of God,”<sup>5</sup> and like John Calvin, who defined it as “a reverence compounded of honor and fear.”<sup>6</sup>

The Bible presents the fear of the Lord as a disposition that reveres God and follows his teachings. This reverence for and obedience to God comes from a revelation of God’s greatness and leads to a blessed life even as it leads to Satanic testing. Because the fear of the Lord includes obedience, it is foundational to Christian discipleship and thus is foundational to Christian leadership. But fearing the Lord is not equal to being afraid of the Lord, nor is it equal to the neighborliness of people the Bible sometimes calls “God-fearing.”

### **Two Points of Clarification**

Two points of clarification are needed. The first looks to clarify a common misunderstanding of the fear of the Lord. The second places a delimitation on this study.

#### **To Fear the Lord Is Not to Be Afraid of the Lord**

Some have unhelpfully included being afraid of God in their concept of the fear of God. Albert Martin reaches this conclusion by including any instance of a person experiencing any type of fear before God in his treatment of the fear of God, whether or not a phrase like “the fear of the Lord” or “God-fearing” is used. Because of the compound nature of expressions like “the fear of the Lord,” Bruce Waltke cautions against this approach, comparing it to understanding a butterfly by studying butter and

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<sup>5</sup> John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. W. H. Goold, vol. 6 (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 469.

<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. Baillie, John T. McNeill, and Henry P. Van Dusen, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960), 571; see Paul C. Stock, “Fear of the Lord: An Investigation into Its Meaning and Relevance for Christianity Today” (ThM thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1986), 4–15, for a helpful summary of Calvin’s view and of the views of several Reformers and Puritans.

flies.<sup>7</sup> For instance, Martin appeals to Adam being afraid of God after eating from the forbidden tree. While Adam was “afraid” when he heard God’s footsteps (Gen 3:10), he was nowhere said to be filled with “the fear of God.” So while the word “fear” is used in the story, the compound concept of the fear of God is not. The story has butter and a fly but no butterfly. Martin correctly claims that being afraid of God is right “if you have biblical grounds to be afraid of him,” but then incorrectly includes that terror of God as part of a healthy fear of God.<sup>8</sup>

The Puritan perspective is more complicated, often calling the sort of fear Adam had before God “ungodly” because it actually “supplants the fear of God.” While they often treat ungodly fear in their works on the fear of God, they tend to separate the two concepts.<sup>9</sup> Because Puritans sometimes treat the two concepts close together in the same work, their readers may misunderstand and read the two as more closely connected than intended.

This treatment of ungodly fear is not the only reason Puritans can be misunderstood to equate the fear of God with being afraid of God. The now archaic language which adds a beautiful flavor to their writing can also blur the lines between awe and terror to modern ears. For instance, Bunyan, quotes the prophet Isaiah, “Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread” (Isa 8:12–13). Bunyan then comments, “Set his Majesty before the

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<sup>7</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1–15*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 100.

<sup>8</sup> Albert N. Martin, *The Forgotten Fear: Where Have All the God-Fearers Gone?* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2015), 27, 29.

<sup>9</sup> Frank summarizes this Puritan perspective succinctly in Frank, *The Fear of God*, 26. For a Puritan example, see John Bunyan, “A Treatise on the Fear of God; The Greatness of the Soul; A Holy Life,” in *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan*, ed. Richard L. Greaves, vol. 9, Oxford English Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981). See also John Flavel, “A Practical Treatise on Fear,” in *The Works of John Flavel*, vol. 3 (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1982). Flavel uses the term “sinful” instead of “ungodly.”

eyes of your souls, and let his excellency make you afraid with godly fear.” He then gives examples of the dreadfulness of God and the trembling of those who meet him. For Bunyan, the sights of both God’s dreadfulness and goodness should move his readers to godly fear.<sup>10</sup> Lest readers misunderstand, Joel Beeke and Paul Smalley helpfully note that Bunyan’s use of “dread” actually refers positively to awe and reverence.<sup>11</sup> To be sure, Puritans saw godly or filial fear as “analogous to the fear a son has towards his father . . . a fear of respect or reverence, of awe or adoration” and separate from ungodly fear.<sup>12</sup> In instances like this Puritans may sound as if they are writing about being afraid when they intend to write about the reverent sort of fear.

To further complicate matters, Bunyan’s example of Isaiah 8:12–13 does not refer directly to the fear of God, as evidenced by its use the Hebrew מוֹרָא (fear, terror, awe)<sup>13</sup> and עָרַץ (to be terrified, to be in dread)<sup>14</sup> to refer to fear and dread respectively.<sup>15</sup> Phrases like “the fear of the Lord” use instead the word יִרָא (to fear, be afraid, fear God, et. al.)<sup>16</sup> or the similar יִרָא (fear).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Bunyan, “A Treatise on the Fear of God,” 7–9.

<sup>11</sup> See Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *John Bunyan and the Grace of Fearing God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2016), 35. The concepts of awe and reverence surface regularly in Bunyan, “A Treatise on the Fear of God.”

<sup>12</sup> Frank, *The Fear of God*, 53–77, 121.

<sup>13</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, “מוֹרָא,” in *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. and ed. M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2000), Logos Bible Software.

<sup>14</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, “עָרַץ,” in Richardson, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

<sup>15</sup> Verse 12 does use the יִרָא to refer to Israel fearing things other than God.

<sup>16</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, “יִרָא,” in Richardson, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

<sup>17</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, “יִרָא,” in Richardson, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

Readers could also equate the fear of God with being afraid of God because the Bible uses the verb  $\text{ירא}$  to refer also to exposed sinners being afraid of God.<sup>18</sup> For instance, Adam says to God, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid” (Gen 3:10), referring to both shame and panic.<sup>19</sup> Sarah also fears when God exposes her laughter at his promises (Gen 18:15).<sup>20</sup>

But none of these examples use phrases like "fear of God" or "fear of the Lord." They only connect the word “fear” with the person of God. In fact, no instance of  $\text{ירא}$  or  $\text{ירָא}$  in the Old Testament equates the fear of God to being afraid of God.<sup>21</sup> Thus none of them show that the fear of God is the same as being afraid of God. In fact,

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<sup>18</sup> This is the approach that leads Martin to conclude that being afraid of God is included as part of fearing God in Martin, *The Forgotten Fear*, 24–31.

<sup>19</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis. Chapters 1–17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 193; Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: B. & H., 1996), 240–41, Logos Bible Software; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Word, 2014), 77, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>20</sup> Both these examples are noted in Miles Custis, “Fear,” in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum, et al. Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), Logos Bible Software.

<sup>21</sup> Of 316 occurrences of the lemma  $\text{ירא}$  in the Hebrew Old Testament, the ESV translates 3 of them "terrifying" (Deut 1:19, Deut 8:15, Deut 10:21), 2 of them "frighten" (2 Chr 32:18, Neh 6:9), 1 of them "terrible" (Isa 21:1), and 1 of them "fearsome" (Hab 1:7). One of these occurrences (Deut 12:21) refers to terrible things the Lord has done, but none refer directly to being afraid of God or to the fear of God. The ESV translates 88 occurrences "afraid," 13 of which refer to being afraid of God (Gen 3:10, Gen 18:15, Gen 18:27, Exod 3:6, Deut 5:5, 1 Sa 4:7, 2 Sam 6:9, 1 Chr 13:12, Ps 119:120, Isa 41:5, Jonah 1:5, Jonah 1:10, and Zech 9:5). Only 1 of these thirteen occurrences also refers to the fear of God or the fear of the Lord (Jonah 1:10, in which Jonah’s fear of the Lord makes the sailors afraid and those sailors later fear the Lord themselves). But this 1 occurrence does not equate the two concepts. Of the 65 occurrences of the similar lemma  $\text{ירָא}$  in the Hebrew Old Testament, 51 refer to the fear of God or the fear of the Lord (Gen 22:12, Gen 42:18, Exod 9:20, Exod 18:21, 1 Kgs 18:3, 1 Kgs 18:12, 2 Kgs 4:1, 2 Kgs 17:34, 2 Kgs 17:41, Job 1:1, Job 1:8, Job 2:3, Ps 15:4, Ps 22:23, Ps 22:25, Ps 25:12, Ps 25:14, Ps 31:9, Ps 33:18, Ps 34:7, Ps 34:9, Ps 60:4, Ps 61:5, Ps 66:16, Ps 85:9, Ps 103:11, Ps 103:13, Ps 103:17, Ps 11:5, Ps 112:1, Ps 115:11, Ps 115:13, Ps 118:4, Ps 119:74, Ps 119:79, Ps 128:1, Ps 128:4, Ps 135:20, Ps 145:19, Ps 147:11, Prov 14:2, Prov 31:30, Eccl 7:18, Eccl 8:12, Eccl 8:13, Isa 50:10, Jer 26:19, Jonah 1:9, 2 in Mal 3:16, Mal 4:2). None of these 51 occurrences also refer to being afraid of God. This information was compiled using the Bible Word Study tool in Logos Bible Software 7, which allowed me to group instances of the words according to how the ESV translated them.

biblical authors usually do not use the word אָרַךְ when referring to terror or dread, usually opting for a stronger verb, as perhaps in Isaiah 8:13.<sup>22</sup>

Bernard Bamberger clears confusion by showing through a few examples that fearing God *cannot* be the same as being afraid of God. Samaritans hoping to learn from a priest how to fear the Lord cannot possibly want to learn to be afraid (2 Kgs 17). A Psalmist offering to teach readers the fear of the Lord would not sensibly be teaching readers how to be afraid (Ps 34:12). Finding forgiveness would not cause believers to be more afraid (Ps 130:4). Moses would not tell Israel not to be afraid because God wants his people to be afraid of him (Exod 20:20).<sup>23</sup> While Bunyan and other Puritans hint at this when they differentiate between godly and ungodly fear,<sup>24</sup> Bamberger demonstrates most clearly from the texts of the Bible that the fear of the Lord cannot be the same as being afraid of God.

Bamberger, a Jewish scholar studying the Hebrew Bible, does not use the New Testament or messianic prophecies in his argument. Thus, Christian testimony can add to his argument. The New Testament teaches that being afraid of God cannot be part of any loving relationship with God: “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love” (1 John 4:18). Daniel Akin, speaking of the same fear, and pointing out how its placement in the beginning of the sentence emphasizes it, offers a powerful literal translation: “fear not is in love.” He also affirms what is evident in the text: that though φόβος (fear) can refer to healthy reverence and awe, it refers here to dread.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps more pointedly, if Isaiah

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<sup>22</sup> See Bernard Bamberger, “Fear and Love of God in the Old Testament,” in *Hebrew Union College Annual* 6, accessed August 14, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.2307/23502784>.

<sup>23</sup> Bunyan, “A Treatise on the Fear of God.”

<sup>24</sup> Frank gives a helpful treatment of this concept and Puritan response. Frank, *The Fear of God*, 31–33.

<sup>25</sup> Daniel L. Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, The New American Commentary, vol. 38

11:1–5 refers to Jesus, whose “delight shall be in the fear of the Lord” (Isa 11:3), then he cannot possibly be afraid of himself. Thus, a Christian cannot both fear God and be afraid of God.

During several worshipful moments in the New Testament, the Lord or his messengers specifically tell worshipers not to be afraid. This restraint is a “part of the pattern of a divine visitation.”<sup>26</sup> When Jesus’s disciples see him walking on water, he calls out to them, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid” (Matt 14:27). Before he speaks, they are terrified; after they take him into the boat, they worship him. This sets into stark contrast the concept of being afraid of Jesus against the concept of worshiping Jesus.

The women who first witnessed Jesus’s resurrection had to be reassured twice, “do not be afraid” (Matt 28:5, 10), once by an angel and again by the risen Jesus. As a result, “they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy” (Matt 28:8). While Mark emphasizes the ladies’ fear by using multiple terms for it, Matthew clarifies the positive nature of their reaction by expressing it “only with μετὰ φόβος (‘fear’), which he balances with καὶ χαρᾶς (‘and joy’).”<sup>27</sup>

Thus, though the Hebrew and Greek words for fear can refer to sinners being afraid of God, readers who may naturally think of dread or terror when reading phrases like “the fear of the Lord” should instead remember concepts like awe and marveling mentioned earlier in this chapter. Those phrases are never used in a way that must mean dread, the phrases are sometimes used in ways that show they cannot mean dread, and the Bible teaches that dread of God cannot be part of a loving, worshipful relationship with him.

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(Nashville: B. & H., 2001), 186, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>26</sup> John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 601, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>27</sup> Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1251.

## **The Fear of God Sometimes Refers to Neighborliness**

The Bible occasionally uses the concept of fearing God and phrases like “fear of God” differently from the way they are used in this thesis. In some instances, the phrase refers generally to a decent lifestyle inside or outside God’s people.<sup>28</sup> Arnold Frank helpfully describes this usage as “neighborliness.”<sup>29</sup> This moral code of conduct is the fear Abraham pined for when he handed Sarah over to Abimelech thinking, “there is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife” (Gen 20:11).<sup>30</sup>

This distinction between meanings can make studying the fear of God difficult. Readers may try to merge different meanings into one or struggle to know which meaning a writer meant. Context often aids the reader in finding which nuance the writer intended. While other uses of the phrase may have implications for leadership, this thesis will focus on a disposition among God’s people that reveres him and follows his teachings. This usage is by far the most common biblical use of the phrase.

## **The Fear of the Lord Comes from a Revelation of God’s Astounding Nature**

Martin helpfully and clearly shows that the fear of God is “a promised blessing of the new covenant,” given supernaturally by God to men. God indeed promises to give his people a new heart, “that they may fear me forever,” and to “put the fear of me in

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<sup>28</sup> Waltke and R. N. Whybray argue that the phrase “fear of God” always means general morality while “fear of the Lord” always refers to God’s relationship with Israel. Bamberger corrects this course, pointing out that in the texts “the distinction is not carried out consistently.” R. N. Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs: The Concept of Wisdom in Proverbs 1–9*, Studies in Biblical Theology 45 (Naperville, IL: A.R. Allenson, 1965), 96–97; Bruce Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 101; Bamberger, “Fear and Love of God in the Old Testament,” 46.

<sup>29</sup> Frank, *The Fear of God*, 17–18. Frank sees this neighborliness as based on the fear of divine retribution, which is an accurate representation of the general Puritan understanding.

<sup>30</sup> Bunyan, “A Treatise on the Fear of God,” 22; Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 256–57.



their hearts” (Jer 32:39–40).<sup>31</sup> Thus, while new covenant Christians should work to grow in the fear of the Lord, they can rejoice to know that God has already done the work of planting it in their new hearts. This section outlines how the Lord does this work and how Christians tend to grow in the fear of the Lord.

The fear of the Lord begins when someone sees a glimpse of his astounding glory and reveres him. This person may read of God’s defeat of the nations and tremble with joy (Pss 2:11, 64:9). He may taste the sweetness of forgiveness and marvel (Ps 130:4). He may receive gratefully an unshakable kingdom and worship with reverent awe (Heb 12:28). This person does not take lightly the things of God. He wonders and marvels at them with a thrilling joy.

The fear of the Lord, then, is not natural but learned. It is a reaction to a divine encounter.<sup>32</sup> The *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* points out that the fear of God comes especially from “an experiential knowledge of who he is.” Those who experience first-hand God’s astounding nature tend to fear him most severely.<sup>33</sup>

Some people experience this fear-inducing glory when they see God defeat his enemies. In Psalm 64, David asks for protection from “the secret plots of the wicked” (Ps 64:2) who purpose destruction through words: whetting swords, shooting arrows, and laying snares with their tongues.<sup>34</sup> But these arrows do not consume David; instead, “God shoots his arrows” at the wicked, reversing the direction of the arrows and ruining David’s enemies (Ps 64:7). When God turns the words of the wicked against them, onlookers notice. “Such as had formerly overlooked a divine providence altogether”

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<sup>31</sup> Martin, *The Forgotten Fear*, 90–91.

<sup>32</sup> G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds, “ירא,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

<sup>33</sup> Ryken et al., “Fear,” 277.

<sup>34</sup> Tate points out the destructive language used in the Psalm, pointing to the destructive intent of David’s enemies. Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 20 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 133.

begin to wonder and “speak to one another of a subject hitherto entirely new to them.”<sup>35</sup> David calls this “fear” (Ps 64:9). God has displayed his glory by delivering David and destroying his enemies. Now the fearless enemies are gone and everyone who remains fears at their destruction.<sup>36</sup>

Others, too, fear God after seeing him gloriously deliver his people and defeat his enemies. Even some Egyptians, after thirsting for the blood of the Nile and nursing painful boils at God’s mighty hand, feared the word of the Lord (Exod 9:18–21).<sup>37</sup> Later, Israel, after seeing the Egyptian army scattered dead on the seashore, feared the Lord, trusting both him and Moses (Exod 14:31).<sup>38</sup> Israel later saw the Jordan River dry before their eyes so that they would fear the Lord (Josh 4:24). When God rescues David, “the righteous shall see and fear” (Ps 52:6). A crowd at Pentecost heard the resurrection of Jesus proclaimed, saw tongues of fire, and heard foreign languages that somehow sounded familiar, causing fear (φόβος) to fall upon every disciple (Acts 2:43) and moving them to take careful note of God’s revelation.<sup>39</sup>

Others, instead, fear the Lord after marveling at his forgiveness. The Psalmist says as much: “But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared” (Ps 130:4). Scholars debate the connection between forgiveness and fear, joined by the word יִפְחָד (that you may). John Goldingay emphasizes that one may revere the Lord because of

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<sup>35</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms, Calvin’s Commentaries*, vol. 5, trans. James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 449–450, quoted with modern English in “John Calvin,” in Herman J. Selderhuis, *Psalms 1–72, Reformation Commentary on Scripture*, vol. 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 444. The wording presented here is from Anderson’s translation.

<sup>36</sup> Konrad Schaefer and David W. Cotter, *Psalms*, Berit Olam Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 155.

<sup>37</sup> This also serves to highlight Pharaoh’s stubbornness, since he presumably did not fear or move his livestock. Peter Enns, *Exodus: From Biblical Text . . . to Contemporary Life*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 222.

<sup>38</sup> Enns, *Exodus*, 278.

<sup>39</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 151.

forgiveness, noting that forgiveness does not always lead one to fear him.<sup>40</sup> Allen sees a more natural connection, that “forgiveness increases the sinner’s reverent awe and trust in Yahweh.”<sup>41</sup> The word itself probably has too wide a semantic range to clearly dictate whether forgiveness always leads to fear, sometimes leads to fear, naturally leads to fear, is granted for the purpose of fear, or some combination of connections.<sup>42</sup> But any rendering clarifies that the fear of the Lord can come as the result of forgiveness.

A follower of God who has never experienced powerful manifestations of his astounding nature can still learn to fear God by reading of his astounding nature. Rising kings were commanded to do just that, to learn to fear God by reading from the Law daily (Deut 17:18–20). As Daniel Block summarizes, “Faithful reading of the Torah is key to a proper disposition toward Yahweh. For the first time in the book, the Torah is portrayed as a medium by which the fear of Yahweh is instilled in the heart/mind.”<sup>43</sup> The king does not necessarily have to experience God directly, but must seek God through his word. This must be because the spirit who breathed out the God’s words (2 Tim 3:16) is also “the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord” (Isa 11:2).

If the king learns the fear of the Lord by reading the law, so should all Israel. Peter Craigie summarizes the importance of experiencing God and of the Scriptures in the life of Israel.

The role of the *book* in the life of the king is of importance for understanding the full dimensions of Israel's faith. In the early part of Moses' address, he recalled for his audience the events of past history; on the basis of the experience of God in history (one form of revelation), the Israelites drew strength for the future. But the

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<sup>40</sup> John Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 527–28.

<sup>41</sup> Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2011), 256, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>42</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, “לִּירֵאָה,” in Richardson, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

<sup>43</sup> Daniel Isaac Block, *Deuteronomy: From Biblical Text . . . to Contemporary Life*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 420.

revelation of the word of God, written down for successive generations, was also a source of strength. Both the acts of God and the words of God were recorded; but while the former gave evidence of the living reality of their God, it was the latter that provided in detail the guidance and wisdom for daily living, in the first place for the king.<sup>44</sup>

Later, not only the king but all Israel would be instructed to gather together every seven years for the reading of the law so that they might learn to fear the Lord (Deut 31:10–13). In this renewal ceremony, “the renewed dedication would find its expression in the fear of God and in obedience to his law.”<sup>45</sup> Israel and her king would continue to learn to fear the Lord through reading of his word.

Even foreign kings deep in schemes against the Lord can read an invitation to repent and fear him in Psalm 2. They do not have to perish, for God’s coming destruction of his enemies warns them to abandon their futile scheming to instead “serve the lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling” (Ps 2:11). Yes, the Lord would “break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel” (Ps 2:9). But God warns them of it now, with fearful language, inviting them to avoid such awful fate and instead serve the Lord.<sup>46</sup>

The Psalm goes on to describe the fearful service these kings should offer, connecting several concepts. Ross points out that it “has the religious sense of worshipping God and obeying his commands,”<sup>47</sup> in line with lexical definitions of עָבַד (serve).<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 257. Italics original.

<sup>45</sup> Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 371.

<sup>46</sup> Wenham notes that these words are one of only a few commands in the Psalter addressed to foreigners. Gordon J. Wenham, *Psalms as Torah: Reading Biblical Song Ethically*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 213–14.

<sup>47</sup> Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2011), 211, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>48</sup> Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., “עָבַד,” in *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, trans. Edward Robinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), Logos Bible Software; Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, “עָבַד,” in Richardson, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

Goldingay notes from the language of the Psalm that “joy, and trembling go together.”<sup>49</sup> Johannes Bugenhagen summarizes the invitation by calling all to serve the Lord “not in hypocrisy of an outward worship of God, which today or only for the present is called holiness, but in fear, that is, so that you may tremble at his word.”<sup>50</sup> By revealing poetically the destruction of his enemies, God warns and invites those very enemies to revere him and walk under his teaching.

Apart from Scripture, some portion of the fear of God can also come from general revelation, the revelation of God’s nature through creation. Citing Genesis 20:10–11 and the midwives of Exodus 1:17, Waltke points out that in unbelievers, the “fear of God motivates people to right behavior even when a state does not enforce moral sanctions.”<sup>51</sup> Ryken notes that the sailors who threw Jonah into the sea feared “exceedingly” at the storm and the mention of the Lord, even offering a sacrifice to him (Jonah 1:16).<sup>52</sup>

But a fear based on general revelation can only enable people to follow God’s teachings as much as his law is written on their hearts. While general revelation can lead to moral conduct and temporary reverence, it alone cannot lead someone to receive God’s teachings. For God’s acts of teaching are not acts of general revelation, but of special revelation.<sup>53</sup> So the full experience of the fear of the Lord, to marvel at the Lord and follow his teachings, can only be found after special revelation from the Scriptures or

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<sup>49</sup> John Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 102, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>50</sup> Quoted in Selderhuis, *Psalms 1–72*, 7:27.

<sup>51</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1–15*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 66.

<sup>52</sup> Ryken et al., “Fear,” 277.

<sup>53</sup> For a concise and clear treatment of general and special revelation, see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 122–23.

direct encounter with God himself. This may be why readers noted later in this chapter see a distinction between the phrases “fear of God” and “fear of the Lord” in the Old Testament. It is why Martin teaches, “if you want to sustain and increase your fear of God, you must feed your mind on the Scriptures in general.”<sup>54</sup>

The fear of the Lord comes, then, from some revelation of God’s awesome nature. A person either experiences the fearsome nature of God first-hand or reads God’s fearsome word, and then marvels at him. Thus, one can seek to learn the fear of the Lord by reading the Scriptures, seeking God’s revelation of his glory, and responding to it in awe and reverence.

### **The Fear of the Lord Leads to and Includes Following His Teachings**

Because the one who fears the Lord looks to God with awe, he follows God’s teachings. Twin concepts reign here. Following God’s teachings happens because one fears the Lord; and following God’s teachings is part of fearing the Lord.

If an awestruck person marveling at God’s glory “recognizes that God, not oneself, is the center of the cosmos,” he can no longer be “wise in his own eyes” (Prov 3:7).<sup>55</sup> He is no longer in awe of himself; he is in awe of the Lord. As Longman says elsewhere, “the opposite of being wise in one’s own eyes is to fear Yahweh.”<sup>56</sup> Instead, the one full of awe asks “Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name” (Ps 86:11). Here, David longs for understanding even more

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<sup>54</sup> Martin, *The Forgotten Fear*, 147.

<sup>55</sup> Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns, “Fear of the Lord,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), Logos Bible Software.

<sup>56</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Proverbs*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 133.

than deliverance.<sup>57</sup> He fears the Lord, so he wants to learn the Lord's ways; but he also wants to fear the Lord by walking in his ways.

Like David, Israel's kings were meant to exemplify this divine education. To return to Deuteronomy 17:18–20, Craigie notes “by reading and learning, he would express true reverence for his God, exemplified by his keeping of the law and statutes of God.”<sup>58</sup> The king demonstrated fear of the lord “by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them” (Deut 17:19). On one hand, he would keep the law because he feared the Lord; on the other hand, keeping the Law would be how he feared the Lord.

Altogether, Deuteronomy makes a strong connection between fearing the Lord, keeping his commandments, and walking in his ways, even teaching that Yahweh's covenant with Israel “boils down to” fearing the Lord and walking in his ways.<sup>59</sup> The three phrases are used often enough in the book to emphasize the connection and form a theme (Deut 5:29, 6:2, 8:6, 10:12–13, 20, 13:4, 17:19, 28:58, 31:12). As Craigie words it, “the evidence of this reverence would be seen in the obedience of the Israelites to God's law.”<sup>60</sup> Israel must “fear the LORD . . . by keeping all his statutes and his commandments” (Deut 6:1–2).

If Deuteronomy establishes the connection between fear of the Lord and obedience, the Psalms exemplify it. As Gordon Wenham notes, the Psalmist claims, “I will teach you the fear of the LORD” (Ps 34:11) before calling for obedience and David refers to those who fear God as “those who keep your precepts” (Ps 119:63).<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 384.

<sup>58</sup> Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 257.

<sup>59</sup> Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2012), 125.

<sup>60</sup> Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 168.

<sup>61</sup> In Wenham, *Psalms as Torah*, 206, Wenham lists the fear of God as one of

One way the fear of the Lord works into outward obedience is through one's treatment of others. Nehemiah's refusal to oppress those under him "because of the fear of God" (Neh 5:15) has its roots in specific laws like "You shall not wrong one another, but you shall fear your God, for I am the LORD your God" (Deut 25:17) and in the second greatest commandment (Matt 22:39, Mark 12:31).<sup>62</sup> Again, this theme is shown in both Israel and her leaders.

So rather than the passive cowering that the word "fear" may bring to mind, a person who fears the Lord becomes more active. Puritan pastor Jeremiah Burroughs puts this beautifully.

So here is the note that is of marvelous use: souls which in a gracious manner are struck with the fear of God and of His Word are not hindered in their duty by this fear, but it rather enlarges them. It enlarges the heart and makes the heart so much the more active for God, more active than it was before.<sup>63</sup>

The fear of the Lord both leads to and includes following the Lord's teachings. One follows the Lord's teachings because he fears the Lord; but following the Lord's teaching is also how he fears the Lord.

### **The Fear of the Lord Leads to a Blessed Life**

Because the one who has learned to fear the Lord follows and esteems him, his life is blessed (Ps 115:13). Colin Day thoroughly outlines the aspects of this blessedness as they appear in the Bible. Of particular note, those who fear the Lord enjoy his pleasure (Ps 147:11), provision (Ps 111:5), and protection (Pss 33:18, 34:7).<sup>64</sup>

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three fundamental characteristics of the righteous in the Psalms, after depending on God and trusting in God.

<sup>62</sup> H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 16 (Waco, TX: Word, 1985), 244.

<sup>63</sup> Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel Fear, or, The Heart Trembling at the Word of God Evidences a Blessed Frame of Spirit: Delivered in Several Sermons from Isaiah 66:2 and 2 Kings 22:19*, ed. Don Kistler, 4th ed. (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2001), 34.

<sup>64</sup> Colin A. Day, "854: Fear, B5, Results of Fearing God," in *Collins Thesaurus of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), Logos Bible Software.



The most foundational truth in the Proverbs sounds at their beginning and echoes in variation: “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7). Longman argues that the fear of the Lord is foundational to wisdom, not just a chronological beginning, because the word ראשית (beginning) refers to a foundation or source.<sup>65</sup> So the fear of the Lord doesn’t just come before wisdom and knowledge, it leads to and grounds them.

Following the Lord’s teachings, one element of the fear of the Lord, even leads to vitality and security. The Psalmist compares the one who delights in the word of the Lord with a fruitful, well-nourished tree (Ps 1). This person follows the Lord’s commands, but also meditates on the worldview revealed in the Lord’s teachings.<sup>66</sup> As a result, he lives a vibrant, fruitful life, like a “tree whose roots are sunk deep into the life-giving soil of a river bed.”<sup>67</sup>

The Lord later compares the one who listens to his teachings to a secure house built on a rock, able to weather wind, rain, and flood waters (Matt 7:24–27). The point is not the type of house or the material (neither of which are specified), but the foundation.<sup>68</sup> Following the Lord’s teachings provides a foundation for the one who fears him, allowing him to stand strong in the face of hardship and even divine judgement.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Longman, *Proverbs*, 100–101.

<sup>66</sup> Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 81.

<sup>67</sup> Nancy L. DeClaisse-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 62.

<sup>68</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007). France also shows here how Jesus’s words demonstrate that he is the Lord and his words are the Lord’s words.

<sup>69</sup> Osborne, Arnold, and Turner emphasize the divine judgement, while France argues that interpretation should also include the testing disciples encounter, because someone hearing Jesus’s words would not have imagined the final judgement. Grant R. Osborne and Clinton E. Arnold, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 275–76; David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 222; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 296–97.

So the fear of the Lord, leading to wholehearted following of the Lord's teachings, brings with it great blessings like vitality, security, God's favor, and wisdom.

### **Satan Targets Those Who Fear the Lord**

Though the Lord blesses those who fear him, they do not live without difficulty or harassment. In fact, Satan especially targets those who fear his great enemy. As Gregory the Great notes of the God-fearing Job, "The old enemy is enraged against the righteous the more he perceives that they are hedged around by the favor of God's protection."<sup>70</sup>

John teaches this as prophecy when telling the story of Satan's war against God's people. "Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (Rev 12:17, cf. Gen 3:15). Unable to defeat the woman or her seed, Satan makes war against those who keep the Lord's commandments, those who fear him. Though connecting this verse with the rest of the story is "one of the most difficult problems in the Apocalypse,"<sup>71</sup> the point remains that Satan targets those who fear the Lord.

Readers witness Satan's targeting of those who fear God in the opening chapters of Job. Job is introduced to the reader as one who fears God (Job 1:1). His great blessings are noted (Job 1:2–3). His fear of the Lord is so exemplary that the Lord challenges Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" (Job

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<sup>70</sup> St. Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, trans. Charles Marriott, vol. 1 (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1844), 1.2.65.66, quoted in Manlio Simonetti, Marco Conti, and Thomas C. Odén, *Job, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, vol. 6 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 5.

<sup>71</sup> G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans 1999), 676, Logos Bible Software.

1:8). For this very reason, Satan desires to test him: “But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face” (Job 1:11). Readers then become familiar with the persecution and testing Job suffers.

Satan certainly targeted Job once the Lord mentioned him, he may have come to the conversation with Job already in mind. Robert Alden points to possible renderings of the Hebrew. God may have been asking if Satan had “set [your] heart on” Job. Perhaps the Lord could see into Satan’s heart and discern his preemptive targeting.<sup>72</sup> But even if Satan was not already considering Job at the beginning of the conversation, his answer reveals that he was by the end.

As Revelation teaches generally and Job teaches specifically, Satan targets those who fear the Lord. They receive special protection from the Lord; that is because they will need it.

### **The Fear of the Lord Is Foundational to Christian Discipleship**

The fear of the Lord is necessarily foundational to following Jesus the Lord. Jesus describes Christian discipleship as observing all that he has commanded (Matt 28:20). If following all of his ways is how one fears him, “the highest reaches of attainment in practical holiness and godliness are to be achieved and sought after in the climate of the fear of God.”<sup>73</sup> One cannot be a Christian disciple without fear of the Lord, “the soul of godliness.”<sup>74</sup>

The pages of Scripture bear out this logical connection, as noted by researchers. In the Pentateuch, fearing the Lord is “virtually synonymous with saving

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<sup>72</sup> Robert L Alden, *Job*, The New American Commentary, vol. 11 (Nashville: B. & H., 1993), 54, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>73</sup> Martin, *The Forgotten Fear*, 15.

<sup>74</sup> John Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 229.

faith in him” and an “image for being a follower of God.”<sup>75</sup> In the Wisdom Literature, it is a mark of the people of God and the foundation of wisdom.<sup>76</sup> In the song of Mary, it is the mark of those who receive God’s mercy.<sup>77</sup> In New Testament narrative, it marks “anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:35).<sup>78</sup> In the Epistles, it grounds human relationships with God and serves a primary moral motivator.<sup>79</sup> The fear of the Lord both marks believers and grounds their conduct. Thus, it plays a foundational role in all of the Christian life.

John Frame points out the centrality of God’s revelation of himself as Lord in the Bible. He notes the high frequency of “the Lord” in the Old Testament and New Testament and God’s desire to be known as the Lord throughout Scripture before summarizing, “If the shema (Deut. 6:4–5) summarizes the message of the OT by teaching that Yahweh is Lord over all, so the confession “Jesus is Lord” (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11; cf. John 20:28; Acts 2:36) summarizes the message of the NT.”<sup>80</sup> God’s revelation of himself as Lord and his desire to be revered as Lord are central to the Bible’s message. If God’s desire to be revered as Lord is central to the Bible and if

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<sup>75</sup> Ryken et al., “Fear,” 277.

<sup>76</sup> Longman and Enns, “Fear of the Lord;” Wenham, *Psalms as Torah*, 206; Gordon J. Wenham, *The Psalter Reclaimed: Praying and Praising with the Psalms* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 118, 125; Wenham also shows this through the example of Pss 111 and 112, arguing that they form an acrostic describing the person who fears the Lord. Wenham, *Psalms as Torah*, 215.

<sup>77</sup> Wenham, *Psalms as Torah*, 245.

<sup>78</sup> Though this reference does not directly use a phrase like “fear of the Lord,” it does speak to the concept of reverence rather than terror. Reverence is accompanied by the other half of the fear of the Lord, doing right. For an example of a commentator who assumes fear to mean reverence in this passage, see John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: B. & H., 1992), 260, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>79</sup> Stanley Porter, “Fear, Reverence,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald Hawthorne, Ralph Martin, and Daniel Reid, The IVP Bible Dictionary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Logos Bible Software; Stanley Porter, “Fear,” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph Martin and Peter Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), Logos Bible Software.

<sup>80</sup> John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 16.

following God’s ways is the essence of Christian discipleship, the fear of the Lord (revering God and walking in his ways) must be essential to Christian discipleship.

If the fear of the Lord plays a foundational role in the Christian life, it must play a foundational role in Christian leadership.<sup>81</sup> The pages of Scripture bear out this logical connection, also.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, kings ascending the throne must “learn to fear the Lord” (Deut 17:19). Learning to fear God will cause the king to walk in God’s ways, including treating others justly. The king was to grow in the fear of the Lord daily through the reading of the law, showing its foundational nature in the life of a leader. His fear of the Lord would affect his obedience to the Lord and treatment of others, showing the foundational role it would play in his leadership.

As also mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, David rejoices in this sort of king, who “rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth” (2 Sam 23:3–4). The beautifully contrasting images of the God-fearing king (the shining morning sun and invigorating rain) are not just pleasant; they bring life and growth. This points to the vital, life-giving role a God-fearing king plays, growing the people in his kingdom like the sun and dew grow the grass of the field.<sup>82</sup> A God-fearing king will give life to his kingdom.

Kings are not the only rulers of Israel expected to fear the Lord. Shortly after Israel left Egypt, long before they crowned their first king, Jethro counseled Moses to “look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties,

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<sup>81</sup> For a treatment of leadership as an essential component of the Christian life, see Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B. & H., 2016).

<sup>82</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 8 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 311–12, Logos Bible Software.

and of tens” (Exod 18:21).

Though he is not a king, Nehemiah also shows how fear of the Lord can affect a person’s leadership. The governor before him had burdened the people with excessive taxation, while that governor’s officials abused their authority against the people.<sup>83</sup> But Nehemiah insists on treating those under him justly, making his reason explicit: “because of the fear of God” (Neh 5:15).

By contrast, the judge in the parable of the persistent widow personifies the leader who does not fear God. Readers learn of the judge’s corruption by reading that he “neither feared God nor respected men” (Luke 18:2). Readers are then unsurprised to learn of his slowness to grant justice to a helpless widow, even though he was legally required to give her case precedence.<sup>84</sup>

While these texts show foundational role of the fear of the Lord in the conduct of a Christian leader, the following chapter will trace the connection differently. Chapter 3 will show that the fear of the Lord leads to character qualities that God desires in leaders and that people of all cultures desire in their leaders.

### **Conclusion**

Different from neighborliness or the dread of God, the fear of the Lord is a disposition of awe and teachability that comes from a glimpse of God’s greatness, leads to and includes obedience to God’s commands, and finally leads to God’s blessing through Satanic testing. As a foundational part of Christian discipleship, it plays a foundational role in Christian leadership.

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<sup>83</sup> H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 16 (Waco, TX: Word, 1985), 244.

<sup>84</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1978), 672, Logos Bible Software.

CHAPTER 3  
EFFECTS OF THE FEAR OF THE LORD ON  
LEADERSHIP

**Introduction**

To further show that the fear of the Lord is foundational to leadership, this chapter traces effects of the fear of the Lord on leadership. Chapter 1 noted that God requires leaders in various levels of authority to fear him; chapter 2 outlined what it meant for leaders to fear him. This chapter explores the economic reality, how fearing God makes one into a more effective leader and how God-fearing leadership causes those being led to flourish.

A leader's fear of the Lord strengthens his leadership and blesses those he leads. It strengthens his leadership by developing within him three attributes essential to leadership: integrity, values, and wisdom. The three attributes are desired in leaders by people all over the world<sup>1</sup> and commended in the Bible as essential to leadership. All three attributes come from a person's fear of the Lord. Finally, a leader's fear of the Lord also blesses those he leads by causing them to flourish, as David teaches in his final words.

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<sup>1</sup> This claim will be detailed in the following section. Peter W. Dorfman, Paul J. Hanges, and Felix C. Brodbeck, "Leadership and Cultural Variation: The Identification of Culturally Endorsed Leadership Profiles," in *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies*, ed. Robert J. House et al. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004), 669–719.

## **People of All Cultures Desire Leaders with Integrity, Values, and Wisdom**

Unsurprisingly, leadership researchers take great interest in the world's leadership values. These researchers have found some consensus on the attributes people around the world desire in their leaders.

Peter Dorfman, Paul Hanges, and Felix Brodbeck may have shed the broadest light on the world's leadership values in their chapter of the 2004 study *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: the GLOBE Study of 62 Societies*.<sup>2</sup> Building on “culturally endorsed implicit leadership theory,” the idea that people in common cultures share similar ideas about what makes an effective leader, the researchers studied sixty-two countries and separated them into ten cultural clusters based on the results. Their studies aimed to uncover how perceptions of effective leadership vary across the world's cultures.

Their results revealed interesting differences between cultures. For instance, Nordic Europe has a greater collective distaste for self-protective leadership than Eastern Europe does.<sup>3</sup> In addition to differences between cultures, the results also identified leadership attributes valued across all cultures. These attributes combine easily into a picture of a leader that all cultures in the world would call effective: someone who leads from deeply held values with integrity and wisdom. Their findings are echoed by other

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<sup>2</sup> Dorfman, Hanges, and Brodbeck, “Leadership and Cultural Variation.”

<sup>3</sup> Though Nordic Europe scored almost a full point lower than Eastern Europe on a seven-point scale, neither cluster rated self-protective leadership favorably. Dorfman, Hanges, and Brodbeck, “Leadership and Cultural Variation,” 680.



researchers.<sup>4</sup> Though they categorize the attributes differently, perhaps the better categorization is as follows: integrity, values, and wisdom.<sup>5</sup>

## **Integrity**

The GLOBE researchers note that integrity is actually part of charismatic leadership even though they categorize it separately from their “charismatic-inspiring” and “charismatic-values.” They classify it separately because of its prevalence, because putting them together would make the category too broad. They note that three separate traits that respondents listed favorably “are aspects of integrity.”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, though Bible speaks of integrity as part of wisdom, this thesis categorizes it separately because of the same broad nature and importance. Cultures across the world desire leaders with integrity who are “trustworthy,” “just,” and “honest.”<sup>7</sup>

Peter Northouse observes that, while integrity has long been a major factor in leadership and influence, demand for it is increasing urgently. He considers integrity essential to earning the trust of others. “Leaders with integrity inspire confidence in others because they can be trusted to do what they say they are going to do. They are loyal, dependable, and not deceptive. Basically, integrity makes a leader believable and

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<sup>4</sup> More in-depth research will be noted below, but perhaps the most succinct summarizes a credible leader as “honest, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent.” This conclusion is like that of this chapter, with honesty comparable to integrity, forward-looking and inspiring comparable to values, and competent comparable to wisdom. James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Truth about Leadership: The No-Fads, Heart-of-the-Matter Facts You Need to Know* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 19.

<sup>5</sup> The full list of attributes is as follows: trustworthy, just, honest, foresight, plans ahead, encouraging, positive, dynamic, motive arouser, confidence builder, motivational, dependable, intelligent, decisive, effective bargainer, win-win problem solver, administrative skilled, communicative, informed, coordinator, team builder, excellence oriented. The researchers then categorize these attributes into four “universal facilitators of leadership effectiveness”: integrity, charismatic-inspirational, charismatic-visionary, and team builder. These are the categories recast here as integrity, values, and wisdom, for reasons listed below. Dorfman, Hanges, and Brodbeck, “Leadership and Cultural Variation,” 677.

<sup>6</sup> Dorfman, Hanges, and Brodbeck, “Leadership and Cultural Variation,” 678.

<sup>7</sup> Dorfman, Hanges, and Brodbeck, “Leadership and Cultural Variation,” 677.

worthy of trust.”<sup>8</sup> Others concur: “People need to know that they can trust their leaders not to lie to them, exploit them, betray them, or behave foolishly.”<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, Steven Covey famously noted that for the first 150 years of United States history, most success literature focused on character ethics like integrity before shifting to what he calls a “personality ethic” shortly after World War I.<sup>10</sup> In fact, Covey’s work, first printed in 1989, may have contributed to the renewed interest in integrity that Northouse and others note. From a third perspective, James Kouzes and Barry Posner say that basics like integrity are enduring.<sup>11</sup> With these nuances, leading voices agree at least that cultures have long valued integrity in leadership.

Other studies confirm these observations and the GLOBE findings on integrity. When Kouzes and Posner surveyed more than 1,500 managers in the United States asking what they believed to be crucial for leadership, “integrity” ranked first in responses. When they later developed upon their research with an international study, the highest ranked response was “honesty.”<sup>12</sup> They commented on the findings, “People need to believe that your character and integrity are solid.”<sup>13</sup> They note that a follow-up study by the Federal Executive Institute Alumni Association replicated their findings and that

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<sup>8</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 7th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2015). Northouse also summarizes the GLOBE study accessibly in this volume.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Hogan and Timothy Judge, “Chapter 2: Personality and Leadership,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Leadership*, ed. Michael G. Rumsey, Oxford Library of Psychology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 41.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic*, 25th ann. ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 26–27.

<sup>11</sup> Kouzes and Posner, *The Truth about Leadership*, xv.

<sup>12</sup> James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It*, The Jossey-Bass Management Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993), 12–14, 34; Kouzes and Posner, *The Truth about Leadership*, 16–19; Barry Z. Posner and Warren H. Schmidt, “Values and the American Manager: An Update,” *California Management Review* 26, no. 3 (1984): 202–16; Posner and Schmidt, “Values and Expectations of Federal Service Executives,” *Public Administration Review* 46, no. 5 (1986): 447–54.

<sup>13</sup> Kouzes and Posner, *The Truth about Leadership*, 19.

another study by Steelcase found a desire for ethical management worldwide.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Bates Communications, Inc. surveyed 293 professionals about “what makes an authentic leader,” finding that “integrity” was the most important of ten key components.<sup>15</sup> Leading voices and researchers form a consensus around the continuing need for integrity in leadership.

## Values

The GLOBE researchers combine their categories of “charisma-inspirational” and “charisma-visionary” into “Charisma/Value-Based Leadership,” a term for inspiring others through firmly held core values that have universal appeal and do not have to be linked to other values. Leaders with this quality hold deeply to values that others share and appeal to those values to inspire others.<sup>16</sup> Thus they are described as “positive,” “dynamic,” “motive arouser,” “confidence builder,” “and “motivational.”<sup>17</sup>

While this ability to inspire others from shared values is often listed as a prized leadership attribute, it is called by different names. Bates Communication’s survey listed “vision” as the second of ten key leadership components, which includes the ability to inspire action from a clear picture of a valued future and the ability to motivate.<sup>18</sup> Kouzes and Posner ask, “If you don’t burn with a desire to be true to something you hold

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<sup>14</sup> Posner and Schmidt, “Values and Expectations of Federal Service Executives,” 447–54; Steelcase, *Worldwide Office Environment Index Summary Report* (Grand Rapids: Steelcase, 1991), 7.

<sup>15</sup> Suzanne Bates, *Speak Like a CEO: Secrets for Commanding Attention and Getting Results* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 203–9.

<sup>16</sup> Dorfman, Hanges, and Brodbeck, “Leadership and Cultural Variation,” 673, 675.

<sup>17</sup> Dorfman, Hanges, and Brodbeck, “Leadership and Cultural Variation,” 677. They also list “plans ahead” under this category, but this thesis lists it under wisdom in the next section.

<sup>18</sup> Bates, *Speak like a CEO*, 208.

passionately, how can you expect commitment from others?"<sup>19</sup> and quote an unnamed interviewee, "People won't follow you, or even pay much attention to you, if you don't have any strong beliefs."<sup>20</sup> They note in their aforementioned study, "91 percent said that by the year 2000 it will be very important that CEO's be inspiring," and rank inspiring third among their four essential leadership attributes.<sup>21</sup> While terms differ, leading voices and researchers agree that leaders must hold strong values and inspire others from those values.

## **Wisdom**

All the remaining universally desirable attributes fall under the Bible's description of wisdom.<sup>22</sup> All but three are directly addressed in the wisdom literature of the Bible. Cultures across the world desire leaders who are "dependable" (Prov 6:6–11, 32:15), "intelligent" and "informed" (Prov 1:22, 2:10 8:10), skilled in administration/able to plan ahead (Prov 11:14, 21:5), "communicative" (Prov 16:23, 25:11, 29:20), good coordinators/team builders (Prov 24:4–5, Eccl 4:12), and "excellence oriented" (Prov 10:4, 12:24).<sup>23</sup> Because these attributes are all addressed in the wisdom literature of the Bible, they are classified here under the heading "wisdom," asserting that people desire a wise leader.

All those attributes fall into Donald Wiseman's helpful summary of biblical wisdom:

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<sup>19</sup> James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Wiley, 2007), 50.

<sup>20</sup> Kouzes and Posner, *The Truth about Leadership*, 43.

<sup>21</sup> Kouzes and Posner, *Credibility*, 17.

<sup>22</sup> Integrity is also often mentioned in the wisdom literature, but integrity and wisdom are listed separately here because integrity is such a large category.

<sup>23</sup> Dorfman, Hanges, and Brodbeck, "Leadership and Cultural Variation," 677. For the attributes not placed in quotations above, the wording is modified to fit the sentence. For instance, what they list as "administrative skilled" and "plans ahead," is listed here as "skilled in administration/able to plan ahead."

Wisdom is the right understanding of reality and is the basis of moral and ethical life (Job 11:6; Prov. 2:6). It is expressed in the conduct of life in the ‘fear (reverence, awe) of the LORD’, which is its chief origin and aim (Job 28:28; Prov. 1:7, etc.). It arises from an attitude of heart or mind (1 Kgs 3:7, 12) and is expressed also in prudence in secular affairs. Wisdom marks technical skills and craftsmanship (Exod. 25:3; 31:3, 6). It is also demonstrated by ability in judgment between right and wrong (1 Kgs 3; 4:28) and its application in good administration (1 Kgs 10:4, 24; cf. Joseph: Ps. 105:16–22; Acts 7:10).<sup>24</sup>

The three remaining universally desirable leadership attributes (“decisive,” “effective bargainer,” and “win-win problem solver”)<sup>25</sup> fit easily into Wiseman’s categories of “prudence in secular affairs,” “good administration,” and “technical skill and craftsmanship.” Thus, they fit well into the biblical heading “wisdom.”

Other studies mentioned earlier confirm the need for wisdom attributes in leadership. Bates lists “knowledge,” “listening,” “communication skills,” “managerial skills,” and “follow-through” among ten key leadership components.<sup>26</sup> Kouzes and Posner list “forward-looking” and “competent” among four key attributes.<sup>27</sup>

The GLOBE study, confirmed by other studies, shows a clear picture of a leader who would be seen in all cultures as effective and reminds anyone aspiring to leadership to hold the highest integrity, lead from deeply held values, and learn wisdom. People all over the world want to follow a leader with integrity, strong values, and wisdom.

### **The Bible Teaches That Integrity, Values, and Wisdom Are Essential to Leadership**

These findings of the GLOBE study should not surprise. The Bible also has, for thousands of years, taught that integrity, values, and wisdom are essential to leadership.

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<sup>24</sup> Donald J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 8 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 93.

<sup>25</sup> Dorfman, Hanges, and Brodbeck, “Leadership and Cultural Variation,” 677.

<sup>26</sup> Bates, *Speak like a CEO*, 208–9.

<sup>27</sup> Kouzes and Posner, *Credibility*, 15–18.

## Integrity

God requires strong integrity from leaders. When the Bible speaks of integrity, it primarily speaks of incorruption and completeness of character.<sup>28</sup> People sometimes speak of buildings in the same way. Because a cracked foundation or leaky roof can compromise an entire building, only a building that is sound in every way can be said to have integrity. Incomplete or corrupt buildings lack integrity and are not fit for public use. Likewise, someone with incomplete character, beset with character flaws, lacks integrity and is not fit to lead. God requires this completeness of character, this integrity, from leaders in several places in the Bible.

God called each of Israel's kings to follow him completely, to not turn away "either to the right hand or to the left," so that he and his children could enjoy long reigns (Deut 17:20); he likewise judged them based on this command during and after their reigns. After Solomon consecrates the Temple, God says to Solomon,

If you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my rules, then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, 'You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.' (1 Kgs 9:4-5)

The integrity of Solomon's heart would be exposed through his walk, through his obedience. God would keep his promise to David, but the temporal flourishing of the kingdom depended on the king's integrity displayed by his obedience. Early readers of 1 Kings would have tasted all too bitterly the truth. Solomon did not follow God with integrity; and the kingdom did not flourish for long.<sup>29</sup> Few kings after him walked in the

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<sup>28</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, "יָמִים," in *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. and ed. M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2000), Logos Bible Software; Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, "יָמִים," in Richardson, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*; Fredrick William Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), s.v. "Ἀφθορία," Logos Bible Software.

<sup>29</sup> Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, The New American Commentary, vol. 8 (Nashville: B. & H., 1995), 151, Logos Bible Software.

ways of the Lord with integrity as Solomon's father David did,<sup>30</sup> though they were evaluated during and after their reigns by the integrity of their walk.<sup>31</sup> The standard was clear: show integrity by walking completely in God's ways. Though few kings met it, this standard of integrity was God's essential requirement of Israelite kings.

God also requires integrity from pastors, for the church's reputation is stained when her leaders fail to show it.<sup>32</sup> A blameless reputation grounded in integrity, called "above reproach," is exactly what Paul would call from the future pastors and elders he directed both Titus and Timothy to install.<sup>33</sup> Paul desired a man with a reputation of blameless integrity. He then described a blameless family life: "the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination" (Titus 1:6). After reemphasizing "for an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach," Paul completed the description of a blameless, integrity-filled reputation: "he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it" (Titus 1:7–9).

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<sup>30</sup> Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, 134.

<sup>31</sup> See 1 Kgs 15:26, 15:35, 16:2, 16:19, 22:52; 2 Kgs 8:18, 8:27, 16:3, 21:22; 2 Chr 20:32, 28:2, and 34:2 for such evaluations.

<sup>32</sup> William Mounce notes that the pastoral epistles were written to churches that faced a poor reputation because of the conduct of their leaders. William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Grand Rapids: Thomas Nelson, 2016), 388.

<sup>33</sup> The CSB and NIV translate it as "blameless." Either option makes a fine translation, as the two are synonymous. Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 682; Thabiti Anyabwile describes it in terms of integrity. Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons*, IX Marks Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 57–58, 60.

Philip Towner notes that the subsequent qualities after “blameless/above reproach” define it further, making a reputation for integrity the core requirement for church leadership.<sup>34</sup>

Paul also emphasized appointing only men who are above reproach, with blameless reputations of integrity, when similarly instructing Timothy on appointing elders. “Therefore an overseer must be above reproach,” he says, before similarly describing such a man:

the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive. (1 Tim 3:2–4)

Howell defines this blameless reputation as “not vulnerable to criticism for character or conduct deficiencies.”<sup>35</sup> Towner, similar to his treatment of Titus, claims that the placement of “above reproach” first and the breadth of the term’s meaning “suggest that this is the essential requirement for candidacy.”<sup>36</sup> William Mounce agrees, saying, “the overall concern is that leaders be above reproach in their daily lives.” Again, the essential requirement for church leadership is a blameless reputation for integrity.

The Bible also requires deacons to be above reproach. For the same word (*ἀνέγκλητος*) used in Titus 1:6 to summarize the requirements for elders is also used in 1 Timothy 3:2 to summarize the requirements for deacons.<sup>37</sup>

The Bible’s core requirement for kings, elders, and deacons, the concept of integrity sums up much of God’s expectation for leaders. This repeated and thoroughly

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<sup>34</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 681; Alexander Strauch also states this perspective. Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, rev. and exp. ed. (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1995), 74.

<sup>35</sup> Don N. Howell, *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 288.

<sup>36</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 250.

<sup>37</sup> George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 289, Logos Bible Software. Knight agrees with Towner that the word is synonymous with the word used in 1 Tim 3:2.



discussed biblical requirement leads one to confidently say “that grace-generated integrity is the leader’s most important asset.”<sup>38</sup> Leaders must walk with integrity of heart in all the ways of the Lord.

## Values

A survey of celebrated biblical leaders reveals a pattern; key biblical leaders inspired others from deeply held values. Often these leaders saw a problem in the status-quo and felt the burden to correct it. Through the stories of these celebrated leaders, the Bible teaches that values are essential to leadership.

Moses led Israel from a deep value: his assuredness that God wanted him to free Israel from Egypt and lead them to Canaan. During Moses’s fearsome moment of commissioning, God made this value clear by stating a problem, his intention to correct it, and Moses’s role in correcting it.

Then the Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” (Exod 3:7–10)

John Durham notes that the “call” is preceded “with a review of the plight of the sons of Israel in Egypt.”<sup>39</sup> The Lord saw the oppression of Israel, purposed to deliver them from Egypt to the land he had promised them, and sent Moses to lead it. God was Moses’s chosen instrument to correct the status-quo. For the rest of his life, Moses led focused on this mission, from the God-given value that Israel must be freed from Egypt and led into

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<sup>38</sup> Timothy Z. Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P. & R., 2010), 161.

<sup>39</sup> John I. Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 3 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 32.

Canaan. Israel followed him because they knew that “God truly sent him, that his mission was God inspired.”<sup>40</sup> From this deeply held, God-given value, Moses led others.

Joshua led Israel from a strong value: that he was God’s chosen instrument to courageously take the promised land. During Joshua’s moment of commissioning, he heard God’s command to “Go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them” (Josh 1:2). God promised him that “every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses” (Josh 1:3) and exhorted him to “be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them” (Josh 1:6). Joshua was to be the one who led them in this conquest.<sup>41</sup> As the rest of the book of Joshua catalogs, he then led Israel to do just that: to courageously conquer the land God had promised them.<sup>42</sup> His leadership inspired Israel, as they vowed to follow him and obeyed God during his lifetime.<sup>43</sup> From this deeply held value that God had given them the land, Joshua acted with faithful courage and inspired it in others.

David led Israel and fought Goliath from a strong value: his insistence that God’s armies must not be defied.<sup>44</sup> Israel had shamefacedly heard Goliath taunt them many times. But when David heard it, he asked, “who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” (1 Sam 17:26). These words of outrage

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<sup>40</sup> George Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church: How Pastors and Church Staffs Can Grow Together into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders*, The Jossey-Bass Religion-in-Practice Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 51.

<sup>41</sup> David M. Howard Jr., *Joshua*, The New American Commentary, vol. 5 (Nashville: B. & H., 1998), 28, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>42</sup> God keeping his promise to Israel’s forefathers through Joshua’s leadership appears as a reoccurring theme in the books of Joshua. Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1981); Joshua’s courage appears as another theme. Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 6 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 25. Both themes begin in the first chapter.

<sup>43</sup> Howard, *Joshua*, 29.

<sup>44</sup> The selected theme is emblematic. Others will be explored in the following chapter.

garnered the attention of others, inspiring them to report the words to Saul.<sup>45</sup> They also moved David to action. He volunteered to fight Goliath himself, telling Saul, “Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God” (1 Sam 17:36). Bergen comments, “David’s faith and courage were as extraordinary as his logic was simple.”<sup>46</sup> Beneath David’s rock-slinging rested a simple value: one cannot defy God’s army and live. After killing Goliath, David continued in battle from this value, inspiring other soldiers to fight with bravery and the nation to sing songs like, “Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Sam 18:8). In this way, David fought and inspired others to fight from deeply held values.

Nehemiah led Israel from a value: an aching awareness that Jerusalem’s wall must be rebuilt.<sup>47</sup> When he heard that Jerusalem’s wall lay destroyed, he wept and fasted for days (Neh 1:3–4). From this value for the integrity of Jerusalem’s wall, he moved from weeping and fasting to a prayer of lament (Neh 1:5–11) and then to action.<sup>48</sup> He dared to bring his troubles before the king, at risk of his life (Neh 2:1–8). Then, with the king’s blessing, he made the journey to Jerusalem to lead the rebuilding of the wall, inspiring Israel to complete it in fifty-two days despite great opposition (Neh 2–6). From his deeply held value that the wall must be rebuilt, Nehemiah inspired Israel to accomplish a great feat.

Peter preached and pastored from two values: callings from Jesus to fish for

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<sup>45</sup> Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 7 (Nashville: B. & H., 1996), 193, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>46</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 194.

<sup>47</sup> Mervin Breneman notes Nehemiah’s “singleness of purpose.” Mervin Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, The New American Commentary, vol. 10 (Nashville: B. & H., 1993), 59, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>48</sup> H. G. M. Williamson notes that Nehemiah’s prayer follows the pattern of a Lament. H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 16 (Waco, TX: Word, 1985), 153.

people to shepherd Jesus's sheep. Howell summarizes this dual emphasis at length:

The Lord arrests Peter's attention by using two familiar metaphors to specify his mission, one at the beginning and one at the end of the earthly ministry. Peter will fish for people (Mt 4:19) and he will feed God's flock (Jn 21:15–17). He is thus the comprehensive leader with both evangelistic and pastoral roles. The former is especially seen in the early chapters of Acts, as Peter's proclamation becomes the means of drawing thousands to faith and repentance (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 8:25; 10:48). The authoritative word spoken by Peter and the apostles looses or binds the listeners according to their response (Mt 16:19). The latter role of pastor is seen in his two letters to the churches of Asia Minor where he provides instruction in doctrine and ethics (1, 2 Peter). He urges his fellow elders to become worthy shepherds of God's people (1 Pet 5:1–4).<sup>49</sup>

Commentators on the Gospels reflect similarly on Peter's mission. John Nolland understands Jesus's call to fish for men in Matthew as central to the work Peter will do, "an apprenticeship which prepares these men for carrying out the same activity as Jesus," activity he describes as, "preaching and healing."<sup>50</sup> Gerald Borchert makes the connection between Jesus's call to feed his sheep in John and the content of 1 Peter: "if the first letter of Peter is any indication, there seems to be little doubt that this experience seared itself into the consciousness of this well-meaning disciple because in that letter there is an instructive message for the leaders of his missionary churches."<sup>51</sup> From the value of fishing for people Peter preached powerfully; from the value of shepherding Jesus's sheep Peter shepherded churches and encouraged other pastors to do the same. Thus, from these two values, Peter led and inspired others.

Finally, Paul led from a deep value: his mission to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles.<sup>52</sup> He speaks of "the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles" (Gal 2:2),<sup>53</sup> tells

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<sup>49</sup> Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 219–20.

<sup>50</sup> John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 179, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>51</sup> Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21*, *The New American Commentary*, vol. 25B (Nashville: B. & H., 2002), 335–36, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>52</sup> Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church*, 51.

<sup>53</sup> F. F. Bruce calls this Paul's "Gentile mission." F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to*

the Romans that he is “under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome” (Rom 1:14–15),<sup>54</sup> and tells Timothy that Jesus protected him “so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it” (1 Tim 4:17).<sup>55</sup> From this conviction he acted at great cost to himself, taking multiple missionary journeys and later recalling the cost.

Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. (2 Cor 11:24–27)

Having led and acted from this conviction, Paul planted and encouraged many churches of disciples, inspired later missionaries like Timothy and Titus, and still inspires many today.<sup>56</sup>

The Bible outlines how its most celebrated leaders inspired others from their deeply held values. From this pattern the Bible teaches that leaders need strong values from which to lead.

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*the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), 111, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>54</sup> Joseph Fitzmyer notes that Paul’s indebtedness stems from his apostleship, from Christ sending him to the Gentiles. Thus, he is indebted to Christ most of all. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 250.

<sup>55</sup> Paul probably thinks of his mission as complete at this point, that he has proclaimed the Gospel to all the Gentiles by proclaiming it before the judge in Rome. Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: B. & H., 1992), 256, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>56</sup> Don Howell helpfully catalogs Paul’s many acts of leadership. Don N Howell, “Chapter 22: Characteristics of His Leadership.” *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 256–86.

## Wisdom

When Moses could no longer bear the leadership of Israel alone, he charged them to choose “wise, understanding, and experienced men” to be appointed as heads under Moses (Deut 1:13). The Old Testament often uses the phrase “wise and understanding,” which “might best be rendered here as a hendiadys, ‘very wise.’”<sup>57</sup> The leaders chosen must be more than ordinarily wise. Moses’s instructional command lays a foundation on which Solomon will build. Leadership requires great wisdom.

Solomon outlines the reason Moses insisted on very wise leaders. Speaking plainly of wisdom, Solomon says “By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; by me princes rule, and nobles, all who govern justly” (Prov 8:16–17). As Tremper Longman summarizes, “Those who rule well do so by virtue of their relationship with wisdom.”<sup>58</sup>

Before Solomon wrote the proverb quoted above, he gave it weight with a momentous decision. When the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying, “Ask what I shall give you” (1 Kgs 3:5), Solomon answered, “Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?” (1 Kgs 3:9). Solomon knew that wisdom is “the hallmark of a just king.” The following chapters of 1 Kings then serve to emphasize Solomon’s wisdom.<sup>59</sup>

While ruling wisely himself, Solomon worked to pass on the essential leadership skill of wisdom to his sons, who would rule after him. Jonathan Akin claims that the book of Proverbs “functions to explain how King Solomon trains the Davidic prince to be the ideal king.” He argues “that the whole book of Proverbs is introduced

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<sup>57</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: B. & H., 1994) 69, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>58</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Proverbs*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 202.

<sup>59</sup> Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, 89.

and meant to be read under the phrase ‘The Proverbs of Solomon, Son of David, King of Israel’ (1:1).”<sup>60</sup> The Bible’s wisdom manual may also be viewed as a leadership manual.<sup>61</sup>

Through Solomon’s teaching that rulers reign by wisdom, his request for wisdom above all other things, and his efforts to teach wisdom to the future kings of Israel, the Bible teaches that wisdom is essential to leadership.

### **The Fear of the Lord Exhibited in Integrity, Values, and Wisdom**

While the Bible teaches that integrity, values, and wisdom are essential to leadership, it also gives the source of the three qualities: the fear of the Lord. Developing these three qualities in leaders is one way the fear of the Lord benefits one’s leadership.

#### **One Fears the Lord by Walking in Integrity**

One must fear the Lord to walk in integrity. As the Proverbs make plain, “by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil” (Prov 16:6). While this thesis separates the categories of integrity and wisdom for reasons earlier noted, integrity is closely connected to wisdom, occurring often as a theme in the wisdom literature.<sup>62</sup> Thus, integrity begins with the fear of the Lord by virtue of its relationship with wisdom alone.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Jonathan David Akin, “A Theology of Future Hope in the Book of Proverbs” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 16, 18. <http://hdl.handle.net/10392/3951>

<sup>61</sup> Andrew Hill and John Walton summarize the scholastic understanding of the Proverbs similarly. Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 320.

<sup>62</sup> The wisdom literature commends integrity in at least Job 2:3, 2:9, 4:6, 27:5, 31:6; Pss 7:8, 25:21, 26:1, 26:11, 41:12, 101:2; Prov 2:7, 2:21, 10:9, 11:3, 19:1, 20:7, 28:6, and 28:18.

<sup>63</sup> The next section argues that wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord.

The Bible also often links following the Lord with integrity to the fear of the Lord, sometimes saying that keeping all the law is how one fears the Lord. Moses longs for Israel to “fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son’s son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments” (Deut 6:2). A king ascending the throne was to “learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them” and to “not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left” (Deut 17:19–20). These examples emphasize keeping all the law, with completeness.

This concept comes to life when Job, “a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil” (Job 1:8), also “holds fast his integrity” in trial (Job 2:3).<sup>64</sup> He is later encouraged “is not your fear of God your confidence, and the integrity of your ways your hope?” (Job 4:6). As all Israel was called to do, Job feared the Lord by walking in integrity. Because the virtues ascribed to Job here are extolled in the Proverbs, Longman calls Job “the epitome of the sage,” highlighting the intersection between integrity and wisdom.<sup>65</sup> He states this intersection well, saying later, “Wisdom is on one level connected to the practical skill of living and on another level an ethical construct.”<sup>66</sup> In the midst of his suffering, Job teaches that the fear of the Lord leads to both (Job 28:28).<sup>67</sup>

Integrity is both the outward expression of the fear of the Lord and grounded in the fear of the Lord. Because leadership requires integrity, producing it in leaders is one way the fear of the Lord strengthens one’s leadership.

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<sup>64</sup> Francis Andersen points out how rare such men truly are. Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 14 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 88.

<sup>65</sup> Tremper Longman III, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom: A Theological Introduction to Wisdom in Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 43.

<sup>66</sup> Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, 62.

<sup>67</sup> Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, 52.



## God Imparts Values to Leaders Who Fear Him

When the Bible commends leaders who inspire others from deeply held values, it often shows how God imparts these values during close moments that inspire reverence and encourage leaders to walk in his ways.<sup>68</sup> This is true of all of values from which the earlier-listed leaders led: (1) Moses’s value of freeing Israel from Egypt and delivering them to the promised land, (2) Joshua’s value that the Lord had given them the land, (3) David’s value for God’s name, (4) Nehemiah’s value for the gates of Jerusalem, (5) Peter’s values of fishing and shepherding, and (6) Paul’s value of bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles. This pattern shows a connection between the fear of the Lord and the values from which leaders lead.

Moses’s commissioning was one such moment. As noted before, Moses led from the God-given value that Israel must be freed from Egypt and led into Canaan, a value given to him when God appeared to him through a burning bush and commissioned him to do that very task. Importantly, the text describes Moses’s reaction to the burning bush with the word *אֵיִרָא* (fear) before God reveals himself as “the Lord” in a threefold pattern (Exod 3:6, 3:14–15).<sup>69</sup> He is also told to take off his sandals at the beginning of the encounter (Exod 3:5), a sign of reverence in the ancient Near East.<sup>70</sup> As argued earlier, this profound moment became the “prerequisite for the leader’s self-understanding.”<sup>71</sup> But this self-understanding and core value did not come during a time of introspection. The smoldering ember within Moses, burning to free the people of Israel

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<sup>68</sup> Chap. 2 argues that to fear the Lord is to do just this, to look to God in reverence and walk in his ways.

<sup>69</sup> John Frame helpfully describes the three uses of God’s name in this passage as “long,” “medium,” and “short,” noting God’s emphasis in this passage and throughout the Bible on revealing himself as the Lord. John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 15.

<sup>70</sup> Peter Enns, *Exodus: From Biblical Text . . . to Contemporary Life*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 98.

<sup>71</sup> Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 28.

and lead them to the promised land, was placed in him during a moment of reverence, awe, and fear before the Lord. So the value from which Moses led came to him during a moment full of the fear of the Lord.

The values from which Joshua led also trace back his fear of the Lord. Before he led Israel, Joshua saw revelations of God's glory rivaled by few in history, giving him enviable opportunities to learn the fear of the Lord. These opportunities came during his time of formation as Moses's aide: divine appearances at Saini and in the tent of meeting that prepared him for courageous, faithful leadership.<sup>72</sup> So Joshua, who demonstrated his fear of the Lord through his faithful courage and who inspired Israel to faithful courage, must have developed those values during the fearful encounters in which God's glory was revealed and his ways were written down. The values that drove his leadership were solidified in his character as he learned the fear of the Lord.

The value from which David fought Goliath, that one cannot defy the armies of God and live, also flowed from David's reverence for God. When he reacts viscerally against Goliath, who would "defy the armies of the living God" (1 Sam 17:26), he does so out of a clear reverence for God.<sup>73</sup> Baldwin summarizes, "David is indignant that anyone, no matter how powerful, should presume to insult the people of Israel, and therefore, by implication, Israel's God."<sup>74</sup> He then tells Saul of God's great deliverance (1 Sam 17:37) and later declares to Goliath his own reverence for God (1 Sam 17: 45–47). David's indignation at an offense to God, his awe-filled declarations of God's greatness, and his willingness to fight show that his actions flowed from his reverence for the God whose honor was at stake.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 39; Hess, *Joshua*, 6:22, 25.

<sup>73</sup> Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 74.

<sup>74</sup> Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 135; see also Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 192.

<sup>75</sup> Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 137.

The value from which Nehemiah led, his desire to see the walls of Jerusalem rebuilt, came from his fear of God (Neh 5:15), who “loves the gates of Zion” (Ps 87:2).<sup>76</sup> When Nehemiah heard that those gates and walls were broken, he brought his grief to the Lord (Neh 1:3–5), expressing his fear of the Lord in the process.<sup>77</sup> Because he feared God, because God loves the gates that were broken, and because Nehemiah brought his grief directly to God in terms that emphasize his fear of God, one can see that his deeply held value (that the wall must be rebuilt) had roots in his fear of the God. So the value from which Nehemiah inspired Israel to rebuild the wall was grounded in his fear of God.

The values from which Peter led, fishing for men and shepherding the flock of God, were given to him by Jesus during profound moments by the sea. In both encounters, Jesus paired the words, “follow me” with profound revelation about Peter’s future; in both encounters Peter responds to Jesus emphatically, immediately leaving literal fishing (Matt 4:18–22, John 21:7–19). These details point to Peter’s enthusiasm toward Jesus and willingness to follow Jesus’s ways.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, Peter would follow, fishing for people and shepherding the flock of God<sup>79</sup> until his predicted martyrdom.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Williamson refers to Nehemiah’s fear of God as the “religious devotion” of a “devoted Jew.” Williamson, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 153; Howell also notes that the responsibility of cupbearer would only be given to someone with the highest integrity and with enough wisdom to advise the king. These are the two other essential leadership attributes argued in this chapter. Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 122.

<sup>77</sup> Williamson notes that the phrase “great and awesome God” can be translated “awe-inspiring” or “stand in fear.” The word occurs 14 times in Nehemiah. Williamson, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 1985, 154.

<sup>78</sup> Gerald Borchert notes the religious elements of Peter’s hasty reach for his garment before jumping in the water. Borchert, *John 12–21*, 328.

<sup>79</sup> Craig Keener notes that different estimates count between one third and three quarters of the book of Acts as speeches, indicating the importance of preaching in the book and thus in missions. Many of these speeches are Peter’s, in which he is fishing for people and shepherding the flock of God. For instance, Keener treats Peter’s speech in Acts 2 as an example of Peter fishing for men. Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 1:261, 1:862.

<sup>80</sup> The earliest readers of the Gospels could have made this connection as well. Don Carson notes that Peter had already died by the time the four Gospels were written. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1991), 680. Thus, 1 and 2 Peter had already been written as well.

The way Jesus's charge to shepherd informed Peter's ministry can even be seen in detailed connections between the two. Carson notes that Jesus's words to Peter emphasize the action of pastoring, not the title of pastor (*feed* my sheep), and emphasize that the sheep are Jesus's, not Peter's (*feed my* sheep).<sup>81</sup> In reverence of his Lord, Peter later echoes these emphases in his letters: "shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you" (1 Pet 5:2).

Peter's responses, bursting with awe and following the Lord's ways, are two aspects of the fear of the Lord argued for in chapter 2. In these two conversations, Peter received the values that guided his ministry and his death: to fish for people and shepherd the flock of God. So both values from which Peter led found root in his fear of the Lord.

The value from which Paul led, that his purpose on earth was to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles, came to him shortly after the fearful day he saw the glory of the Lord and began walking in his ways. On the way to Damascus, he had his fearsome encounter with the Lord he was persecuting (Acts 9:1–5). The sight was so glorious that it blinded him for three days (Acts 9:9), left him speechless once he learned that the voice was Jesus's, and kept him from food and water for three days.<sup>82</sup> Jesus commanded him to go into the city and then await more commands, which Paul did (Acts 9:6–8). Only then, three days after Paul saw the Lord's glory, reacted with awe, and began to walk in his ways, did Paul receive the mission and value that guided the rest of his life: "he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name" (Acts 9:15–16). In these verses, as Alan Thompson rightly notes, "the rest of

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<sup>81</sup> Carson, *John*, 678. Carson also notes a connection between these words and 1 Pet 5:1–2.

<sup>82</sup> John B. Polhill, *Paul & His Letters* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 48.

Paul’s ministry is outlined under the authority of the Lord Jesus.” Later, God reaffirmed this calling in Acts 18:9–11 and 23:11.<sup>83</sup> So the values from which Paul led and inspired others flowed forth from his fear of the Lord.

Durham sees similar pattern of callings flowing from fearful encounters with God in the lives of prophets like Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Micah.<sup>84</sup> Craig Keener similarly notes the resemblance of the fearful theophany at Paul’s calling to those of many prophets.<sup>85</sup> George Cladis notes the pattern in the lives both prophets and others: Moses, Jeremiah, Mary, and Paul. He summarizes, “The heroes and heroines of the Bible are often individual leaders with a mission who live it out with faith and conviction and draw others to follow.”<sup>86</sup> The values that drive such faith and conviction are received at the feet of the Lord. Because leadership requires values, producing them in leaders is one way the fear of the Lord strengthens one’s leadership.

### **The Fear of the Lord Is the Beginning of Wisdom**

As the wisdom literature of the Bible echoes, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Ps 111:10). Put differently, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov 1:7).<sup>87</sup> Aptly calling these words “the climatic, concluding verse” of Proverbs’ preface, Longman says,

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<sup>83</sup> See Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke’s Account of God’s Unfolding Plan*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 27 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 53–54; Keener agrees, saying it “foreshadows most of the rest of Acts.” Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 1:1597; Polhill also agrees, calling v. 15 “programmatic for the rest of Acts.” Polhill, *Paul & His Letters*, 49.

<sup>84</sup> For a summary of this conversation, see Durham, *Exodus*, 29.

<sup>85</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 2:1597.

<sup>86</sup> Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church*, 51.

<sup>87</sup> Roland Murphy affirms knowledge refers to wisdom here, as confirmed by the parallel passage Prov 9:10. Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 5.

“Beginning” can either refer to the foundation on which an edifice is built or can mean the first of a succession of moments. In either case (and both might be meant), the phrase insists that where there is no fear of the Lord, there is no wisdom. One cannot even begin in the enterprise of wisdom without having fear of God.<sup>88</sup>

Waltke agrees that the word can take either meaning, but insists it must mean “principal” (Longman’s “foundational”) because of the word used in the parallel passage, Proverbs 9:10. He expounds, “What the alphabet is to reading, notes to reading music, and numerals to mathematics, the fear of the Lord is to attaining the revealed knowledge of this book.”<sup>89</sup> Raymond Ortlund says of it, more literally, “this wonderful fear of the Lord is where we begin our journey into wisdom. It is how we keep making progress all the way.”<sup>90</sup> However one may put it, the fear of the Lord grounds and leads to the wisdom leadership requires. Because leadership requires wisdom, producing it in leaders is one way the fear of the Lord strengthens one’s leadership.

### **God-Fearing Leadership Blesses Those Being Led**

The fear of the Lord is the foundation of attributes required for leadership. But that is not the primary argument that leadership that helps flourish others is grounded in the fear of the Lord. The material in this chapter only explained how the fear of the Lord leads to flourishing leadership. The primary argument that the fear of the Lord leads to flourishing leadership is that David’s last words, recorded in 2 Samuel, teach it directly.

Now these are the last words of David:  
The oracle of David, the son of Jesse,  
the oracle of the man who was raised on high,  
the anointed of the God of Jacob,  
the sweet psalmist of Israel:  
“The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me;  
his word is on my tongue.  
The God of Israel has spoken;  
the Rock of Israel has said to me:  
When one rules justly over men,

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<sup>88</sup> Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, 12.

<sup>89</sup> Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, 181.

<sup>90</sup> Raymond C. Ortlund, *Proverbs: Wisdom That Works*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 31.

ruling in the fear of God,  
he dawns on them like the morning light,  
like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning,  
like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth. (2 Sam 23:1–4)

The oracle begins with nine lines of introduction, serving to underscore the importance of these words and their centrality to the book’s message.<sup>91</sup> One line says these words are David’s last, four reinforce the importance of their human author,<sup>92</sup> and four more call the words an oracle from God. Readers have been given every reason to perk their ears to David’s prophecy.

After such a grandiose introduction, David gives readers a simple prophetic image. As sunshine after rain invigorates the grass to flourish from the earth, so does just, God-fearing leadership invigorate those under it to flourish.<sup>93</sup> “A righteous king guided by the fear of the Lord . . . brings life and blessing to his nation.”<sup>94</sup>

Though David says these words as king, he does not limit them to kings. Not only kings, but all those in authority can see those they lead flourish if they will learn the fear of the Lord. Bergen also says this quotably: “for well-watered seedlings to fulfill their potential, they must have bright sunlight; similarly, strong, righteous leaders help create an environment in which the people under their care can fulfill their potential.”<sup>95</sup>

Given the exhortation of this oracle, it becomes clearer why, as noted earlier, God calls leaders of many different levels to fear him. As noted in previous chapters, God requires kings (Deut 17:18–20), governors (Neh 5:9, 15), and judges (Exod 18:21, 2 Chr

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<sup>91</sup> Bergen says it is “clearly one of the highlighted passages in 2 Samuel.” Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 464.

<sup>92</sup> Baldwin poetically referred to these four lines as a “fourfold portrait of the writer.” Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 311.

<sup>93</sup> Roger Omanson and John Ellington recommend rendering 4 as the sunshine coming after the rain. Roger L. Omanson and John Ellington, *A Handbook on the First and Second Books of Samuel*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 2001), 1154, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>94</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 464.

<sup>95</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 466.

19:7, 9, Luke 18:2, 4) to fear him. David teaches here that, when they do, the people they rule over tend to flourish.

Human beings, made to fruitfully multiply and have dominion over the earth (Gen 1:28), flourish under God-fearing leadership. David's last words teach this explicitly. This teaching directly claims that fear of the Lord plays a foundational role in flourishing leadership.

### **Conclusion**

Both God and men find integrity, values, and wisdom essential to leadership; the fear of the Lord leads to all three of these things. In this way, the Bible teaches how the fear of the Lord flourishes leadership. More definitively, David's last words teach that the fear of the Lord grounds flourishing leadership.

In one more way, the Bible teaches and reinforces this lesson: through story, pointedly through two characters. The next chapter will present King Saul as a leader who never learned to fear the Lord and King David as the ideal God-fearing leader.



## CHAPTER 4

### THE KING'S FEAR OF THE LORD AS A THEME IN THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL

#### Introduction

Previous chapters have explored God's requirement of leaders in all levels of authority to fear him and his blessing on those who do, asserting that the fear of the Lord is foundational to leadership. This chapter argues the fear of the Lord's foundational role in leadership through the biblical narrative of 1–2 Samuel,<sup>1</sup> which presents Saul as the king who never learned to fear the Lord and David as the ideal God-fearing king. The books of Samuel do this by first by referencing Deuteronomy 17:18–20 (which implores rising kings to learn the fear of the Lord) just before Saul is crowned Israel's first divinely appointed King and then by tracing how David leads in the fear of the Lord while Saul does not.

Reading through the books of Samuel leaves readers desiring to avoid the fate of Saul and find the favor David enjoyed. On one hand, Saul died trembling on his own sword after a descent into madness, rage, and witchcraft, leaving his kingdom to his rival instead of his son. "These things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone

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<sup>1</sup> The books of Samuel were originally written as one unit that was separated into two scrolls when it was translated into Greek. For this reason, they are best treated as a whole story and analyzed together. Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*, vol. 2, *Prophets* (New York: Norton, 2019), 164. Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, *The New American Commentary*, vol. 7 (Nashville: B. & H., 1996), 17–18, Logos Bible Software.

who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:11–12). Readers of the Books of Samuel who take heed and wish to avoid Saul’s fate are on the right track. On the other hand, David found God’s favor at an early age and died full of days, with an eternal dynasty to rule after him. With such a motivating narrative, one has good reason to search the story for key differences between the two characters, for key flaws in Saul, or for key virtues in David.

Those who have probed into Saul’s fatal flaw have not reached a consensus. If Barbara Green is right that his life is a riddle, few seem to have solved it.<sup>2</sup> Many who have thought long on him as a character come from traditions outside Evangelical scholarship. David Gunn says Saul’s problem was fate, that from the beginning Yahweh was against him.<sup>3</sup> Moshe Garisel casts Saul not with a single pitfall, but as an analogy with both Abimelech and the House of Eli.<sup>4</sup> Clovis Chappell had a more basic take: Saul never repented of his sin.<sup>5</sup> Scholarly and popular inquiries into David’s life bear more consensus, either summarizing him as a man after God’s heart<sup>6</sup> or considering his virtues alongside his misdeeds.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Barbara Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen? A Dialogical Study of King Saul in 1 Samuel*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supp. Series 365 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 55.

<sup>3</sup> D. M. Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul: An Interpretation of a Biblical Story* (Sheffield, England: University of Sheffield, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> Moshe Garisel, *The First Book of Samuel: A Literary Study of Comparative Structures, Analogies, and Parallels* (Jerusalem: Revivim, 1985), 97–102.

<sup>5</sup> Clovis Chappell, *Sermons on Old Testament Characters* (New York: Harper, 1925), 134.

<sup>6</sup> Jerry Vines, *Pursuing God’s Own Heart: Lessons from the Life of David* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003); Mark J. Boda, *After God’s Own Heart: The Gospel According to David*, The Gospel According to the Old Testament (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007); Gene A. Getz, *David: Seeking God Faithfully*, Men of Character 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995); H. Edwin Young, *David, after God’s Own Heart* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1984).

<sup>7</sup> See Paul Borgman, *David, Saul, and God: Rediscovering an Ancient Story* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Charles R. Swindoll, *David: A Man of Passion & Destiny*, Great Lives from God’s Word (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997); Baruch Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King*, The Bible in Its World (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001).

Paul Borgman, appreciating how the patterns in the books of Samuel tell readers “why David instead of Saul,” notes that the answer is mysterious because “God . . . can see what humankind cannot.”<sup>8</sup> The difference is not evident at first. Readers must wait patiently to see the difference: David delights in God.<sup>9</sup> Borgman is right; but this delight rests on a deeper theme woven through the books of Samuel. David delights in God because he fears God.

Robert Alter, with his treasured eye for literary nuance, finds their difference in knowledge. Saul is “deprived of the knowledge he desperately seeks,” while David is “peculiarly favored with knowledge.” Like Borgman’s, Alter’s insight takes his readers the right direction but leaves them off-center. Indeed, David’s knowledge contrasts with Saul’s lack of it. But David has more than knowledge. He has “the fear of the Lord,” which “is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7).<sup>10</sup>

To uncover the key difference between David and Saul, one must consider the role of Hebrew prophets like Samuel: enforcing the book of Deuteronomy.<sup>11</sup> Peter Gentry states it most plainly early in his work on the Prophets, writing that “*Everything* in the prophets” is “based upon the book of Deuteronomy, an expansion and renewal of the covenant made at Sinai.”<sup>12</sup> Prophetic books like 1–2 Samuel were not written to predict the future but to apply a covenant made in the past to the present. This foundation in Deuteronomy helps to explain why references to Deuteronomy abound in the Prophets and helps readers see the difference between David and Saul in the Books of Samuel.

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<sup>8</sup> Borgman, *David, Saul, and God*, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Borgman, *David, Saul, and God*, 244.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019), 2:172.

<sup>11</sup> Peter John Gentry, *How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 15. Brian Vickers first pointed this out to me during a class lecture at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

<sup>12</sup> Gentry, *How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets*, 15. Emphasis original.

True to this prophetic form, Samuel references Deuteronomy in his farewell speech to point readers to God's key expectation of Israelite kings: that they learn to fear him. Once readers are pointed back to this expectation, they are invited to measure the coming kings against it. Readers who do so will be rewarded, as the prophet notes five ways in which David learned to fear the Lord and four ways in which Saul did not. Sprinkling this contrast as a theme throughout the books of Samuel is one more way the Bible teaches that the fear of the Lord is essential to leadership.

### **Framing Israel's Kingship**

The theme begins with Samuel's farewell speech. Before installing Israel's first king, Samuel points readers to one of Deuteronomy's requirements for kings.<sup>13</sup> Peter Gentry's framework for understanding prophetic books helps readers see the speech's significance. Biblical prophets refer to Deuteronomy often because their job is to enforce it.<sup>14</sup>

Samuel's farewell speech carries great thematic significance, being Samuel's longest speech and containing three of his six longest individual quotations.<sup>15</sup> In this telling moment Samuel enforces Deuteronomy 17:18–20 by saying,

And now behold the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked; behold, the LORD has set a king over you. If you will fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well. (1 Sam 12:13–14)

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<sup>13</sup> The writer's language is so similar that scholars who subscribe to the Documentary Hypothesis tend to believe a Deuteronomistic writer inserted it. See David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 321, 324.

<sup>14</sup> Gentry, *How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets*, 15.

<sup>15</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 140.

Here the writer gives readers a hint for evaluating Saul's kingship: look back to Deuteronomy 17:18–20. Kings must learn to fear the Lord, and readers must watch to see if they do.

Readers of 1 and 2 Samuel, then, must compare the kings to these words:

And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel. (Deut 17:18–20)

The king must learn to fear the Lord by reading from the Law all the days of his life. He must produce a standard copy in the presence of the Levitical priests, an act of reverence that pointed to his submission to the higher king.<sup>16</sup> Like the vassal of an ancient Near East suzerain-vassal treaty, the king would keep his copy of the covenant with him and read it regularly.<sup>17</sup> The king's fear must then become evident in two ways: his obedience to all the Lord's ways and his refusal to lift his heart above his brothers.<sup>18</sup> If he does learn to fear the Lord, the king's reign will be long and his sons' reigns will be long after him.

Readers, then, should watch for (1) how completely Saul and David follow God's commands, (2) how they treat their fellow Israelites, (3) whether the Lord gives them long reigns, and (4) whether their sons reign long after them. Readers who look for these signs will be rewarded, as 1–2 Samuel carefully catalogues Saul failing at all four of them and David succeeding in all four of them. Readers will also find David fulfilling

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<sup>16</sup> Daniel Isaac Block, *Deuteronomy: From Biblical Text . . . to Contemporary Life*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 419–20.

<sup>17</sup> J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (London: Inter-Varsity, 1974), 226–27.

<sup>18</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 257.

another characteristic the above passage connects with the fear of the Lord: daily reading of the Lord's words.

### **The Books of Samuel Catalogue Saul's Failure to Learn to Fear the Lord**

The writer of 1 Samuel, after pointing the reader back to the promise of Deuteronomy 17:18–20, takes care to detail Saul's miscarriage of it. The writer notes Saul turning "aside from the commandment," his heart being "lifted above his brothers," and his fear of man. The writer then chronicles how Saul "and his children" do not "continue long in his kingdom." These pointed details outline a portrait of a king who never learned to fear the Lord.

#### **Saul Turned Aside from God's Commands**

The king who feared the Lord would "not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left" (Deut 17:20). By keeping all the Lord's words, the king would show that he fears the Lord. Put another way, the one who fears the Lord walks in all his ways (Deut 8:6, 10:12, 13:14). This is the first sign listed above. In striking similarity, when Saul loses his dynasty and later loses his kingdom, Samuel and the Lord take care to note that it is because Saul turned aside from God's commandments. Those are the fourth and third signs listed above, respectively.

In the first instance of Saul turning aside from God's commands, Saul did not wait for Samuel to arrive before offering a sacrifice as instructed. By law, Samuel could have arrived at any point in the day. But Saul grew impatient as the people began scattering. Rather than wait, he offered the sacrifice early.<sup>19</sup> Samuel arrived as soon as the sacrifice was finished, contending, "You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your

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<sup>19</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 150.

kingdom over Israel forever” (1 Sam 13:13). Ironically, Saul “believed he could obtain the Lord’s favor through an act of disobedience.”<sup>20</sup> He actually is guilty of “violating the commandment and spoiling the chance for a long-lasting dynasty.”<sup>21</sup> Thus the writer of 1 Samuel links two aspects of Deuteronomy 17:18–20: Saul lost his dynasty because he turned aside from God’s commandment.

In the second instance of Saul turning aside from God’s commands, God directly warns Saul to listen to him (1 Sam 15:1) before commanding him to destroy every Amalekite and all their livestock, stressing the importance of that command.<sup>22</sup> Despite the warning, Saul does not listen, sparing King Agag and the best of the livestock. Bergen notes details that stress the gravity of Saul’s failure to keep the command completely: Samuel’s angry sleeplessness and God’s use of a term for grief used elsewhere only before the grievous flood of Genesis.<sup>23</sup> The Lord states the reason for his grief and his rejection of Saul as king: “he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments” (1 Sam 15:11). Thus, the writer of the Books of Samuel grievously links two more aspects of Deuteronomy 17:18–20: Saul lost his kingship because he turned aside from God’s commandment. Put differently, “Saul’s rejection of Yahweh’s word resulted in his own rejection as king.”<sup>24</sup>

The writer of the Books of Samuel connects Saul’s failure to keep all of God’s commands with his loss of his kingdom and loss of his dynasty. Saul has thus failed at the first, third, and fourth signs noted above.

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<sup>20</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 150.

<sup>21</sup> Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 10 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 128.

<sup>22</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 167.

<sup>23</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 170–71.

<sup>24</sup> Klein, *1 Samuel*, 155.

## **Saul Lifted His Heart above His Brothers**

The heart of the king who feared the Lord would not “be lifted up above his brothers” (Deut 17:20). This sign is listed second above. The word for “lifted up” refers to exalting or exempting oneself.<sup>25</sup> The king cannot exalt himself above the rest of the nation or exempt himself from God’s laws. Modern readers might say he is not above the Law.

By contrast, the writer of the Books of Samuel details Saul hunting David for years (1 Sam 18–31), hurling a spear at his own son in anger (1 Sam 20:33), and murdering an entire city of priests (1 Sam 22:19). He made himself the exception to God’s laws over and above his Israelite brothers. He lifted his heart above his brothers because, again, he did not learn to fear the Lord.

## **Saul Feared Man, Not God**

Though Saul did not learn to fear the Lord, he did learn to fear the very Israelites he lifted his heart above. Biblical counseling author Ed Welch gives helpful insight on why. One fears man because one does not fear God. Every person bears God’s image, an image that strikes fear in the hearts of sinners. Sinners fear that image-bearers will see them, reject them, and hurt them. To overcome this fear of man, one must learn to fear the Lord and love others.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the fear of the Lord “swallows up all other fears.”<sup>27</sup> But Saul, a head and shoulders taller than the rest of Israel (1 Sam 9:2), is afraid of them. Building on Jeremiah Burroughs’s foundation and Welch’s insights, readers can

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<sup>25</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, “רום,” in *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. and ed. M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2000), Logos Bible Software.

<sup>26</sup> Edward Welch, *When People Are Big and God Is Small: Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and the Fear of Man*, Resources for Changing Lives (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1997).

<sup>27</sup> Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel Fear, or, The Heart Trembling at the Word of God Evidences a Blessed Frame of Spirit: Delivered in Several Sermons from Isaiah 66:2 and 2 Kings 22:19*, ed. Don Kistler, 4th ed. (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2001).



conclude that Saul would not have grown so afraid of others if he had learned to fear God. This logic can be extended to say that Saul feared his Israelite brothers because he did not learn to fear the Lord.

Readers get their first taste of Saul's fear of man at his coronation. The lot falls to Saul, the kingship along with it, but Saul is missing. Saul's absence puts Samuel's authority and the lot itself into question. "Is there a man still to come?" (1 Sam 10:22).<sup>28</sup> but is it Saul who should be embarrassed. The Lord speaks the answer: "he has hidden himself among the baggage" (1 Sam 10:22). Perhaps now readers begin to see why Saul had previously "shut out both his servant (9:27) and his uncle (10:16) from any knowledge of his destiny."<sup>29</sup> Saul's stage-fright could not be hidden any more than he could; he was afraid to be king.

Yet the reason for Saul's fear had not yet become clear. Any wise king would be intimidated by the divine imperatives set upon a ruler and the divine accountability that follows them. At this point, a reader may wonder if Saul trembles with a true sense of reverence for the burden placed upon him. However, as 1 Samuel continues to unfold, the root of Saul's fear comes to light. Rather than a fear of God that moves him to obedience, Saul later admits he disobeyed God "because I feared the people" (1 Sam 15:24). Bergen summarizes the root of Saul's disobedience well:

What had motivated Saul to move away from obedience to God's command? Fundamentally it was misdirected fear: instead of fearing the Lord as required by the Torah (cf. Lev 19:14; 25:17; Deut 6:13, 24; 10:12, 20), Saul "was afraid of the people" (cf. Mark 11:32; John 7:13). Because of that misguided fear, Saul "listened to the voice of" ("gave in to") the people instead of listening to the Lord's voice as required by the Torah (cf. Deut 27:10).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 100.

<sup>29</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 132.

<sup>30</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 173.

Even after the fear of man took the kingdom from Saul, it still had more to take. Trembling with the fear of the Philistines, Saul eventually took his own life. The Philistines had pushed Israel back, killed Saul's three oldest sons, and overtaken Saul with archers. If this were not enough, Saul already knew his fate from a haunting revelation the night before.<sup>31</sup> There appeared only one choice, as Saul would say to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and mistreat me" (1 Sam 31:4).

To be sure, some venerable exegetes do not see Saul's suicide this way. Joyce Baldwin saw Saul's choice as honorable. "Saul heroically fell upon his own sword rather than have the uncircumcised Philistines make sport of him, as they had done with Samson." But this conclusion seems out of line with her other observations and with the biblical account of Samson's death. Saul's choice must be out of fear and self-interest, for the Philistines could just as much dishonor Israel's God with the body of a dead king as they could with a live king. Baldwin affirmed they did so with strong imagery.

Though Saul did not live to witness the scene, the Philistines did enjoy themselves at his expense; in particular, they made capital out of their victory by congratulating their gods, and by dedicating Saul's armour to become a trophy in *the temple of Ashtaroth*, in much the same way as Goliath's sword had been treasured in Israel's sanctuary (1 Sam. 21:9). The foreign deity had triumphed, and the decapitated body of Israel's anointed king was hung, exposed, on the city wall of Bethshan, the easternmost of the line of old Canaanite fortress cities across the country from the Mediterranean to the Jordan, which the Israelites had not conquered (Josh. 17:11).

Saul did not have in mind the honor of Israel's God, or he would have stayed alive as long as possible to fight for it. Indeed, the Lord did choose to honor himself during Samson's humiliation (Judg 16:28–30). Saul could only have killed himself out of fear for the taunting and torture sure to meet him.

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<sup>31</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 282.

Interestingly, Saul's armor-bearer refused to thrust Saul through because "he feared greatly" (1 Sam 31:5). Of this Baldwin fittingly quipped, "David, who had once been Saul's armour-bearer, would have approved."<sup>32</sup>

It follows, then, that if Saul had learned to fear the Lord, he would not have feared his people or his enemies. But Saul's fear of man grew so great that it took the kingdom from him and killed him.

### **Saul Paid for His Disobedience**

The promise of Deuteronomy is ultimately that the king who fears the Lord will "continue long in his kingdom, he and his children in Israel" (Deut 17:20). These signs, a long reign and a long dynasty, are listed third and fourth above, respectively. By contrast, God rejected Saul and anointed David two years into Saul's reign.<sup>33</sup>

If the detail in Saul's transgression is heartbreaking, the details of his promised downfall are worse. Once the anointing moves from him to David, the Lord's blessing and the people's hearts go with it. The Spirit of the Lord departs from Saul and a harmful spirit begins to torment him (1 Sam 16:14). David slays the giant that gigantic Saul would not fight (1 Sam 17). The people start lauding David more highly than Saul (1 Sam 18:7). Saul's turns into a jealous madman until he kills himself (1 Sam 31:4) with no son reigning after him. One may imagine how long his dynasty would have lasted if Saul had learned to fear the Lord. Yet the framework of the narrative suggests that another, David, is gaining the Lord's favor as Saul finally loses it completely; Saul is defeated by David's former friends (the Philistines) while David defeats the enemy near whom Saul found his rejection from God (the Amalekites).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 182.

<sup>33</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 148.

<sup>34</sup> Jan Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide*, trans. Ineke Smit (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 39.

### **Saul Must Not Have Read from the Law Daily**

The promise spelled out the way in which the king must learn to fear the Lord: daily reading of the Law. Thus, because Saul did not learn to fear the Lord, readers can infer that Saul did not read daily from the Law. Rather than trace this aspect of the theme directly, the books of Samuel remain silent on it. Saul's story tells of no expression of love for the Law, of repentance brought about by it, or of his copying or reading from it. While this absence does not confirm that Saul never read the Law, it can leave the reader with the same sense of absence, a sense that Saul's love for God's word simply was not there.

### **David Ruled in the Fear of the Lord**

During and after Saul's tragic failure to learn the fear of the Lord, the writer of 1–2 Samuel carefully notes David's fulfillment of Deuteronomy 17:18–20 and ends David's life with a summary that he ruled "in the fear of God" (2 Sam 23:3).<sup>35</sup> Thus, after pointing readers to Deuteronomy's promise to and expectation of kings and cataloguing Saul's failure to embrace it, the writer of 1–2 Samuel then casts David as a God-fearing king who ends his life exhorting others to lead in the fear of God.

### **David Cherished God's Commands**

Despite striking blemishes in David's track record, prophets mark him with integrity and with delight in God's commands. He reminds readers that sinners can still walk in integrity. This integrity is the first sign noted above.

David's integrity is perhaps best summarized in the song recorded at the end of his life. Why did God continue to deliver David from threat after threat?

The Lord dealt with me according to my righteousness;  
according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me.

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<sup>35</sup> Second Samuel 23:3 is further treated in chap. 3.

For I have kept the ways of the Lord  
and have not wickedly departed from my God.  
For all his rules were before me,  
and from his statutes I did not turn aside.  
I was blameless before him,  
and I kept myself from guilt.  
And the Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness,  
according to my cleanness in his sight. (2 Sam 22:21–25)

The wording, especially the *inclusio* of verses 21 and 25, points readers back to Deuteronomy's imperative to "keep the ways of Yahweh" (note verse 22), so much that many see it as a Deuteronomistic insertion.<sup>36</sup> Instead, the prophet who wrote 1 Samuel intentionally pointed back to Deuteronomy, painting David as the ideal fulfillment of Deuteronomy's expectation of royal integrity. Other prophets continue this trend later when they measure his descendants against him in 1 Kings, asking whether they "walked in my ways, doing what is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my rules, as David his father did" (1 Kgs 11:33).<sup>37</sup> In Samuel and elsewhere, the prophets cast David as the king who kept God's commands.

The promise of Deuteronomy 17 states where this integrity will come from: daily reading of the Law. The writer of Samuel notes David's view of this Law in the same song. "This God—his way is perfect," David sings, "The word of the LORD proves true" (2 Sam 22:31). God's word "'stands the test of fire', like precious metal."<sup>38</sup> David's perilous life tested it indeed, finding it pure and reliable. While his anthology of songs like Psalm 19 and Psalm 119 may best express David's love for God's word, Samuel does make note of it to continue the theme. The God-fearing king will regard God's word highly and walk in all of it; David did just that.

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<sup>36</sup> Peter McCarter summarizes this position well. Peter Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 9 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 468.

<sup>37</sup> While these words are taken from 1 Kgs 11:33, similar evaluations can be found in 1 Kings alone, including 3:3, 3:6, 3:14, 9:4, 15:3, and 22:2.

<sup>38</sup> Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 309.

Yet readers and interpreters must weigh such a sterling assessment with David's great sins. Most notably, David lustfully took a married woman and conspired to kill her husband before pridefully counting God's people contrary to the Law.

David's affair with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 "jolt[s] the reader, who has become accustomed to the mild and generally upright David."<sup>39</sup> Such a jolt testifies to the integrity readers expect from David; but readers must wonder how a man who fears the Lord so greatly could do such a thing. They are right to wonder, as the story shows the writer's focus on David's character over his military feats.<sup>40</sup>

Though David's conduct is shockingly immoral, the story eventually shows that even David at his worst is different from Saul. Readers ultimately see David's openness to prophetic rebuke, in contrast against Saul's hardness.<sup>41</sup> Whereas Saul makes excuses before offering a questionable confession (1 Sam 15:13–25),<sup>42</sup> David immediately responds, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam 12:13). To confess this sin is to admit to a capital offense, even to admit it to one of his own subjects, placing himself at great political liability. Yet David confesses his sin to Nathan the prophet, showing his integrity before the Lord. Though a shocking breach of integrity, the Bathsheba affair and its repercussions are rightly called "the clearest indication that he was different from Saul in the most essential relationship of all, that of submission to the Lord God. For that reason, he found forgiveness, whereas Saul never accepted his guilt or the rejection that followed from it."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> McCarter, *II Samuel*, 288.

<sup>40</sup> Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 247–48.

<sup>41</sup> Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 252.

<sup>42</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 173.

<sup>43</sup> Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 255.

The writer echoes a similar pattern later as David holds a census, inevitably violating Israel's purification laws, resulting in a plague upon Israel.<sup>44</sup> This time without prompting, David's heart strikes him and he confesses, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done" (2 Sam 24:10). Baldwin saw how David's words point to his "tender conscience."<sup>45</sup> Again, David's response to his sin shows the good in his character.

Despite these two great breeches, David is remembered by the Lord as one who walked before him "with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my rules" (1 Kgs 9:4). Thus, readers cannot take the accounts in Samuel as marks against David's integrity but as reminders not to equate integrity with sinlessness. David, filled with integrity, listens to the Lord even when he has sinned; Saul, who lacked integrity, failed to listen to the Lord and thus multiplied his sin. In this way, David "learn[ed] to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them (Deut 17:19).

### **David Did Not Lift His Heart above His Brothers**

The God-fearing king of Deuteronomy 17 would not lift up "his heart . . . above his brothers (Deut 17:20). He will not be proud or consider himself above his brothers.<sup>46</sup> In suit, Samuel portrays David's heart as knit to his brothers' through his mourning for his fallen brethren turned enemies and his favor shown to his rival's house. This sign is listed second above.

If readers would expect David to lift his heart above anyone, it would be Saul. Yet upon hearing of Saul's death, David lamented in "the overwhelming agony of

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<sup>44</sup> McCarter, *II Samuel*, 512–14.

<sup>45</sup> Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 316.

<sup>46</sup> Robert G. Bratcher and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on Deuteronomy*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 2000), 310, Logos Bible Software.

bereavement”<sup>47</sup> and commanded that his lament be taught to the people. Even as he was lifted above Saul, his heart was not.

Similarly, when Joab’s murder of Abner advantages David, David keeps his hands clean and mourns for his fellow Israelite. Unaware of Joab’s actions until Abner is dead, David declares, “I and my kingdom are forever guiltless before the LORD for the blood of Abner the son of Ner” (2 Sam 3:28), and then insists that the people (including Joab himself) mourn for Abner in sackcloth, gives him a proper burial, weeps at his grave, and finally composes him a lament (2 Sam 3:31–34).<sup>48</sup> Bergen perceptively cites these acts as intentional fulfillment of Deuteronomy 17:18–19.<sup>49</sup> Participating in Abner’s murder would have violated the command, but the writer of Samuel is careful distance David from the murder. David could not be confused with one who has the blood of Israelites on his hand, for he did not lift up his heart above his brothers.

Once David ascends to the throne, he asks, “Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?” (2 Sam 9:1). Upon learning that a son of Jonathan remained, David lifted that son up by showing great kindness to him. The story intends to stress David’s loyalty to Jonathan; rather than lift up his heart over Jonathan, David keeps his covenant with Jonathan.<sup>50</sup> This emphasis sits in stark contrast with the usual treatment of rival houses by kings.<sup>51</sup> David would not lift up his heart above even rival houses in Israel, for he had learned the fear of the Lord.

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<sup>47</sup> Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 190.

<sup>48</sup> Baldwin reads perceptively into Joab’s inclusion in the mandatory mourning, noting that Abner’s murderer appearing in sackcloth would be noticed by the crowd and thus communicate David’s distance from the act. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 204.

<sup>49</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 313.

<sup>50</sup> A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 11 (Dallas: Word, 1989), 140; Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 242–43; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 260.

<sup>51</sup> Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 140.



David's refusal to lift his heart above his brothers may find its peak when his own son revolts against him, takes much of the kingdom from him, and dies dishonoring him. Upon hearing of it, true to his pattern, David weeps, saying, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Sam 18:33). Anderson notes how the form of David's lament (saying Absalom's name three times and calling him as son five times) "accentuates the depth of David's grief and anguish."<sup>52</sup> Whereas Saul erupted against his son at the thought of treachery (1 Sam 20:30–34), David keeps his heart knit to his son's through betrayal and rebellion. He could not lift his heart above a truly rebellious son, when Saul had lifted his heart over a loyal son.

Conspicuously, David does use his sword against his fellow Israelite Uriah to hide an affair with Uriah's wife Bathsheba, paying dearly for it with the life of his own son (2 Sam 11–12). Readers will certainly see the exception to the pattern: David did lift his heart above Uriah. Yet the final direction of the story serves to contrast David against Saul and highlight David's fear of the Lord.

The significance of David's repentance, which "came with immediacy, without denial, and without excuse,"<sup>53</sup> is noted in the previous section. Additionally, while David's repentance shows his desire to stay on the God-fearing path, the Lord's discipline showed his desire to keep David there. Upon David's repentance, he hears The Lord's judgement from Nathan, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD, the child who is born to you shall die" (2 Sam 12:13–14). Immediately the story moves to the death of David's son, highlighting the swiftness of God's judgement.<sup>54</sup> The Lord's severe

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<sup>52</sup> Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 226.

<sup>53</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 373.

<sup>54</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 374.

discipline can only have one motive: to restore David to right fellowship, including right treatment of his fellow Israelites. David responds in kind, seeking the Lord on behalf of the child while it is still alive and then worshiping after it dies. As Bergen describes it:

In losing his son, David sought more than ever to gain a deeper relationship with his Heavenly Father. It is significant that David did not break his fast until after he had worshiped God; David's hunger for a right relationship with God exceeded his desire for culinary delights.<sup>55</sup>

Bergen also quotes Baldwin, who called the story a “turning point in the life of David.”<sup>56</sup> So David's worst and most uncharacteristic moment finally set him more firmly on the path of God-fearing living and leadership.

Though David's sword was fierce, he hesitated to use it on his brothers. Instead, he expressed his love for even his enemies at their deaths. Having learned to fear the Lord, he would not lift his heart above his brothers.

### **David Ruled Long and Left an Eternal Dynasty**

The king who learned to fear the Lord would “continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel” (Deut 17:20). If he read the Torah daily, the results would lead to a secure future.<sup>57</sup> These signs, a long reign and a long dynasty, are listed third and fourth above, respectively.

Aiding translators on this verse, one translation handbook spontaneously points forward to David's 424-year dynasty.<sup>58</sup> Though hardly important to translators of Deuteronomy and rare for a series that focuses little on biblical theology, the appropriate reference demonstrates the unmistakable connection between Deuteronomy's prediction

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<sup>55</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 375.

<sup>56</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 373; Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 255.

<sup>57</sup> Block, *Deuteronomy*, 421.

<sup>58</sup> Bratcher and Hatton, *A Handbook on Deuteronomy*, 310.

of a long dynasty and David's long dynasty. This ideal, God-fearing king could be none other than David.

Though four centuries would mark an impressive dynasty, the Lord promises David an even longer one.

Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (2 Sam 7:11–13)

Anderson aptly calls this chapter “the theological highlight of the Books of Samuel.”<sup>59</sup>

Saul would have received this eternal dynasty, but he did not follow the Lord completely (1 Sam 13:13). In contrast to Saul, the favor of God rests on David so much that he receives a dynasty marked by eternity.<sup>60</sup>

In his last words, David confesses a connection between this covenant and his God-fearing rule. He connects them by referring to his rule as “just” and “in the fear of God” (2 Sam 23:3) before further prophesying,

For does not my house stand so with God?  
For he has made with me an everlasting covenant,  
ordered in all things and secure.  
For will he not cause to prosper  
all my help and my desire? (2 Sam 23:5)

Baldwin saw the standing of David's house dependent on both the word of the Lord and upon David's desire to rule in the fear of God, without contradiction.<sup>61</sup> This dual dependence must be at least in part because the word of the Lord already promised a long dynasty to God-fearing kings in Deuteronomy 17:20. Bergen notes plainly that these last words of David present “the ideal of a righteous king guided by the fear of the Lord.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 112.

<sup>60</sup> Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 122.

<sup>61</sup> Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 311.

<sup>62</sup> Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 464.

With his last words, David brings to a close this theme through the Books of Samuel: the difference between David and Saul was found in their fear of the Lord.

### **Conclusion: the Unique Contribution of Story**

This chapter has argued that in the Books of Samuel, the Bible teaches through story what it systematically teaches elsewhere (as argued in chap. 3). Brief comment is in order concerning the unique contribution narrative makes to this teaching, on why the Bible would teach one way what it has already taught another way.

While the systematic teaching outlined in chapter 3 helps to explain how the fear of the Lord grounds and grows a leader, the story of David and Saul makes those teachings come to life in the fullness of “familiar human experience.”<sup>63</sup> Through the books of Samuel, the foundational role the fear of the Lord plays in leadership becomes “concretely embodied”<sup>64</sup> in the lives of a failed king and a successful king. Readers see David’s integrity, wisdom, and values while they pine for Saul’s lack thereof. This connection to the real experience of readers helps aspiring and serving leaders ground their own lives and leadership in the fear of the Lord. Through David and Saul, readers can experience what they have been taught elsewhere.

By pointing back to the promise of Deuteronomy 17:18–20 in Samuel’s farewell speech and then measuring Saul and David’s lives against it, the writer of the books of Samuel shows readers the difference between a leader who learns to fear the Lord and a leader who does not. This theme through the books of Samuel leaves readers with a vivid contrast of God-fearing leadership and foolish leadership while reinforcing teaching argued in this thesis that the fear of the Lord is foundational to leadership. As the

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<sup>63</sup> Leland Ryken, *How Bible Stories Work: A Guided Study of Biblical Narrative*, Reading the Bible as Literature (Wooster, OH: Weaver Book Company, 2015), 18.

<sup>64</sup> Ryken, *How Bible Stories Work*, 25.

next chapter will suggest, it also may provide material for those desiring to train young leaders in the fear of the Lord.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION, CALL, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Introduction**

Rediscovering the forgotten foundation of leadership requires the church to fundamentally change the way she teaches and understands leadership. This thesis explored the role of the fear of the Lord in leadership by claiming that the fear of the Lord grounds flourishing leadership. The fear of the Lord, a disposition of marveling at God's glory and walking in his ways, is expected by God of leaders and grounds flourishing leadership by producing favorable qualities in leaders. The contrasting streams of David's God-fearing leadership and Saul's foolish leadership flow as a theme through the books of Samuel. This final chapter begins to explore practical implications of the previous chapters for leaders and the church. It also lays groundwork for future research, including hopes that a full leadership model could be built upon this material.

#### **Clarifying the Goal of Leadership**

If the fear of the Lord flourishes a leader and those led, the concept of flourishing can help the church understand the goal of leadership. This can help keep a leader grounded in his or her purpose.

A second look at two key biblical texts clarifies that flourishing is at least a major part of the goal of leadership, though not necessarily the single goal. The Lord casts flourishing as a result of God-fearing kingship when he says, "that he may learn to fear the LORD his God . . . so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel" (Deut 17:19–20). There it is the ruler and his sons who flourish, while

later king David will point to the flourishing of those ruled when he utters, “When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth” (2 Sam 3–4). From these texts alone readers can infer that leaders should desire the flourishing of themselves, their children, and those they lead.

Similar to the way leaders work to keep an organization focused on its mission, the concepts in this thesis can help leaders stay focused on their own mission. They should keep their eyes on the flourishing of their people. Clarity on this aspect of their mission can help them find clarity on several difficult issues.

Church growth becomes easier to evaluate for a pastor who keeps his eyes on the flourishing of his flock. Though he may be evaluated on numerical growth alone, he can widen his view when remembering that God-fearing shepherding should lead to spiritual flourishing, more wisely lived lives, and perhaps also numerical growth. As flourishing grass grows thicker, taller, and over more ground under the light of the sun, a pastor should look for holistic flourishing in his flock.

Profit becomes easier to evaluate for a business leader who keeps his eyes on the flourishing of his or her division, company, and people. That leader may be evaluated on easy-to-digest metrics like quarterly profit and daily production. The concept of flourishing can include profit but also widens the view of a business leader toward employee productivity, employee conduct, justice, team harmony, and other measures of human flourishing. This leader should seek the full flourishing of every person and group he or she leads in all the areas he leads them.

The concept of flourishing in the fear of God can help parents stay focused on the purpose of their family leadership through parenting’s many challenges and distractions. God-fearing fatherhood tends flourish families.

Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord,  
who walks in his ways!

You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;  
you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.  
Your wife will be like a fruitful vine  
within your house;  
your children will be like olive shoots  
around your table.  
Behold, thus shall the man be blessed  
who fears the Lord. (Ps 128:1–4)

A God-fearing father should aim to flourish his wife and children in the fear of the Lord. Upon this foundation he can evaluate parenting advice, books, sermons, and wisdom. He should constantly ask if his actions are leading his family to flourish in God's ways.

The concept of flourishing in the fear of God aids leaders as they read and learn. Books and other materials marketed to leaders tend to promise success for leaders. Steven Covey notes that in the early twentieth century this success literature shifted from focusing on inward qualities like integrity to outward skills like public image management.<sup>1</sup> Leaders may become bewildered sorting through book aisles that mix biblical wisdom and unhelpful promises from a mixture of believing and unbelieving authors. The concept of flourishing in the fear of God can serve as a north star in the night sky, helping leaders navigate the sea of books often available to them. Leaders should evaluate literature that promises flourishing by asking if it helps them flourish themselves and their people by walking in God's ways.

Leaders should strive for the flourishing of those they lead. If God-fearing leadership is rewarded with flourishing, leaders should infer flourishing is to be sought after in their work.

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<sup>1</sup> Covey calls these the “character ethic” and “personality ethic.” Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic*, 25th ann. ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 26–27.



## **A Call for Further Research on the Goal of Leadership**

The findings of this thesis, then, point the church toward the goal of leadership and call for further research into the goal of leadership beginning with the biblical texts emphasized here. While arguing that God-fearing leaders tend to flourish those they lead, this thesis has not defended the notion that flourishing is the sole goal of leadership. A biblical case may be made by further inquiry.

Further inquiry should start with the three biblical texts noted above: David's last words in 2 Samuel 23:3–4, The Lord's exhortation to rising kings in Deuteronomy 17:19–20, and the Psalmist's words to fathers in Psalm 128. This work could continue by noting the flourishing of Israel and the church under favorable leaders like Moses, Nehemiah, and others noted in chapter 3.

Further inquiry should also interact with popular definitions of leadership. Peter Northouse's overview of the evolving definitions of leadership would give a helpful starting point.<sup>2</sup>

## **Integrating New Testament Teaching on Leadership**

This thesis addresses New Testament teaching on leadership mainly through stories of celebrated New Testament leaders like Peter and Paul and through qualifications for pastoral leadership. Perhaps because the theocracy of Israel fades out of focus in the New Testament, it says little about qualification for non-church leaders. But areas connected to this thesis remain to be explored.

Further research could uncover a connection between the Spirit of the Lord and the fear of the Lord, a bridge that could extend the theme well into the New Testament. If God's spirit is indeed "the spirit of . . . the fear of the Lord" (Isa 11:2), perhaps that is why the leaders chosen to oversee food distribution for widows were to be "full of the

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<sup>2</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 7th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2015), 2–3.

Spirit” (Acts 6:3). Could it be that the New Testament rarely connects the fear of the Lord to leadership because the Holy Spirit now has come upon believers (Acts 1–2)? Perhaps emphasis shifts from the fear of the Lord to fullness of the Spirit.

### **Connecting God-Fearing Leadership to Justice**

This thesis connects God-fearing leadership with fair treatment of those led, at least in its treatment of Deut 17:18–20. Perhaps this concept should be thought of under the idea of justice, as it seems to be in 2 Sam 23:3–4.

Further research could trace a connection between God-fearing leadership and justice. Research might begin with two volumes listed in this thesis. *The God Who Goes before You* develops clearly but briefly a connection between leadership and justice while President Theodore Roosevelt speaks to the connection in his own leadership.<sup>3</sup> The work would also need to clarify the Bible’s definition of justice.

### **Implications for Leaders**

One implication from this study may echo over the others: leaders must learn to fear the Lord. If reverence and obedience for the Lord ground leadership, leaders must lay that groundwork.

First, leaders should ask God to teach them to fear him. All pursuits into the fear of God will be fruitless if God does not reveal his glory and his ways. A simple prayer like “Lord, teach me to fear you,” should come regularly from the lips of a leader.

Because rising kings were admonished to learn to fear the Lord by reading the Scriptures daily, and because God reveals his glory and ways in the Scriptures, daily study and meditation in the Scriptures are essential to leadership. Albert Martin says this

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<sup>3</sup> Michael S. Wilder and Timothy Paul Jones, *The God Who Goes before You: Pastoral Leadership as Christ-Centered Followership* (Nashville: B. & H., 2018); Theodore Roosevelt, *Fear God and Take Your Own Part* (New York: George H. Doran, 1916).

directly and well: “if you would sustain and increase your fear of God, you must feed your mind on the Scriptures.”<sup>4</sup> The concept of fearing God also gives leaders two things to look for as they read. They should look for God’s glory so they can marvel at it and God’s ways so they can walk in them. This pursuit gives a sense of purpose to a wandering Bible reader. So leaders should build for themselves a daily devotional habit that involves learning God’s glory and ways from the Bible.

Leaders should also learn to marvel at God’s glory as it is revealed in creation. They should walk back from a mountain overlook or an artfully crafted meal in wonder at God’s handiwork, ready to obey him. When they do, they are growing as a leader.

This thesis only touches on the connection between forgiveness and the fear of the Lord. But Martin helpfully instructs those looking to grow in the fear of God to meditate on God’s forgiveness. As he points out, the Scriptural case is plain: “But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared” (Psalm 130:4).<sup>5</sup> Martin’s instruction is beneficial to leaders. They would indeed grow in the fear of the Lord by regularly confessing sins to the Lord and rejoicing in the Gospel.

Leaders should strive for holy integrity in both their everyday lives and in their leadership. Integrity is both a result of and a part of fearing the Lord. Because integrity involves well-rounded character through all areas of life, leaders should search their lives and hearts for their most unholy areas and strive for complete character.

Because wisdom is essential to leadership, leaders should work gain more of it each day. Regular reviews of the wisdom books of the Bible would be helpful. Because the Proverbs were written for the regular training of Israel’s rulers, leaders will find great help in a daily proverbs regimen. Possibilities include memorizing a different proverb

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<sup>4</sup> Albert N. Martin, *The Forgotten Fear: Where Have All the God-Fearers Gone?* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2015), 147.

<sup>5</sup> Martin, *The Forgotten Fear*, 150–51.

each day and reading the entire book each month by reading a chapter each day (since it has 31 chapters).

Finally, leaders should guard the source of their values. Celebrated biblical leaders led from deeply held values given to them in intense moments fearing the Lord. God taught them to value something he values; their leadership sprang from it. Leaders must learn to value the things God values so that, when the moment comes, they can act with godly zeal for something he loves. They also must learn to communicate these values, especially from the Scriptures.

### **The Need to Teach God-Fearing Leadership**

If the fear of the Lord can be learned, the church is closer to answering the long-asked question of whether leadership is innate or can be taught. At the very least, the foundation and the three pillars of leadership argued for in these pages can be taught: the fear of the Lord, integrity, wisdom, and strong values. While the results of this study still leave room for the possibility of innate qualities contributing to effective leadership, they clarify that a leader's flourishing can be improved by growth in those four learnable qualities. In order to build strong leaders, then, the church should urgently resurrect teaching on the fear of the Lord and focus its leadership training on that teaching.

### **Teaching on the Fear of the Lord**

As noted in earlier chapters, the church has assumed or forgotten the fear of the Lord through most of her history. If the current interest in the topic continues to grow, the church may expect the rising of stronger leaders. Church leaders can contribute to the strength of leadership in their own churches by teaching on it intentionally, similar to the way John Bunyan, Jeremiah Burroughs, and Albert Martin have written entire works dedicated to it. Because the concept is mentioned many times in Scripture, church leaders can also contribute by slowing down and emphasizing the theme when it appears in the

passages they are teaching on. But teaching on the fear of the Lord by itself is not enough. Teachers must also connect it to leadership.

### **Depicting the Glory and Ways of God in Church Gatherings**

While teachers cannot always teach about the fear of the Lord, teachers can always teach the church to fear the Lord. If the fear of the Lord builds leadership, a church wishing to build strong leaders should work to proclaim the glory and majesty of Jesus in its regular gatherings. Congregants should leave with a trembling sense of awe and a readiness to follow no matter the subject or text taught. This will require a dual emphasis on awe and faithfulness, since the fear of the Lord includes both marveling and obedience. Churches with only one or the other should not expect to engage or develop leaders as effectively. On the other hand, if a church regularly leads the entire congregation in the fear of the Lord, they will effectively lay a foundation upon which to train God-fearing leaders.

**For preachers and teachers.** Preachers and teachers should teach about the fear of God at times and constantly teach people to fear God. They should do their work with a contagious sense of fear as they point hearers to the glory and ways of Jesus. This will develop their own leadership and that of those they teach.

Because the fear of the Lord includes the twin concepts of marveling and obedience, preachers and teachers should focus on biblical themes of God's glory and ways. Where the Bible points to the glory of God, preachers and teachers should lead their people to marvel at him. Where the Bible commands, preachers and teachers should lead their people to obey. This would blend both the Christ-centered preaching goals of Bryan Chapell and the moral action preaching goals of Haddon Robinson.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 279; Haddon W. Robinson,

Congregations should marvel at God's wonders during teaching times and leave ready to obey.

However, such teaching could see limited effect if the teacher does not do his work in the fear of the Lord himself. He must marvel at God's glory as he studies, so much that he bursts with wonder when he proclaims the truth before his people. He must walk obediently in the Lord's ways to earn the credibility to teach them. Such a life and teaching will be more contagious as he demonstrates the fear of the Lord while teaching others to fear the Lord.

If a preacher or teacher can do his work in the fear of the Lord, he can generally expect his own leadership to flourish while he flourishes the leadership of those he teaches and the growth of those led. A God-fearing teacher not only sees his students become stronger leaders; he becomes a stronger leader himself.

**For song leaders.** Song leaders play an influential role in teaching the church to fear the Lord because they regularly lead the church to marvel at him. To lead effectively, they should first learn the fear of the Lord themselves. They can then show their congregations what it looks like to relish in Jesus's glory each week and display a life of obedience each day. As they grow in integrity, wisdom, and values, they can expect earn their congregation's trust and lead them more effectively to savor Jesus's glory.

Beyond their own development, they should work to craft the worship service in such a way as to evoke a sense of great awe toward God's grandeur. In God-fearing wisdom, they may learn to read Scripture skillfully in ways that call hearers to wonder at God's glory. They may learn to select songs and readings with a discerning eye toward evoking awe. They may learn to call the church to worship in a voice that trembles boldly

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*Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 107.

before the glory of God. Under such leadership, church members would be encouraged regularly to worship in the fear of the Lord, building God-fearing habits along the way. Such worship services could create a strong foundation on which the principles of leadership could be taught, flourishing churches and communities.

**For production teams.** Church production teams are often tasked with using technology and media to add a sense of grandeur to the worship service. Such a task calls for both an exhortation and a caution.

As production techniques can craft an atmosphere for worship, they can also distract from the Lord by leaving people in awe of the techniques. Production teams may find it easy and exciting to leave congregations in awe, even seeing more people return with friends the next week. But that awe must be directed at Jesus, not at the technology or the talents of those using it. Production teams should regularly ask what the congregation is marveling at to ensure they are influencing people to fear the Lord above all else.

### **Training Leaders in the Fear of the Lord**

If the fear of the Lord grounds flourishing leadership, any leadership curriculum should teach about the fear of the Lord, connect it to leadership competencies, and help leaders live in it. This work will need to address several areas covered in this thesis.

As a helpful method for teaching these concepts together, teachers could refer to the fear of the Lord as a foundation and the other core competencies as pillars. This thesis has used that imagery occasionally. Foundation/pillar imagery has the advantages of (1) showing the other competencies' dependence on the fear of the Lord and (2) showing the leader's development as a building in progress. It has the disadvantage of casting the foundation as something that can be laid and then only maintained. Instead, the fear of the Lord must be developed continually over one's life. Because integrity is

part of the fear of the Lord, it may be a helpful nuance to refer integrity as a central pillar with prominence over the others.

Because the fear of the Lord begins when one gazes upon God's astounding glory, leaders will need to be trained to look for that glory. Early in the curriculum, leadership teachers will need to teach students to read Scripture regularly looking for glimpses of God's majesty. Students will need to learn to linger long over these glimpses and let them affect their disposition, reacting intentionally with marvel. In this sense of wonder, they will find fertile ground for growth in the fear of the Lord.

God often reveals his glory through the world he created. So students will need to be taught to stop and marvel at sunsets, to worship while they hold their children, and to praise God for the beauty of music. Experiences like these should lead them to tremble with joy in the fear of the Lord, but students will have to be taught intentionality.

Since the fear of the Lord continues with walking in God's ways, students will need to learn to watch the Scriptures for God's commands and take care to note them. They will need emphasis on the importance of walking in all the ways of God over most of the ways of God. In this they will find integrity, the core pillar of leadership built on the foundation.

Students will then need to understand the connection between the fear of the lord and pillars like integrity, wisdom, and values. Whether or not the curriculum casts them as a foundation and pillars, teachers will need to find some way to show that the fear of the Lord develops the other desired leadership qualities. It may be helpful to also include other pillars like a strong family life.

Because so much leadership teaching focuses on wisdom, a leadership curriculum will likely need to be long on biblical wisdom. A leadership curriculum will need some method of ensuring perpetual reading in the Bible's wisdom literature for continual growth in wisdom. Students should also learn to classify many of the teachings in leadership literature as wisdom and evaluate them against the Bible's wisdom. Lest



they plateau, they should see Job, “the epitome of the sage,” learn still more wisdom and the Proverbs’ purpose to “make the wise even wiser.”<sup>7</sup>

Leaders will need to be taught to value what God values. In order to lead from strongly held and contagious values, they will need to learn to value justice, God’s glory, the great commission, and other things dear to God’s heart. Not only will they will need to see these values in the Scriptures, they will need to learn to articulate them from the Scriptures to others. This communication will help them spread their values and lead others in the fear of the Lord.

One way to teach some of these concepts is to walk through the books of Samuel. Chapter 4 of this thesis would provide a teacher with many teaching points by which to develop the characters of David and Saul as blessed and failed leaders.

### **Calls for Further Research on Non-Christians in Leadership**

If the fear of God leads to flourishing leadership and unbelievers are sometimes known to fear God in the Bible, further research could address the leadership capacities of unbelievers in the political and business spheres. Chapter 2 noted ways in which phrases like “God-fearing” can be used to refer to neighborliness even outside the people of God. This thesis excluded that understanding of the fear of God, focusing on the concept of God’s people trembling before his glory and walking in his ways. Another study could explore the neighborliness concept to determine if it leads to similar qualities like wisdom and integrity or otherwise leads to strong leadership. This research could help Christians considering whether to vote for an unbelieving but God-fearing political candidate or considering their expectations of an unbelieving but God-fearing supervisor.

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<sup>7</sup> Tremper Longman III, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom: A Theological Introduction to Wisdom in Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017) 43, 60–61.

Additionally, researchers could look for a patterned connection between God-fearing rulers and societal flourishing. Perhaps a foundational belief that God-fearing leadership flourishes those being led could help to explain the flourishing of the West, if Western public servants may have more often considered themselves accountable to God for their leadership.

### **Counseling Those Suffering under Poor Leadership**

Church members and counseling clients who are suffering under unjust leaders or frustrated by clumsy leaders may have difficult questions about handling their disappointment. A counselor who understands the fear of the Lord to be the foundation of flourishing leadership has a framework from which to answer those questions. This framework can express itself in at least three helpful ways.

First, an understanding of God-fearing leadership teaches people how to pray for their leaders. Counselors should give words to help these counselees pray, like, “Lord, please teach my husband to fear you.” From this prayer and understanding, both the counselor and counselee can better systematize the disappointments most acute to their situation.

Second, the fear of the Lord can teach a Christian to honor a leader who does not deserve it. Though interacting with them is outside the scope of this thesis, 1 Peter 2:17 and Proverbs 24:21 connect fearing God with honoring the king in ways that would be helpful to these counselees. Counselors should study both verses as part of their preparation for such a counseling case. The material following 1 Peter 2:17 into 1 Peter 3 may also be of help, depending on the nature of the unjust situation.

Finally, one encouraging word always remains for Christians whose leaders have failed them. While they pine for a leader who fears the Lord, the Lord himself is coming to lead them. Counselors can direct them toward biblical passages about the shepherd who gently leads those with young (Isa 40:11) and the flourishing kingdom he

will build when he comes (Rev 20–22).<sup>8</sup> Such a word could provide great comfort for someone who tastes the bitterness of failed leadership.

### **The Need for a New Leadership Model**

Leadership researchers tend to construct and operate out of models, which are overarching systems by which they understand and systematize their research and the research of others. These models fit into several major approaches, which are methods for building models.

A survey of major leadership models lands a spotlight on the elephant already in the room: no known model grounds leadership in the fear of the Lord. If the fear of the Lord grounds flourishing leadership, either a new model should be built, or an existing model should be significantly altered. Peter Northouse has helpfully and authoritatively categorized mainstream models into various approaches, some of which may be useful as starting points or reference points for a new model.<sup>9</sup>

### **Trait Approach**

The trait approach is most likely the best starting point for a new leadership model. Whereas the fear of the Lord develops strong leadership traits, the trait approach explores “how traits influence leadership,” attempting to “identify the innate qualities and characteristics possessed by great . . . leaders.”<sup>10</sup> The connection is natural since both are concerned with traits. In fact, most of the qualities adherents have associated with strong leadership are noted in the Bible as products of the fear of the Lord.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Counselors might adapt their counsel on Rev 20, depending on their millennial view.

<sup>9</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, probably the best summary of prevailing leadership models, is relied upon heavily for this evaluation.

<sup>10</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 19.

<sup>11</sup> Of more than twenty qualities listed by various adherents to the traits model listed in Northouse, *Leadership*, 22–23, only four (masculinity, extraversion,

A model based on the fear of the Lord would probably be lumped into other trait approaches. But the new model may not fit well if it focuses on the holistic development of the leader as a person, as more than a set of traits.

If it is classified as a trait approach, it could look to correct that approach's failures: "subjectivity," a "failure . . . to delimit a definitive list of leadership traits," and a tendency to view leadership traits as "innate and largely fixed."<sup>12</sup> A model based on the fear of the Lord would bring needed objectivity, perhaps resting on the authority of Scripture to build a definitive list of qualities around integrity, wisdom, and strong values. It could also show that leadership is not innate by showing how leadership traits develop within a person who learns the fear of the Lord. It could also bring needed complexity to the approach, outlining the relationships traits have with each other and with the fear of the Lord.<sup>13</sup>

### **Skills Approach**

A model based on the fear of the Lord will probably need to integrate concepts and research from models within the skills approach. The skills approach intersects with concepts that would be found in a model based on the fear of the Lord but would probably not serve as a strong starting point because it addresses too little of the picture.

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conservatism, and tolerance) do not fit easily into the Bible's description of integrity, wisdom, or strong values argued for in chap. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 30–31, 43.

<sup>13</sup> A survey of prominent adherents to the trait approach should begin with Ralph M. Stogdill, "Personal Factors Associated with Leadership: A Survey of the Literature," *The Journal of Psychology* 25, no. 1 (January 1, 1948): 35–71; Stogdill, *Handbook of Leadership: A Survey of Theory and Research* (New York: Free Press, 1974); R. D. Mann, "A Review of the Relationship between Personality and Performance in Small Groups," *Psychological Bulletin* 66 (1959): 241–70; R. G. Lord, C. L. DeVader, and G. M. Alliger, "A Meta-Analysis of the Relation between Personality Traits and Leadership Perceptions: An Application of Validity Generalization Procedures," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, no. 71 (1986): 402–10; S. A. Kirkpatrick and E. A. Locke, "Leadership: Do Traits Matter?" *The Executive* 5, no. 2 (1991): 48–60, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4165007>; S. Zaccaro, C. Kemp, and P. Bader, "Leader Traits and Attributes," in *The Nautre of Leadership*, ed. J. Antonakis, A. Cianciolo, and R. Stemberg (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004), 101–24.

The skills approach addresses the weaknesses of the traits approach by focusing on the skills, not the traits, possessed by effective leaders.<sup>14</sup> Research into it was first initiated by R. L. Katz in 1955 and finally developed into a more complex model in 2000.<sup>15</sup> Because practical skill is deeply intertwined with wisdom, research within the skills approach research should give much help toward a model based on the fear of the Lord. But because wisdom includes practical, ethical, and theological elements, the skills approach is not complete enough to base a model upon.<sup>16</sup> Neither the fear of the Lord, integrity, nor strong values would naturally fit into skill categories.

A new model, however, could look to correct two noted weaknesses of both main skills models. Neither model explains how the skills they note practically help leaders perform better; and they both list skills that may only apply in the contexts they study.<sup>17</sup> But a model based on the fear of the Lord could trace through Bible stories how certain qualities of God-fearing leaders help them lead. It could also rest on the authority of Scripture to make more objective, universal claims.

### **Behavioral Approach**

Research within the behavior approach, focusing “exclusively on what leaders do and how they act,”<sup>18</sup> may also provide some help. But because it also addresses too little of the picture, it would not make a good framework to start from. For instance, some of the research might outline how a skilled leader communicates strongly held values.

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<sup>14</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 43.

<sup>15</sup> R. L. Katz, “Skills of an Effective Administrator,” *Harvard Business Review* 33, no. 1 (1955): 33–42; M. D. Mumford et al., “Leadership Skills: Conclusions and Future Direction,” *Leadership Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (2000): 155–70. An inquiry into skills-based models should start with these two works.

<sup>16</sup> These three dimensions of wisdom are treated well in Longman, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom*, 6–14.

<sup>17</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 59.

<sup>18</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 71.

But it would not address how those values came from an inward quality like the fear of the Lord. This approach can only address and help researchers understand the outward qualities, which a model based on the fear of the Lord will treat as peripheral.

### **Authentic Leadership**

Research within the authentic approach may give substantial help toward building a new model because it contains several concepts that would overlap with a new model. Though the approach has not yet solidified into a single definition, research into it addresses concepts like leading from strong values and leader behavior that “develops from and is grounded in the leader’s positive psychological qualities and strong ethics.”<sup>19</sup> This research may shed light on the ways the fear of the Lord develops positive behaviors and strong values within a leader. But, like other approaches, it is not holistic enough to address every way the fear of the Lord affects a person’s leadership.

A model built on the fear of the Lord could, then, address shortcomings in all these models and approaches by addressing the leader’s entire person, not just his or her traits, skills, behavior, or situational wisdom. In this way, it could systematize the most helpful research of all the models under a biblical framework. Many approaches have produced research that would be helpful toward the building of a new model. Still, only the trait approach comes close to providing a framework from which to start building that model. A new model should hope to impact the conversation by reconstructing the paradigm completely, providing a more complete approach than any model yet has.

### **Conclusion**

Perhaps the most immediate fruit of this research comes not in a principle but in the strongest of exhortations. Leaders must learn to fear the Lord. They must tremble before him and walk in all his ways. As they do, they provide the sort of leadership that

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<sup>19</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 196.

flourishes men. “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Eccl 12:13–14).

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## ABSTRACT

### THE FEAR OF THE LORD: THE FORGOTTEN FOUNDATION OF FLOURISHING LEADERSHIP

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This thesis argues that the fear of the Lord grounds flourishing leadership. A combination of awe and obedience, the fear of the Lord is consistently called for in kings, governors, and judges in the Bible. This obedient awe grounds flourishing leadership by producing wisdom, integrity, and strong values within leaders, qualities that both the Bible and nearly all cultures find indispensable in leaders. To illustrate this principle, the Books of Samuel present the fear of the Lord as a key thematic difference between David and Saul, a fulfillment of Deuteronomy 17:18-20. These conclusions reveal the need for a new model or theory of leadership teaching based on the fear of the Lord and point to several best practices for researchers, growing leaders, churches, and mentors.

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