

The Joy of Fearing God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 January 2023

Preacher: Jeremy Sarber

[0 : 0 0] But we live in a very fast world. We want everything as quickly as possible. If we have to wait longer than five minutes in the drive-thru, or more than two days for an Amazon package, we start to get a little annoyed.

And sadly, we may approach our study of the Bible in a similar way. As a church, we believe the Bible is sufficient, right? 2 Peter 1.3, we have been given all things that pertain to life and godliness.

2 Timothy 3 says, All Scripture is breathed out or inspired by God, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

To say we believe the Bible is sufficient is to say it has all of the answers we need. It has everything required to guide us through this life.

But the Bible's sufficiency does not mean the Bible gives us answers quickly in every case. Contrary to what some believe, it's not as though you can just grab the Bible, open it to a random page, look down, and find exactly what you need, exactly when you need it.

[1 : 1 6] We can go further. The Bible's sufficiency does not mean we can read a passage and immediately know its relevance to us. We heard something about this just a few weeks ago.

Let's say we read Philippians 4.13, I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. And we may be tempted to think, Oh, I can do anything I set my mind to with the help of Christ.

No, that verse actually has context. It requires a bit more study. Maybe some meditation before we try to make personal application of it.

Unfortunately, that doesn't always stop us from trying. We know this, but sometimes we approach the Bible like we're ordering from a fast food restaurant. We think I should be able to get what I need in five minutes or less.

And what do we think we need? In most cases, we're looking for some practical application. Lord, tell me what I'm supposed to do. Give me clear and direct answers.

[2 : 2 0] A to-do list would be nice. The Bible doesn't work that way. And I don't think God intended for it to work that way. Anyone can tell you what to do.

A meaningless fortune cookie can tell you what to do. But the Bible is different. It doesn't just tell us what to do. It gives us substantial, meaningful reasons for why it tells us to do what we do.

Consider Paul's epistles in the New Testament. Many of them follow the exact same pattern. Paul may be halfway through the letter or more before he gives the first practical instruction.

Why? Why? Why? It's because our practices have a theological foundation. A substantial foundation. And in fact, Paul says in his letters, Before I tell you what you should be doing, you need to know a little something about the truth of God.

You need to know a little something about the truth of the gospel. You need to know the truth about yourself. Only then will the practical stuff really make sense.

- [3 : 30] Only then will the practical stuff have any meaning at all. Take the book of Ephesians, for instance. Chapter 1, foundational.
- Chapter 2, foundational. Chapter 3, foundational. It's not until we reach the fourth chapter that we read the first practical instruction to speak of.
- Paul begins the chapter. Now, obviously, Paul wants everyone in the church to get along. We can get that much from it. But there's so much more to it than that. In the first three chapters, we learn unity within the body of Christ is a gospel issue of the utmost importance.
- Paul reminds us that God sovereignly elected us for salvation. He reminds us that we were dead in sin until Christ redeemed us and the Spirit made us alive together with Christ.
- [4 : 45] In other words, every last one of us was in the same sinking ship without hope apart from God's grace.
- Keep in mind that Paul was also writing to a mixed congregation of Jews and Gentiles. No two groups could have been more culturally and religiously different.
- And perhaps no two groups were more prone to be judgmental of one another. The Gentiles thought less of the Jews. The Jews thought less of Gentiles for a myriad of reasons.
- And then comes Ephesians 2. And by the way, this is going somewhere. I know we're talking about the fear of God. I'll get there. In Ephesians 2, For Christ himself is our peace, who has made us both one and broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility, abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace.
- And might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. Paul says we have a track record of judging and condemning one another, but we should all realize that we're essentially the same.
- [6 : 12] Before our conversions, we were dead, hopeless sinners. Some of us had God's law. Some of us didn't. It doesn't matter, though, because every last one of us transgressed his law.
- Every last one of us is guilty before God. Oh, but God's grace, he chose us. Not because we were Jews. Not because we were Gentiles.
- He chose us according to his own sovereign, benevolent purpose. So whether Jew or Gentile, Christ died for us. Whether Jew or Gentile, the Spirit made us alive together with Christ.
- In short, the very essence of the gospel message in Ephesians is really one of unity between believers.
- Christ alone has made this possible. Christ alone made it possible. We are no better. We are no worse than one another. And furthermore, Paul reminds us within those first three chapters that we all share an eternal inheritance.
- [7 : 19] In other words, we're not only united now, we're united forevermore. We will always be members together in the body of Christ. Now, that's a pretty quick summary of those first three chapters, but doesn't that affect how we understand the beginning of Ephesians 4 when Paul calls us to strive for unity?
- I think it does. Most politicians in this country call for unity, right? But what is their unity based on?
- What are they calling for exactly? What's the foundation of that unity? What's the foundation made of? Is it strong enough to hold an entire nation of very diverse people together?

Together for what exactly? In the church's case, the foundation of our unity is the death of Christ's Son.

And it's vital to our understanding of an otherwise simple commandment to be striving for unity. The point I've probably spent too long trying to make is that we shouldn't be too quick to arrive at the Bible's practical applications.

[8 : 35] I think theology comes first. Doctrine comes first. We need the truth of God to inform and give meaning to our practices and our behaviors.

Whatever the Bible calls us to do. And this is why we have spent six weeks trying to define godly fear. This is why we've spent six weeks talking about the attributes of God.

While we will consider the practical side of this subject today, even the practical side of it takes us back to the foundation. If we are to fear God and to enjoy the benefits that come with it, we have to know something about God himself.

We have to be reminded of who he is and what he's done. So, we will not be surprised to learn that the practical approach to deepening our fear of God encourages us to learn more and more about God.

To go back to the foundation, if you will. One of my favorite pastimes is perusing a bookstore. I can spend hours in a bookstore. I may not buy anything.

[9 : 49] I just like to be in there. And if you've ever been to a popular book retailer and you've browsed the Christian section, you have likely noticed how thin the selection usually is.

And I don't just mean the volume of books. I mean the quality of books. Sometimes you can hardly distinguish between the Christian section and the self-help section.

It seems that the most popular Christian books promise to show readers how to receive some sort of blessings if only they will do X, Y, and Z.

And if we're honest with ourselves, I think many of us may be drawn to books like that. Even if they're true books. Even if they're grounded books. Biblical books.

We want the practical stuff. But what about R.C. Sproul's *The Holiness of God*? What about A.W. Pink's *The Attributes of God*?

[10 : 57] What about Dane Ortlund's *Gentle and Lowly*? Or one that was recommended to me last week, Michael Reeves' *Rejoice and Tremble*? Which follows the theme of this study, by the way.

Are we drawn to those kinds of titles? Like we're drawn to, I don't know, *The Purpose Driven Life*? That's probably a bad example. Maybe a book on marriage, a book on money, or some other practical subject.

If not, why? Perhaps it's because those books just don't get us to the practical application quickly enough.

They don't give us something to do right away. They speak more about what we should know than what we should do. But again, there's a reason Paul structures his letters, his New Testament epistles, the way he does.

And there's a reason we've spent six weeks talking about the definition of godly fear and discussing the attributes of God before getting into the practical things. If we haven't seen God in all his glory, his majesty, his holiness, his wisdom, and his love, I think we'll struggle to fear him as we should.

[12 : 12] We will struggle to even know what godly fear means, personally, really. So now that we've focused on the glory of God for a while, we are ready to move into the more practical matters.

In his book, *The Joy of Fearing God*, Jerry Bridges, tells about a man who wrote YBH in the margins of many of the books he read.

And one day a friend was looking through his library and saw this in many of the books, and he asked him, why YBH? What does that mean? And the man said, YBH stands for yes, but how?

In other words, he agreed with what the author had to say, but he needed to know how to apply it. What does he do with that information? Well, that story kind of makes me think of the 3,000 who were converted on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

You know, Peter, he preaches a powerful sermon, a foundational message, heralding the resurrected Christ, and when the people were cut to the heart, what did they ask?

[13 : 25] Brothers, what shall we do? What do we do? So we don't want to be too quick to draw practical, personal applications from the Bible, but at the same time, we don't want to stop studying and meditating on it until we have found some, because there are plenty there.

In other words, we need it all. We need theology to ground and inform our behaviors, and we need to know the proper responses to our theology. We need all of it, the doctrinal, the practical, all of it.

Now, by now, I trust we know that godly fear is the proper response to the God of the Bible, the one true living God.

I trust you know that he is worthy to be feared. I trust that you know that who God is and what he has done should determine how we relate to him.

And with that understanding in mind, the lingering question becomes, YBH, yes, but how? On the one hand, the answer to that question is, fearing God is going to come quite naturally to the believer.

[14 : 48] We'll talk about that. On the other hand, like every aspect of our walk with God, every aspect of our Christian discipleship, there are things we can do to grow.

How do we grow in fearing God? Jerry Bridges asks, How can I experience more of that mingled emotion of dread, reverence, veneration, and wonder?

To be clear, the steps are relatively simple, but we are talking about a lifelong process of growth and sanctification.

There are no quick answers, quick methods, I should say. Go with me, if you will, to Jeremiah 32. Jeremiah 32. Jerry Bridges cites this passage in his book, and I believe it's worth reading now.

This is a tremendous promise from God to his people. Jeremiah 32. Starting at verse 38.

[16 : 02] And God says, They shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart in one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good, and the good of their children after them.

I will make with them an everlasting covenant, and I will not turn them away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.

I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul. Now you'll notice there are two references here to fearing God.

The first is in verse 39, and the second is in verse 40. And in both verses, God is making a promise to his people. Specifically, he promises to give us fear, the proper fear.

I will give them one heart, that they may fear me. Then he says, I will put the fear of me in their hearts. And this is where godly fear must begin.

[17 : 15] It must begin with God himself. In Romans 3, we read, there is no fear of God before their eyes, speaking of unbelievers. The heart of stone simply does not dread God.

It does not revere God. It does not wonder at God. If we are to love God, as we understand, he must implant in us a new heart. If we are to fear God, he must implant in us a new heart.

And that's why I say fearing God comes to some degree naturally to all believers. It doesn't come naturally to an unbeliever, but to one whom God has given a new heart, the seeds of fear are inevitably there.

They may not be growing much, but the seeds must be there. That's God's promise. They may only be seeds.

Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 1.6 to fan into flame the gift of God. Slightly different subject matter he was talking about, but our fear of God may begin as only a spark, which we must then fan into a flame.

[18 : 35] Granted, Paul was talking about spiritual gifts, but I believe the same principle is true here. Jeremiah makes it clear that God puts fear of him into our hearts.

It's part of that everlasting covenant that he has made with his people. But I think even experience teaches us that we may not fear God as we should. The spark is there, but what we need to do is fan it in all of the biblically prescribed ways.

Having said that, I don't want us to get the impression, though, that God puts the seed into our hearts and then leaves us to do the rest. There's the seed.

Good luck. We'll see if you make anything of it. That's not biblical. In Philippians 2, Paul writes, We cannot accomplish anything worth accomplishing apart from God.

This is going to be true from the moment we're converted all the way until we reach glory. Every single day. We depend on him.

[20 : 03] We depend on his grace. We depend on his power every step of the Christian life. We cannot grow apart from him. Paul says, Neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

Only God who gives the growth. We work toward growth, again, by the biblically prescribed means, but God brings the work to completion. He gives the growth.

He is working in us and through us and for us. That's a vital point to keep fresh in our minds every single day. We depend on God for growth.

So, let's get really practical here. The most important thing we need for growth is God himself. In practical terms, we must approach God daily for help.

We must pray to him. We must ask him to turn that spark of fear in our hearts into a flame that grows bigger and bigger.

[21 : 14] Now, I suspect most of us are turning to God daily in prayer. But how often do we turn to him in prayer regarding this? Godly fear.

Now, if you're taking notes, let's call that step number one, pray. We want to grow in our fear of God. We need to pray to that end. Second, and this is really something we should be praying for, but I want to make it distinct here.

We need a singleness of mind. A singleness of mind. In Psalm 86:11, David speaks of it as an undivided heart.

He says, teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth. And listen to this next part. Unite my heart to fear your name.

Unite my heart to fear your name. What is David's prayer? He wants a united, undivided heart. He wants a heart with focus, with a singleness of aim, a singleness of purpose, a singleness of direction.

[22 : 25] I want my heart moving toward the fear of God always. Whenever we sing the hymn, Come Thou Fount, I find the one line, I think it's the third line in the song, especially compelling because it resonates so deeply with my personal experience.

It's the line that says, O to grace, how great a debtor, daily I'm constrained to be. Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to Thee.

Prone to wonder, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart. O take and seal it.

Seal it for Thy courts above. That's David's prayer in Psalm 86. He's praying that his heart and affections will not be divided.

Instead, he wants his entire person to be singularly focused on his God. He doesn't want to be pulled away from every temptation and distraction.

[23 : 32] Regarding this prayer, John Calvin writes, it is indispensably requisite that the faithful, after having learned what is right, should firmly and cordially embrace it, that the heart may not break forth in impetus, desire, after unhallowed lusts.

Thus, in the word unite, there is a very beautiful metaphor conveying the idea that the heart of man is full of tumult, drawn asunder, and, as it were, scattered about in fragments, until God has gathered it to himself and holds it together in a state of steadfast and persevering obedience.

I think we can all relate, can't we? But even more than steadfast obedience, David wants his heart to be united to the fear of God.

He pleads with God to take that implanted fear, if you will, and make it grow, to make it his first concern, his utmost concern.

He wants to be singularly focused on growing in godly fear. So we learn two things from David's prayer. First, we learn that praying for a deeper fear of God is a good thing.

[24 : 51] It's exactly what we should be doing. And second, growing in the fear of God is a fundamental part of our discipleship, of our walk with him.

Why else would David feel the necessity to pray, not just for a deeper fear of God, but for his heart to be bent in that one direction? Don't let me turn from this direction toward fearing God.

He says, Lord, unite my heart to fear you. It's almost as if he wants everything he thinks and everything he feels to be shaped and defined by this godly fear.

So to grow in fear, first we need prayer. Second, we need to know and we need to strive for that singleness of mind, and those two are very closely connected, obviously. And third, we need God's word.

We need frequent, consistent exposure to God's word. Listen as I read Deuteronomy 4.10.

[26 : 02] God says to Moses, gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth and that they may teach their children so.

That seems clear enough, doesn't it? God draws a direct connection between hearing his words and fearing him. Jerry Bridges offers a lot of excellent insights throughout his book, but this one in particular struck me.

He was talking about Acts 22 when the apostle Paul recalls his conversion on the road to Damascus. He tells the story and in this account, Paul asked Jesus two questions.

First, he asked, who are you, Lord? And then he asked, what shall I do, Lord? Who are you?

What shall I do? And Jerry Bridges writes, these questions are helpful to ask as we hear God's word taught. Who are you, Lord?

[27 : 11] Lord, reveal yourself to me in some aspect of your greatness or holiness or wisdom or love. Show me more of who you really are. And what shall I do, Lord?

How do you want me to apply and obey your word today in reverence to you? Those are very helpful questions. So whether we hear God's word preached or we read God's word in private devotion, this is an excellent way to strive toward that singleness of mind.

As we listen or we read, we ask, who are you, Lord? And what shall I do? Going back to what I said previously, let's not skip over the first question in a rush to get to the second.

Let's learn more about God as we learn what we're supposed to do. Let's keep these questions together, if you will.

Deuteronomy 17, verse 18, says to the future kings of Israel, And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, God's law, approved by the Levitical priests, and it shall be with him, and he shall read 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.

[28 : 42] So again, we see the same principle. The more exposure we have to God's word, the more we learn about God himself, the more we learn to fear him.

Now, I don't know how you've felt as a listener to this Sunday school series so far, but as I've read and studied to teach about the fear of God, I have felt myself getting smaller and smaller.

I guess it's to my advantage that I've been obligated to spend weeks narrowly focused on the majesty of God and all of the reasons that we have to stand in awe of him.

John the Baptist said, he must increase, but I must decrease. And that's an accurate description of what happens when you study God and his word, when you really give your heart and mind to it.

You really devote yourself to knowing more about God. When we give him and his glory as much of our attention as possible, it has a way of shrinking us.

[29 : 55] It's humbling and it should be. It should be. Meanwhile, God is elevated in our hearts and in our minds. We get smaller, yes, but he gets bigger and that's a good thing.

Now, to be clear, we don't merely look at God in the Old Testament. You know, people like to make that distinction. God of the Old Testament, God of the New Testament, it's the same God.

But, I understand why people think that way. If you're entirely focused on the God of the Old Testament, which is where our mind goes when we think about the power and the greatness of God because of all of those grand, terrifying miracles that he performed, well, John Bunyan wrote, Godly fear flows from a sense of the love and kindness of God to the soul.

Where there is no sense of hope of the kindness and mercy of God by Jesus Christ, there can be none of this fear, but rather wrath and despair, which produces a fear that is devilish.

Think of Martin Luther becoming angry at God's holy righteousness because he didn't see the love. He didn't see the grace.

[31 : 17] He didn't see the mercy. Bunyan continues, Godly fear flows from a sense of hope, of mercy from God by Jesus Christ.

Now, where does Bunyan's understanding come from? Psalm 130 says, if you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared. With you there is forgiveness that you may be feared.

As we heard last week, it's not just God's greatness and His holiness and His wisdom that causes us to fear Him. His love gives us all the more reason to stand in reverent awe of this great, kind God we have.

As we've talked about before, a proper fear of God is not the kind of fear a slave has in response to an evil, oppressive master. Godly fear is filial fear.

[32 : 32] It's the respect, it's the admiration, the awe, the fear a child has for his father. He recognizes the love and the kindness of his father just as we recognize the love and the kindness of God our father.

And godly fear, well, love and this kindness are an integral part of what creates in us, grows in us this godly fear.

As Jerry Bridges writes, I cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of living our Christian lives each day in the atmosphere of the gospel. As we experience God's love through His forgiveness, our hearts are drawn to Him in this filial fear and we stand amazed at His love.

So, we strive for a singleness of mind, we pray and we return to God's word both the Old and New Testaments frequently and consistently but we need to do more than just read the Bible.

We also need to study it. A Bible reading gives us breadth, Bible study gives us depth. Now granted, studying the Bible can be a challenge for some of us.

[33 : 55] We don't always know where to begin but I think the first five verses of Proverbs 2 points us in the right direction. Bible study needs to begin first of all with a teachable spirit.

A teachable spirit. Proverbs 2 says, My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding, yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as hidden treasure, then you will understand, listen, you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

Any Bible study that may prove beneficial to us will begin with a teachable spirit within us. we have to want to learn, which includes a willingness to sometimes be uncomfortable with what we learn and even proven wrong at times.

Think of the Jews in Jesus' day. In John 5, 39, he says to them, You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

There is an example of people who diligently studied the Bible. Some of them knew it very, very well in terms of what the words on the page say but not necessarily what they mean.

[35 : 38] They did not have a teachable spirit even though the Scriptures revealed to them this Christ. Here he is in front of them and they say, No, that's not him. So first, Bible study begins with a teachable spirit.

Second, Bible study requires a spirit of dependence. Dependence. Again, Proverbs 2 says, If you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, see, there's a sense of pleading in that.

It's like calling out to God, Lord, give me insight. Give me understanding. I need you. I'm dependent upon you for insight. Into the Scriptures. That's the opposite attitude of the Jews in John 5.

They studied the Bible but they didn't feel they needed God's help in understanding it. They had it figured out already. And as wrong as they proved to be, they stuck with it.

We're right. We understand we don't need anyone to teach us. Including God Himself who was standing before them in the flesh. The Bible itself makes it clear that we depend upon God for understanding.

[36 : 50] In Luke 10, Jesus prayed, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.

You know, sometimes we use the expression from the mouths of babes. Have you ever noticed a child's ability to cut through the layers of complication that we adults sometimes add to a matter?

We tend to overcomplicate things while children often see things in very simple terms. But more to the point, a child doesn't pretend to know everything.

A child is under no illusion that he's got everything figured out. I'm not including teenagers in this category. Young children. If my children are unsure about something, they ask me.

And they don't seem embarrassed at all to ask me. They don't seem hesitant. As a general rule, anyway, their pride doesn't stand in the way. They are more than willing to be dependent upon their parents for truth, for wisdom, for answers.

[38 : 00] And we should be equally dependent, more dependent, upon our Heavenly Father. Every time we approach the Bible, we should pray, Lord, give me understanding.

give me understanding. So when we study, we need a teachable spirit. We need a spirit of dependence. Last but not least, we need diligence.

Diligence. Proverbs 2 says, seek understanding like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures. Pray, of course, but don't assume you can just open the Bible, read a passage and walk away with insight into the text.

As I said before, we shouldn't be in such a hurry when it comes to the Bible. We need to take our time. We need a deep, long dive into the text. Then we return to it over and over again.

We are searching for treasure and I believe, I firmly believe our time and effort will be well worth it. And what happens when we prayerfully, dependently, and diligently study the Bible?

[39 : 08] Then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. Proverbs 2, 5. Let me quote John Bunyan on this point.

The fear of God flows from a sound impression that the Word of God makes on our souls. For without an impress of the Word, there is no fear of God.

Hence it is said that God gave to Israel good laws, statutes, and judgments that they might learn them and in learning them learn to fear the Lord their God. For as to the extent a man drinks good doctrine into his soul, so to that extent he fears God.

If he drinks in much, he fears Him greatly. If he drinks in but little, he fears Him little. If he drinks it not at all, he fears Him not at all. I believe I've previously expressed my concern for those who show little to no reverence for God.

And I'm fairly certain that if we probed into their lives, we'd find that those who do not seem to have a reverence for God do not spend much time studying His Word.

[40 : 18] When we study the Bible, we are learning about God. And when we learn about God, the more we grow in our fear of Him.

It's kind of a natural byproduct of our study. Now briefly, very briefly, we're almost out of time, I have two more practical steps we can take in growing in godly fear.

So to recap, we hone our focus, we pray, we read the Bible, we study the Bible. Fifth, we can read sound theological books. I've mentioned a few already.

Practical Christian books are great and are often needed. But let's not avoid those books that are about God and about His attributes. Let's not avoid the books that address the foundational subjects of our faith.

We wouldn't skip the first 11 chapters of Romans, would we? We wouldn't skip the first three chapters of Ephesians. So let's not go shopping for wallpaper before the foundation of the house has been poured.

[41 : 21] You know what I mean? Let's go back to some of those deeper subjects, if you will, those foundational subjects anyway. The sixth and final step I'll offer can be summarized with the word meditation.

Jerry Bridges calls it thinking great thoughts about God. In other words, we can't merely pray, read the Bible, study the Bible, read a few good books, and return to the other things in our lives.

You know, compartmentalizing those spiritual disciplines we've exercised. We can't say, you know, I've spent an hour trying to grow in godly fear, now I need to get back to the rest of my life.

Obviously, we can't pray, we can't read, we can't study 24 hours a day, but we don't want to compartmentalize those things. For example, if you remember when Jesus miraculously fed thousands of people, there were baskets of food left over, right?

Twelve baskets. What did Jesus tell his disciples to do with them? I don't think three of the accounts really clarify, but he didn't tell them to throw it away, he didn't tell them to leave it behind.

[42 : 36] According to John's account, Jesus said, gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost. We want to take what we've read and carry it with us.

Don't leave it behind. Take it with us. We want to reflect on it continually, meditate on it. We want to think great thoughts about God while we're working or driving or doing chores around the house.

We want to look for God in the things that we see. We want to keep an eye out for those evidences of what we've read in this world around us, applications of what we've read in the scriptures.

We want to see his glory all around us and we do that by meditating continually on him. Ultimately, we want to spend as much time as possible thinking about God.

What have we learned about him? As John Calvin said, man is never sufficiently touched and affected by the awareness of his lowly state until he has compared himself with God's majesty.

[43 : 39] You may remember from Isaiah 6 and Isaiah 40 that seeing the contrast between God and ourselves motivates us to fear him as we should. So imagine if you're constantly thinking about God in relation to yourself.

I said my sixth step was my final. Let me give you one more. Companionship and accountability. They're always helpful. Ecclesiastes 4.9 says two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil.

For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow, but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up. In prayer, in Bible study, finding and reading good books, we don't always have to do it alone.

We can grow in godly fear with others. We're dismissed.