

FEAR

I can remember many stories from a young age where specific people close to me (kids and adults) tried as best they could to instill fear into me about some evil supernatural force, boogeyman, or axe murderer. I recall the first time I was invited over to a friend's house, and when I arrived, they were cueing up the latest horror movie on VHS. I was in elementary school. Another time, an older cousin encouraged me to stare out of a window into a dark forest in the middle of the night because he was sure he had seen something coming for us. Each of these incidents included a story of terror and dread. Being a young, impressionable kid, I allowed my mind to wander down the path they were laying out before me. The destination was fear.

It wasn't until much later in life that I truly learned about fear. When I first heard the words of the Bible, I wasn't sure if they were just another crazy story to incite fear/terror or if they were the words I needed to comfort my soul.

Proverbs 1:7

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

I had ample experience with the kind of fear that creates the fight or flight response. I knew the spine-tingling and sometimes paralyzing presence of terror. I was unfamiliar with the reverential fear and awe the Bible talked about as something that should be sought after rather than avoided at all costs. In the same way, while others encouraged me to peer out, looking for something that didn't exist, the Bible called me to gaze upon the Lord and get to know him. It offered me a view of a God who was all-powerful yet full of steadfast love. The word pointed me to one who could provide divine judgment and, at the same time, offer complete redemption. The more I learned, the more I realized how great he was and how little I still knew about him. Instead of making me want to look away, it caused me to desire to seek him more and more.

On the other hand, as I looked at the righteous Lord, I was convicted of all of my foolishness. In my fear and sinful rebellion, I rejected instruction and wisdom. My focus was on all manner of things that were opposed to the Lord. I was living a life of fear (terror) and had no admiration for anything beyond myself.

The darkness wants mankind to remain fools. It constantly offers us a buffet of things to fear, from the most popular axe murderer to the worst-case scenario. Scripture teaches that focusing on that instead of the Lord causes us to be dumb and further fuels our rebellious nature. However, when we stop listening and looking at all that stuff and turn our gaze upon the God of Heaven, seeking to know him more each day, that is the pathway to a reverential, awe-inspiring fear that leads to true knowledge.

Don't get caught up in what god-less people tell you to look at. Seek the Lord! He is the way, the truth, and the life (Jn. 14:6).

Eyes up!
Ryan