



The God of The Rockies

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SHAUNA: I'm Shauna with Joni Eareckson Tada: Sharing Hope. Thank you for joining us. Joni, a few Christians I know are wondering what it means to have a proper "fear of the Lord" [and we may have listeners who struggle with that, too]. So, what would you say might help them?

JONI: Well, Shauna, years ago when I was a teenager, I clearly remember hiking in the Colorado Rockies. Now, my friends and I were outfitted with all the right gear, the right boots for climbing the rugged trails. We were warned to be very careful though, to tread cautiously when we got above timberline. Hiking that far up into the Rockies was not child's play. Oh, but I clearly recall making that last steep climb up a difficult path and then when I got to the top – I looked out and was awestruck by what I saw. Ridge after ridge of soaring mountain peaks covered in snow. It took my breath away. I was speechless, I was so enthralled by the pristine beauty of it all. Yet at the same time, it was a fearsome sight. I stood there, overcome by the majesty and the splendor, even the danger of how those ancient, glacier-scarred peaks appeared to me. I was drawn into the sight, but with great trembling.

Now, it's not the perfect illustration, but I share it because I think many Christians believe that the fear of the Lord is a cringing terror that drives them away from God. But really, it's a reverent, joyful, awestruck wonder of God that draws us near to him in humble obedience. When you fear the Lord, you are taking God so seriously that you gladly submit to Him and His ways.

And when I remember that awesome scene of those imposing Rocky

Mountains, I think of 1 Chronicles 29:11. “Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.”

When I read that verse in first Chronicles, it’s the perfect description of the fear of the Lord. It’s the kind of fear where we are attracted to God, yet at the same time, overwhelmed by Him. And really, that’s a paradox. Because although the fear of the Lord draws us near to God [like I was drawn into those daunting mountains], we were never ever drawn in a casual, ho-hum way.

The way I like to look at it is that, well, it’s a deep, heart level awareness of God’s holiness and goodness that wells up within us both trembling and trust. The Bible makes a big deal about cultivating a fear of the Lord because it is what leads us to hate sin and delight in pleasing Him. And I’m sure we all know Proverbs 9:10. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” right? Well, another way of saying that is the fear of the Lord is the beginning point of rightly knowing and living before God.

Sinclair Ferguson once said, “The fear of God . . . is . . . a heartfelt love for Him because of who He is and what He’s done; a sense of being in His majestic presence. It’s a thrilling awareness that we have this greatest of all privileges, mingled with the realization that now the only thing that really matters is His opinion. . . . To fear God is to be sensitive both His greatness and His graciousness.” And oh, Shauna, I sure hope this helps.

SHAUNA: Oh, it sure does, Joni. And listening friend, go to joniradio.org where you can download a PDF of today’s program; because the fear of the Lord is always a good thing.

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