

## BACKWARD THINKING, PART 4

*For in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness. Rather, fear God. (Ecclesiastes 5:7, NASB)*

IT DOESN'T WORK TO TELL A GOLF STORY FROM THE FUTURE. We have a name for that: boasting. Our pie is in the sky until we show that we can pull it from the oven and serve it up at the county fair.

Of course, we can boast in the past, too. But if we have hung around the same golf buddies for long enough, they'll bring us back to earth. For every memory of success we offer, they can counter with a laughter. That's what friends are for!

But either way, we are dealing in words. Oh yes, we can get to enjoying some good bluster, trading goofy memories and self-assured "next times." We look both backward and forward dreamily, carving out with cleverness moments that have never happened the way we remember nor will ever happen the way we anticipate. In this way, honest men and women are the staunchest of realists.

When Solomon considered the way people let their imaginations and tongues run amok, he laid down the simplest of reversals. Fear God. They are two brilliant words that drop us down in the midst of today. Let's take them one at a time.

*To fear* can mean either "to be afraid of" or "to demonstrate reverence for." Though the ideas may be exclusive, in many cases they are related. For instance, when you encounter a fence marked DANGER: HIGH VOLTAGE, you respect what is behind that fence because it has the power to destroy you. The same has been true among the societies of earth for millennium, most of which have been governed by a single controlling leader. Even the kindest kings possess ultimate authority in the land, and crossing them wrongly can lead to severe consequences. This is the blending of being afraid and being reverent.

And then there is *God*. His reign extends to the ends of his creation, so that he is the King of kings, the one who establishes and deposes all earthly authorities. Moreover, he has authored a code of conduct that cannot be attained in our own accomplishment, but yet is to be pursued for the sake of the one who did attain its standard, Jesus.

Coupling the two and pointing our reverent fear in the Lord's direction promotes clarity of purpose, sobriety in approach, and right attention to the present day.

**Opening questions** What golf story will your friends never let you live down? Does it hurt to hear the story or do you laugh along with them? • How does the idea of fearing God sit with you?

**READING** Ecclesiastes 5:1-7; Deuteronomy 10:12-22; Revelation 14:6-7

**Caution before the Lord (Ecclesiastes 5)**  
How does the full passage at the outset of this chapter contribute to our understanding of verse 7? Other versions have translated "fear God" as "stand in awe of God." What does that add to your thinking on the concept?

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**What God asks of us (Deuteronomy 10)**  
What motivations do you find in this passage for fearing God? What other principles for responding to God do we see here?

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**Fear and worship (Revelation 14)**  
How do fear and worship fit together? What must you do to improve your reverence for God?

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Written by Jeff Hopper ©2015 Links Players International. A 5-minute video accompanies today's study at <https://youtu.be/PVhSvoXX8lw>