Tonight I would like to begin a series of messages on one of my favorite books in the Bible, the Book of Proverbs. I have entitled this series: “Heavenly Wisdom For Earthly Living.”

Before we get into tonight’s scripture text let me give you some basic information on this wonderful book.

(1) First of all, we need to know the Book of Proverbs is one of the five books of poetry in the Old Testament. The others are: Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. These five books are also known as the “Wisdom Literature.” The focus of all five of these books is to instruct men in the ways of the LORD.

(2) Secondly, we need to understanding the meaning of the word PROVERB.

- The word Proverb means “to be like.” A proverb is very similar to a Parable in that two things are laid beside one another for comparison.

- A proverb is a simple, moral statement that highlights and teaches fundamental realities about life.

- William Arnot says “Proverbs are laws from heaven for life on earth.”

- My professor of Old Testament studies at Johnson Bible College, the late Robert Black, described Proverbs as “a collection of short, pithy sayings.” Pithy meaning, “short and to the point with an element of wit.”

(3) The third thing we need to understand about PROVERBS
is that most of them were written by King Solomon. Solomon wrote over 3,000 proverbs in his lifetime. The Book of Proverbs contains just 513 of those proverbs.

Many commentators believe Proverbs is a collection of things Solomon taught his own son to keep him from making the same terrible mistakes he had made in his life.

On that note, I would challenge every young person here tonight to read Proverbs over and over again. If you will live by the wisdom of this book it will save you a lot of pain and heartache as you grow older.

(4) The fourth thing we need to know about Proverbs is that the major theme of the Book is “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” We will see this theme in verse 7 of our scripture text this evening. In fact it appears 18 times in the Book of Proverbs and a total of 27 times in the whole Bible.

Because of its unique structure from all other Bible books, the Book of Proverbs presents quite a challenge to preachers. The approach I plan to take in this series is to explore the various subjects that are dealt with throughout the Book. We will look at things like WISDOM…….FOOLISHNESS…….FINANCES…..THE TONGUE…..ANGER…….PARENTING…..HAPPINESS…….FRIENDS…….and ALCOHOL.

But tonight as we begin the series I want us to focus on the primary theme of the Book of Proverbs: “Living In The Fear of The LORD.”

Let’s read tonight’s scripture text: PROVERBS 1:1-7.

B R I E F   P R A Y E R

There are three things I would like for you to consider this evening
about “Living In The First of The Lord.”

First of all let’s consider........

I. The Definition of “Living In The Fear of The LORD” (v. 7)

7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

1. What does the phrase “the fear of the LORD” refer to?

-Webster defines fear as: “a feeling of anxiety or agitation produced by the presence or nearness of danger, evil or pain.”

-To us, “fearing someone or something” means to be afraid of them or to have a sense of terror.

-How many of you fear snakes? Personally, I’m only afraid of three kinds of snakes: live snakes, dead snakes and sticks that look like snakes.

-How many of you fear mice? If a mouse were to ever get on Linda in bed I would have to call the funeral home and make her arrangements.

-We fear lots of things. To us, fear is a negative emotion.

2. Is this what it means to “fear the LORD?” Does it mean we are to be overcome with dread and terror and anxiety toward the LORD? Does it mean we are to be scared of the LORD like we are scared of snakes or spiders or mice?

3. Absolutely not! To “fear the LORD” means to have REVERENCE and AWE and the highest degree of RESPECT for God. It means we are to be HUMBLED by His presence.

When we come into this house of worship, we should enter in the “fear of the LORD.”

4. To “fear the LORD” means we recognize He is the CREATOR and we are just the CREATED. He is the MASTER and we
are His SERVANTS. He is the FATHER and we are His CHILDREN.

5. This knowledge will manifest itself in our having the utmost respect for GOD, for God’s SON, for God’s SPIRIT, for God’s WORD and for God’s holy NAME.

6. Genuine fear of the LORD is always seen in one’s OBEDIENCE to God’s commands. If one says he loves God and believes in God but not does not obey the commands of God, he truly does not FEAR the LORD.

7. To live in “the fear of the LORD” doesn’t mean we are obsessed with what God will do to us if don’t obey His commands, but rather we are driven by a passion to PLEASE God in all we say and do.

    illustration: The late Oswald Chambers said........

    “The remarkable thing about fearing God is that, when you fear God, you fear nothing else; whereas if you do not fear God, you fear everything else.”

8. Do you truly “fear the LORD?” Does your reverence and respect for the LORD drive you toward obedience and holiness?

    “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.”

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Secondly, I would have you to consider........

II. The Dividends of “Living in The Fear of The L ORD”
1. Remember I told you in the introduction that the phrase "the fear of the LORD" appears eighteen times throughout the book of Proverbs.

2. When you look at those various references it reveals the wonderful dividends that will be ours’ if we live our lives in the “fear of the LORD.” Let’s look at just a few of those references:

(A) “Living in the fear of the LORD” gives us WISDOM.

-Proverbs 9:10 “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

-Proverbs 15:33 “The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility.”

Over the course of my lifetime I have known a number of godly people who never went to college. In fact some of them never even finished High School.

I’m thinking of one man in particular who dropped out of school after the eighth grade. He acknowledges he lacks smarts on a lot of things, but one thing is for sure, he loves the LORD and lives his life to please the LORD. That makes that man wiser than the man who has a half dozen college degrees who doesn’t know God.

.......You tell me, who is wiser, the man who knows the ages of rocks or the man who knows the Rock of Ages?

.......Who is wiser, the man who knows all about outer space or the man who knows the One who created outer space?

The fear of the LORD gives us WISDOM!

(B) “Living in the fear of the LORD” steers us away from DEADLY paths in life.

-Proverbs 3:7 “Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil.”
ILLUSTRATION  Just this past week the world was shocked to hear of the tragic death of Whitney Houston at the young age of 48. What made her death so tragic is that it didn’t have to happen. Had she had the godly wisdom to stay off the deadly path of drugs and alcohol she might still be alive today.

When you and I live our lives in the “fear of the LORD” and obey His commands, it helps steer you and me away from self-destructive habits that could and likely would shorten our lives.

(C) “Living in the fear of the LORD” produces a sense of SECURITY.

- Proverbs 14:26 “In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge.”

Isn’t it comforting to know that no matter what’s going on in our personal world or in the world around us, that God is on our side? Living in the fear of the LORD gives you and me the confidence to face any and every situation knowing that “If God is for us, who can be against us.”

Whatever you are going through right now, remind yourself, “I am not going through this alone, God is on my side.”

(D) “Living in the fear of the LORD” makes all of life BETTER.

- Proverbs 15:16 “Better is a little with the fear of the LORD” than great treasure with trouble.”
This verse is teaching us it is better to be a poor man and have God than to be a rich man who doesn’t have God.

You see, when you and I live in the fear of the LORD and we are walking in obedience to His will, God is going to provide our every need. God takes personal responsibility for caring for each and every one of us who are His children.

Now I’ll tell you what brothers and sisters, that ought to mean more to you and me than having all the money and material possession in the world.

Time does not permit us to look at all the wonderful dividends of living in the fear of the LORD, but let me just share these with you:

- Living in the fear of the LORD” brings great BLESSINGS. (Proverbs 22:4)
- Living in the fear of the LORD” produces SAFETY and SATISFACTION (Proverbs 19:23)
- Living in the fear of the LORD” points us toward ETERNAL life. (Proverbs 14:27)
- Living in the fear of the LORD” motivates us to live HOLY lives. (Proverbs 16:6)

Well we have considered THE DEFINITION OF LIVING IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD and THE DIVIDENDS OF LIVING IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD.

Finally, let us consider.........

III. The Decision to “Live In The Fear of The LORD

1. I don’t know any other way to put this than to just say it in plain, simple English.

   Walking in the fear of the LORD is your personal decision.
2. No one can make you walk in the fear of the LORD. No one else can do it for you.

3. The decision to live a life that is centered around a holy, reverential fear of Almighty God is your decision to make.

4. I can go through the scriptures and point out to you all the benefits of “living in the fear of the LORD.” I can tell you that it will make your life a whole lot better and lead to great blessings from God.

   But the bottom line is: It is your decision to live your life in the fear of the LORD or to not live your life in the fear of the LORD.

5. If you decide to live your life in the fear of the LORD it will evident in a number of ways:

   a. You will seek to honor God in all you do and say.

   b. You will make pleasing Him the most important thing in life.

   c. Prayer and personal Bible study will be very important to you.

   d. Being in God’s house on the first day of each week will be a priority for you.

6. But by the same token, if you decide NOT to live your life in the fear of the LORD that will be very evident too.

   a. You will live to please yourself rather than God.

   b. Everything else will take a place of greater priority
over spiritual matters.

c. There will be very little space if any at all for prayer and personal Bible study.

d. You will have a greater appetite for money and material things than you do for the things of God.

e. Being in the LORD’S house on the first day of the week won’t be a top priority.

7. Will you live in the fear of the LORD or NOT live in the fear of the LORD?  It’s your DECISION!

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CONCLUSION

In the jungles of eastern Sri Lanka, fifteen soldiers were saved by two dogs they had adopted as mascots. According to a news report, the soldiers were completing a 10-mile hike when the two dogs sensed danger.

Running ahead toward a water hole where the unit planned to rest, the dogs started barking and circling the area. The troops searched carefully and found twelve buried grenades attached to a tight wire trigger.

You know it is amazing to think that those dogs were tuned to the smell of danger. The soldiers escaped certain death because they listened to those two barking dogs.

LORD willing as we continue our study of the Book of Proverbs in the weeks to come, GOD will alert us in these wonderful scriptures to the hidden dangers and pitfalls in life you and I must stay away from. If you and I will TRUST and OBEY what God teaches us in Proverbs, it will lead to a life of blessing, as we learn to “Live in the fear of the LORD!”