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Week nine

Randy Robison

John Bevere #1

In the studio

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Randy Robison. My parents are off this week, and Tammy is out, she'll be back with us soon. But I'm excited because I have one of our favorite guests here at *Life Today*. John Bevere is with me. He has a new book called *The Awe of God*. There are some very interesting things in that book and we're going to discuss them. So if you'll stick with us, I'm sure you will be stretched and blessed. We're glad you're here. John, great to have you, man!

JOHN: Randy, it is so good to be here.

RANDY: It is so good to see you. And you always—I love talking to you because it is—

JOHN: And I love talking to you.

RANDY: It is a little bit of a challenge. You're on a topic that I have a hard time with at times. Walk us through a little bit of the basics of this book.

JOHN: So the awe of God or I could say the fear of God has nothing to do with being scared of God. So first of all, let's start with that. If you look at when Moses led Israel out of Egypt, God wanted to meet them. He comes down the mountain and the people are all scared and run away. And Moses said something to the people. He said, "Do not fear because God has come to test you, to see if his fear is in you so that you may not sin."

Now Moses is not talking out of two sides of his mouth. He is differentiating between being scared of God and the fear of the Lord. The person that is scared of God has something to hide. What does Adam do in the garden when he sins? He hides from the presence of the Lord. The person who fears God has nothing to hide. That person is terrified of being away from God.

So your very first definition of the awe or the fear of God is to be terrified of being away from him.

RANDY: Okay. You're right because I'm a word nerd like you. I went into the Hebrew and Proverbs says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Right? And I looked that up in the Hebrew. I had to write it down, "yirah," for those who care. And I thought it would say like "respect" or "reverence." It says "terror." I thought, oh okay. Maybe that's just the Hebrew. So I went to the Greek, "Phobos," in Philippians two. "Terror!" "Terror!"

JOHN: Yes, sir. So this is a terror that has a drawing effect. It is so hard for people to understand this with their minds. But in essence, the fear of the Lord does involve terror and awe but it has a drawing effect. I've experienced it. I will never forget being in Brazil, my first time there. There were thousands of people in the arena. They were walking around while they were reading the scriptures, talking to one another. It is the National Believers Conference, and this had been going on for an hour.

I was like what do I do? And God said, confront this. I remember I got up and I said, "I have two questions, if you're sitting across the table talking to somebody and the whole time they've got their arms folded looking around or they're whispering to the person beside them, will you continue to talk to them?"

"No."

I said, "If you keep going to your neighbor's house and knock on the door and he opens

the door and goes, 'Oh, it's you, again.' Would you continue to go to that house?"

"No."

I said, "I've been in this arena for two hours now. There isn't a drop of the presence of God because God will never come into an atmosphere that he is not held with the utmost of respect."

I remember ministering to them for an hour and a half on the fear of the Lord. At the end, I said, "Everybody who says, 'I'm a believer' but you lack the holy fear of God, stand up." 75% of the arena stood up. The presence of God came in and people started weeping. In the next service, people received so beautifully from God.

It is a very, very important aspect of our salvation. If you look at Isaiah 33, verse six, it says, "The fear the Lord is God's treasure." Stop and think about that—God's treasure. It says it should be ours. If you look at Isaiah 11:3 it says, "The spirit of the Lord would rest upon Jesus, the spirit of wisdom, counsel, might, knowledge, understanding and the spirit of the fear of the Lord. And his delight was in the fear of the Lord."

So there is something we're missing in our western church. We've preached on the love of God, and we should always preach on the love of God because it protects us from legalism. But what we haven't preached is the fear of the Lord, and the fear of the Lord protects us from lawlessness. Proverbs 16:8 says, "By the fear of the Lord one departs from evil." If you look at what Paul said in Philippians, he said, "We work out our salvation with fear and trembling." Not with love and kindness, with fear and trembling. What does it mean to work out our salvation? That means mature our salvation.

Randy, the reason I spent the entire year last year writing this book is because we have lost over 40 million believers in the last 23 years. Barna has done an in-depth study; over 40 million believers have walked away from the faith. Now Second Thessalonians tells us that. It says there will be a great falling away of those who profess Christianity. But what

Thessalonians doesn't say it doesn't say that those people aren't going to come back. That's where I'm at. I'm like God, I'm believing these people are going to come back.

But why have we lost over 40 million in 23 years? And half of those 40 million are now professed to be Agnostics, atheists, and spiritualists.

So think about it, America is 332 million people. We're talking about one out of every ten Americans has walked away from the faith. Not one out of every ten people in churches, one out of—so if you look at ten Americans on the street, you pick out one that might be a person that has walked away from the faith. Why have people done that? Because of our lack of preaching on the holy fear of God. Because it balances out. The Bible tells us the beginning, the starting place of knowing God intimately is the fear of the Lord.

So if you don't have the holy reverential fear of the Lord in your life, you're believing in a Jesus—now Jesus is invisible. You've made up a fictitious Jesus. He's not the real Jesus. Now fictitious or a knock-off Jesus. He doesn't answer prayers, he doesn't manifest his presence, he doesn't change our character, and he doesn't fulfill his promises. So in essence if we just get people to come into the faith without repentance, still loving the world in their heart, still loving sin in their heart, we have now introduced them to a knock-off Jesus, let's just say it that way. And now he is not satisfying that deep personal desire for an authentic relationship with our creator. They become disillusioned and they leave.

So in essence, what we try to do to make it wider and easier for people to come into the faith, actually, was setting them up for disappointment, disillusionment, and walking away from the faith. And I believe what it's going to restore is the holy fear of God.

RANDY: You keep saying "holy fear." I think there's intentionality in that to maybe differentiate it because the Bible says God doesn't give us a spirit of fear.

JOHN: Yes! And perfected love casts out fear.

RANDY: You're right. And angels show up or God shows up, the first thing they say is "fear not." Right?

JOHN: After the people already fell over from awe and terror of what they're beholding.

RANDY: Yeah! Yeah! So I think that is confusing for people at times because we don't know what to do with fear. We don't know the right place to put it. Help us between a spirit of fear and holy fear.

JOHN: I'll never forget, and I'd like to say holy, healthy fear. I'll never forget Malaysia; we had had tent meetings. The tent meeting, the holy fear of God, the Lord manifested in that service in a way that was terrifying. I mean terrifying in a good way. In a good way! So I'm sitting there going, oh my, my! That's when I found out there is a difference between my head and my heart. Because my head was going, I don't know if I can handle this. And my heart was saying, God, please don't lift!

And Randy, I had a thought. Now, this is going to shock people. John Bevere, you say one wrong word, you make one wrong move in this atmosphere, you're dead. Now, would that have happened? I don't know. But it happened with a man and wife who brought an offering in the New Testament and they—they acted in an inappropriate way, just in their motives. They were just lying about their offering. They fell over dead and buried them. And I'm sitting there in awe because my head is going, I don't know if I can handle this, Lord, anymore. My heart was saying, God, please don't lift! And I was drawn to it.

That's the thing that our early church fathers wrote about, and wrote about, and wrote about, and I'm talking about for centuries. How the fear of God is almost mysterious and terrifying at the same time because it draws us. Mysterious is how does something that we're terrified of become so drawing and we feel so clean and so safe in it. And that's what I have felt. Because I've been in that atmosphere five or six times in my 40 years of

ministry, and I found every single time there was a terrifying aspect of it but a drawing aspect.

Do you know what the New York Times came out with yesterday? They said that the awe, to have awe in a person's life releases positive endorphins from their mind into their body. Why? Because God created us for fear. So we try to eradicate fear. We said hey, no fear T-shirts. We're trying to get rid of fear. When in reality, fear is a healthy thing if it is constructive fear. Do you know what fear does? It gives us the wisdom to not go and sit on a ledge that has a 2,000-foot drop.

RANDY: And that's what I was going to ask you. Does it make sense—okay, you're from Colorado. I've been to the Royal Gorge. Years ago, I took my kids, and they were pretty small. And at the Royal Gorge, you can go right up to sort of a fence that is like right on the edge. Of course, I'm walking up and I'm like, okay. Let's respect gravity here because it is an immutable law. My kids are running around oblivious and running up and jumping on the rail. And my wife is terrified because you know, one wrong move and you're not coming back from that one.

JOHN: A healthy fear is going to keep—yes, it is going to keep you from sitting on that edge. A healthy fear is going to keep you from going and stealing a grizzly bear's cub. But now those fears, if they go to an unhealthy extreme, if I've got a fear of heights, now I'm not going to get on an airplane, I'm not going to see the world. Now it's gone from healthy to unhealthy. Now I'm not going to take a walk in the woods because I'm so afraid of that grizzly bear. That's an unhealthy fear. So there are healthy fears. And the fear of the Lord is a healthy fear. But what the church fathers wrote and wrote and wrote about is it is the fear that swallows up all other fears.

So here's the situation. When we fear God, we fear nothing else. This is church fathers wrote this over and over and over again. Ephrem the Syrian wrote it way back in the second century. We've got Oswald Chambers writing it in the 20th century. That the fear of the Lord swallows up all other fears. That's why Jesus said, "Don't fear those who can

kill your body and can do nothing else. But fear God, who after he's killed the body can cast the soul in hell." But what's his next statement? "Aren't you more valuable than many sparrows? Do not be afraid."

So here is Jesus saying, fear God! Then he is saying don't be afraid of God. So the fear of the Lord is an aspect that because we've not talked about it, our people have not experienced it. I have experienced it, and there are others who have experienced it but the mass part of the body of Christ in America has not experienced it. And that is the starting place of an intimate relationship with God. And that's what we all crave for.

RANDY: So you say that healthy fear, healthy fear of God casts out all the other fears. Do you think that a lot of Christians and a lot of people, in general, live with an array of fears? We've seen the mental health crisis spike up. A lot of it is rooted in fear. Do you think that we experience all these other fears because we don't understand this healthy fear of the Lord?

JOHN: Yep. And I'll share with you a personal example. I'm in a city in the United States, I'm traveling a lot. My kids are toddlers, and I start thinking about all the minister friends that have lost children and I was gripped with fear. And the Holy Spirit spoke to me in that room. I was staying at a pastor's house. He said, "Son, any area that you fear is an area you still own. You haven't put it under the cross."

I'll never forget, I was halfway taking off my shoes. I stood up in the room and I started screaming, yelling my son's names out. I said, "They're not mine. I give them to you." And I remember from that night forward, I have never feared for my sons' lives since. Never!

And I realized, see, the fear of the Lord is actually, the manifestation of it, is we have a desire and a willingness to obey him no matter what. And that obedience eradicates the fear because when we start trying to do things on our own, with our own wisdom, our own way, our own planning. What happens is we get away from the security and the

protection from being under the shadow of his Almighty.

Let's face it. Eve was drawn to the good side of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She wasn't drawn to the evil side. When she saw the tree, it was good. She made the decision, my wisdom of what's best for me supersedes what God says is best for me. The fear of the Lord says I'm going to embrace whatever God says because he is the one that created me. So the fear of the Lord is when we stand in awe, reverence, and respect, we tremble before him. So now what happens is we take his heart, what he loves, we love. What he hates we hate.

You say, John, God hates? Yes, he hates. If you look at it in Proverbs, it says, these six things the Lord hates, the seventh is an abomination and that one is gossip. So we need to hate gossip. So most Christians dislike gossip. So we're seeing now, you have a disconnect. You're not walking in the full fear of God.

I'll show you what a religious person does. Okay? A legalist does. Oh, I fear God, that's why I hate those people over there—those sinners over there. You don't fear God at all because you hate what he loves. Jesus died for those sinners. He hates the sin that is unmaking those people.

RANDY: Right. It's like hating cancer in someone. You don't hate the cancer victim; you hate the cancer that's destroying them.

JOHN: Correct. So I remember when I was young in ministry in the 1990s, I said, God, why isn't there a strong anointing on my life to preach? I pray every single morning for two hours. I said why isn't there a stronger anointing?

And the Holy Spirit spoke to me, and he said, "Because you tolerate sin."

I went, "What?!"

He said, "Not only do you tolerate it in your life you tolerate it in the lives of others." He said, "Son, go read Hebrews one."

So Hebrews one is when God the Father inaugurates Jesus as king of the universe. Right? And if you start reading it you come to this verse in Hebrews one where God the Father says to Jesus, "Because you've loved righteousness."

And the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, "Stop! Every Christian loves righteousness." He said, "But I didn't stop there. Because you've loved righteousness and hated sin, therefore God, even thy God has anointed you beyond your companions."

I went, "Oh, my goodness!"

And the Lord said to me, "You hate sin the way I hate sin and then you'll see the anointing of God increase upon your life."

You know, Randy, I've been in atmospheres where the presence of God comes in so strong. Why? Because of the love of God and the fear of God, the two combined. And you see the two protect us. The love of God keeps us from being legalistic. The fear of God keeps us from sinning and practicing sin and becoming a transgressor or one who practices lawlessness. There are a multitude of people that they're to come before Jesus, in Matthew Chapter 7 that said, Jesus, we went to church. Our church did these things. We did these things. He's going to say, I don't even know you, you who practice lawlessness.

What protects us from practicing lawlessness? The healthy fear of God. I will never forget when I visited a world-famous evangelist in prison in 1994. I mean this man had the biggest ministry in the world in the 1980s, late 1980s. But yet he was arrested for fraud and put in jail for 45-year sentence. It was reduced to five. He had read the first book I read. Asked me to come to visit him.

Now he was years older than me, and I remember him walking in. He had his prison garb on, and he hugs me, and he hugs me. And he looks at me and said, "Did you write that book? Or did a ghostwriter?"

I said, "I wrote it, sir."

He said, "We have so much to talk about." So he sits down. Now I'm looking at probably one of the most famous human beings on the planet.

RANDY: At the time, yeah.

JOHN: All for the wrong reasons because C.N.N. aired his trial every single day. I'm looking at this man and he looks at me and he goes, "John, this prison was not God's judgment on my life, it was his mercy."

I went, "What?"

He said, "John, if I were to keep living the way I was living, I would have ended up separated from God in hell forever."

I went okay, I need to hear what this man has to say.

So he started telling me how Jesus came into his prison cell and delivered him from all the evil in his life during the first year of prison. How they read the Bible three hours a day, and studied it, the gospels especially. So when we gets done telling me the story and I feel comfortable, I said, "When did you fall out of love with Jesus? When you started, when I was a baby Christian, I watched you. You would weep. When did you fall out of love with Jesus?"

He looked at me and said, "I didn't."

Now I got angry. I said, "What are you talking about? You committed adultery in 1983. You were arrested in 1990. You're totally not living for God for those seven years."

He said, "John, I loved him all the way through it." And he sees the confusion. He said, "John, I didn't fear God." He said, "I loved Jesus, I didn't fear him." And he said, "There are millions of Americans just like me, they love Jesus, but they have no fear of God."

I remember that changed my life in 1994 and set me on a path, on a course to say, there is something to this. I see it all over the Bible. We mature our salvation through fear and trembling, not love and kindness. We perfect holiness in the fear of God, not in the love of God. This is all New Testament. I'm like wait a minute, there is something missing here. I believe this is why we've seen millions walk away from the faith. But we're going to see them come back. I believe it.

RANDY: Yeah, I believe it too. I have a whole list of other questions. Can you do another program with me?

JOHN: I would love to, Randy. We have so much fun together.

RANDY: I know! Man, this is good! This is depth and this is important. And so I want you to come back. I also would like to give you John's book, *The Awe of God*. We'll send it to you today if you request it when you support this beautiful outreach. Take a look at this and I'll be right back to tell you more.

On the mission field

ANNOUNCER: Just imagine having to bring back something your body has to have to stay alive, but it could possibly kill you.

ISAK: I'm here with this young girl. She is probably a similar age to my daughter, maybe 12-13 years old. She's just come down to this dry riverbed where they've dug a hole out

and they've let the water just seep up. She's collecting water for her family. A girl this age, I don't know if you've got children this age, but I can't imagine my daughter having to walk for miles to come down to a riverbed like this. It is not that safe to start with. But then to have to actually come and dish up the water and then carry this heavy container of water all the way back to her village. Carrying what's many times is not life—it's water. It will quench her thirst, but it might steal her life.

ANNOUNCER: This is the reality for tens of thousands of young children throughout the continent of Africa who continue to make the journey day after day to bring back diseased-filled water for themselves and their families.

ISAK: And that's why Mission: Water for LIFE is so critically important. It is why we have to be able to get to this village and other villages like this, bring that water well, drill the water well, put a pump in there so that this young girl can get fresh, clean, life-giving water, not diseased-filled water, right in her village, not having to carry it for miles to get it back there.

Please, partner with us today. Join your hands and your hearts with me. Make it possible for us to bring our drilling rigs here to drill a water well and to give life in the form of water. And let's see this village, this young girl who is dishing up water here, let's see her join others as she celebrates and welcomes that new well into their village.

Please, make that joy and celebration possible. Make the gift of water possible because in doing so you're going to be giving the gift of life.

End of video

In the studio

RANDY: I know every time we air pictures like that, we get all sorts of questions. You get the question of why does God allow that? I think the answer is he has sent us to do something about it. We are his hands and his feet. You don't go anywhere without feet.

You don't reach out and touch someone without hands. And God says you and I are his hands and his feet.

The scripture that says Jesus is the vine and we are the branches, we understand that that means that we need to be connected to him to draw life. But did you know that it is the branch that produces the fruit, not the vine? We are to produce that fruit. We are the ones who are sent to give them an option I honestly believe because I've experienced it and I've seen it in others and many of you have experienced it, that when we reach out to the poor in the name of Jesus God does something miraculous, something supernatural in our lives. John, I know you've seen this too. You've been there.

JOHN: I've been to Africa with you guys and it's heart-wrenching but it rejoices your heart at the same time to see that we get the privilege of being able to help these beautiful people. I kept thinking, when I was there, I've got four boys and I'd watch these mothers with their children just desperate for water and food, and I was there with Isak and his dad Peter, who is now with the Lord, and it changed me forever. I'm so grateful.

This is the reason why Lisa and I have supported *Life Today*. We love *Life Today* because of the way you're helping them one person at a time, but it is groups at a time the way you guys do it. You're so smart and innovative in the way you're helping people.

RANDY: Well, it's only because people watching right now reach out and say, I'm going to give. Let me give you a quick breakdown. Our goal this year is 350 wells across 20 nations. We've been doing this for decades now and we have the privilege of giving to the poor, being generous to the poor because of your generosity.

But when we go in and we drill a well for clean water in one of these villages, it provides typically water for about 70 years, we call it Water for LIFE for a thousand people, and that's because villages come from all over. The average cost of a well is \$4800 which means your gift of \$48 today will provide Water for LIFE on average for ten people. That's ten lives changed. Many of you can do more than that. A gift of \$144 will provide

water for 30 people. Some of you can come together with others, drill half a well, a whole well, multiple, whatever you can do. I'm suggesting we be generous to the poor and let God repay us how he sees fit.

Will you go online or go to the phone right now? Make the best gift you can. And then expect good things from the Lord.

Begin video clip

ANNOUNCER: *Every day thousands of lives are lost to waterborne diseases, and nearly half of those are children under the age of five. Through Mission: Water for LIFE, you can give mothers hope and children a future as we provide clean life-giving water for thousands of children and their families before it's too late.*

With your gift today, you can help drill and establish 350 water wells this year! Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five children. A gift of \$48 will help provide for ten. \$72 will provide for 15. And \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime.

*With a gift of any amount, we'll send you *The Birthright*. This book is a liberating and life-changing celebration of your birthright as a child of the King. Discover the joy of coming home to your Father's warm embrace.*

With your gift of \$100 or more, we'll also send you the "Moments With Him" mug set. These two beautifully crafted coffee mugs feature scripture on the side, the perfect way to start your day and reflect on the goodness of God.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well, and request our new, inspiring bronze sculpture, "Consider the Birds" inspired by Jesus' words in Matthew 6:26.

Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of video

In the studio

RANDY: I hope you are going online or going to the phone. Make the best gift you can. You will impact a life.

You're coming back!

JOHN: Yes, sir!

RANDY: Okay. Good because we've got more to talk about. By the way, don't forget to ask for John's book today if you help support Water for LIFE. And if you're watching online, you can go find the other program. Otherwise, come back and we'll have more with John Bevere right here on *Life Today*. See you again next time.