

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE + STREAMING VIDEO

SIX SESSIONS

JOHN BEVERE

BESTSELLING AUTHOR

The
Awe
of
God

THE ASTOUNDING WAY
A HEALTHY FEAR OF GOD
TRANSFORMS YOUR LIFE

The Awe of God

THE ASTOUNDING WAY A HEALTHY FEAR
OF GOD TRANSFORMS YOUR LIFE

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

JOHN BEVERE

 Harper *Christian*
Resources

The Awe of God Bible Study Guide
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The *words* of the *wise* are like cattle prods—
painful but helpful.

Their collected sayings are like a nail-studded stick
with which a *shepherd* drives the *sheep.*

But, my *child*, let me give you some further *advice:*

Be *careful*, for writing *books* is endless,
and much *study* wears you out.

That's the whole *story.*

Here now is my final conclusion:

Fear God and obey his commands,
for this is everyone's duty.

God will *judge* us for *everything* we do,
including every secret thing, whether good or bad.

ECCLESIASTES 12:11-14 NLT

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The Bible tells us—about 365 times—to “fear not.” This leads many Christians to conclude that God does not want us ever to fear. But all these verses refer to *destructive fear*. There are around 200 other verses that encourage us to “fear God.” Here is the unfortunate reality for many of us. In our quest to eliminate all *destructive* fears, we have also thrown out a *healthy* fear extolled throughout Scripture: *the fear of the Lord*.

This is the purpose of this study. During the next six weeks, you will explore how rightly directed fear—specifically the biblical virtue of fearing God above anything else in this life—will open up the path to a life that is greater than anything you have ever imagined. You will also see that the fear of the Lord will draw you into great intimacy with your Creator and enable you to confront and overcome anything that this life throws at you.

Now, before you begin, keep in mind that there are a few ways you can go through this material. You can experience this study with others in a group (such as a Bible study, Sunday school class, or any other small-group gathering), or you may choose to go through the content on your own. Either way, know that the videos for each session are available for you to view at any time by following the instructions provided on the inside cover of this study guide.

GROUP STUDY

Each of the sessions in this study are divided into two parts: (1) a group study section, and (2) a personal study section. The group study section provides a basic framework on how to open your time together, get the most out of the video content, and discuss the key ideas that were presented in the teaching. Each session includes the following:

- **Welcome:** A short note about the topic of the session for you to read on your own before you meet as a group.
- **Connect:** A few icebreaker questions to get you and your group members thinking about the topic and interacting with each other.
- **Watch:** An outline of the key points covered in each video teaching along with space for you to take notes as you watch each session.

- **Discuss:** Questions to help you and your group reflect on the teaching material presented and apply it to your lives.
- **Respond:** A short personal exercise to help reinforce the key ideas.
- **Pray:** A place for you to record prayer requests and praises for the week.

If you are doing this study with a group, make sure that you have your own copy of the study guide so you can write down your thoughts, responses, insights, and reflections each week—and so you have access to all the videos via streaming. You will also want to have a copy of *The Awe of God* book, as reading it alongside the curriculum will provide you with deeper insights. (See the notes at the beginning of each group session and personal study section on which chapters of the book you should read before the next group session.)

Finally, keep these points in mind:

- **Facilitation:** If you are doing this study in a group, you will want to appoint someone to serve as a facilitator. This person will be responsible for starting the video and keeping track of time during discussions and activities. If *you* have been chosen for this role, there are some resources in the back of this guide that can help you lead your group through the study.
- **Faithfulness:** Your group is a place where tremendous growth can happen as you reflect on the Bible, ask questions, and learn what God is doing in other people's lives. For this reason, be fully committed and attend each session so you can build trust and rapport with the other members.
- **Friendship:** The goal of any small group is to serve as a place where people can share, learn about God, and build friendships. So make your group a “safe place.” Be honest about your thoughts and feelings, but also listen carefully to everyone else's thoughts, feelings, and opinions. Keep anything personal that your group members share in confidence so that you can create a community where people can heal, be challenged, and grow spiritually.

If you are going through this study on your own, read the opening Welcome section and reflect on the questions in the Connect section. Watch the video and use the prompts that have been provided to take notes. Finally, personalize the questions and exercises in the Discuss and Respond sections. Close by recording any requests that you want to pray about during the week.

PERSONAL STUDY

The personal study is for you to go work through on your own during the week. Each exercise is designed to help you explore the key ideas you uncovered during your group time and delve into passages of Scripture that will help you apply those principles to your life. Go at your own pace, doing a little each day—or tackle the material all at once. Remember to spend a few moments in silence to listen to whatever God might be saying to you.

Note that if you are doing this study as part of a group, and you are unable to finish (or even start) these personal studies for the week, you should still attend the group time. Be assured that you are still wanted and welcome even if you don't have your "homework" done. The group studies and personal studies are intended to help you hear what God wants you to hear and how to apply what he is saying to your life. So . . . as you go through this study, be listening for him to speak to you as you learn about the holy fear of God.

WEEK 1

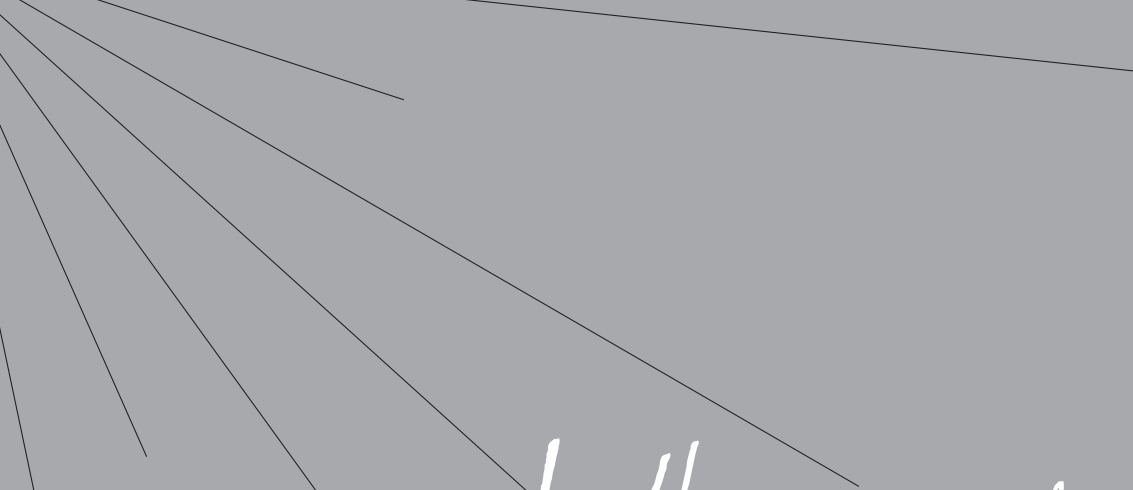
BEFORE GROUP MEETING	Read the Introduction and chapters 1-7 in <i>The Awe of God</i> Read the Welcome section (page 3)
GROUP MEETING	Discuss the Connect questions Watch the video teaching for session 1 Discuss the questions that follow as a group Do the closing exercise and pray (pages 3-8)
STUDY 1	Complete the personal study (pages 10-12)
STUDY 2	Complete the personal study (pages 13-15)
STUDY 3	Complete the personal study (pages 16-17)
CONNECT & DISCUSS	Connect with someone in your group (page 18)
CATCH UP & READ AHEAD (before week 2 group meeting)	Read chapters 8-14 in <i>The Awe of God</i> Complete any unfinished personal studies (page 19)

SESSION ONE

HOLY AWE

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

PROVERBS 1:7



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.

OSWALD CHAMBERS¹

Fear, when rightly employed, is the very
brightest state of Christianity. . . .
"The fear of God" is the constant description
which the Scripture gives of *true religion*.

CHARLES SPURGEON²

WELCOME | READ ON YOUR OWN

Many of us today believe that certain emotions are always wrong, always destructive, and always inappropriate. Like hatred, for example. We're often told followers of Jesus should be creatures of love, not hate. After all, the Bible says God is love, and because hatred is the opposite of love, hatred must be inherently immoral. It's common to hear similar sentiments about other feelings—jealousy, rage, despair, and so on.

But wait a minute. Let's take a moment to assess those assumptions. In Proverbs, we read "there are six things the Lord hates" (see 6:16–19). So God experiences hatred. Scripture also says God is jealous (see Exodus 20:5), that God's fierce anger "raged against the towns of Judah" (Jeremiah 44:6), and that Jesus, "being in anguish," prayed so intensely His sweat was like drops of blood (see Luke 22:44).

In short, God experiences hatred, jealousy, rage, and despair. Now, this is not to say that God's people should act in a hateful, jealous, or enraged manner. It is simply to say that we need to recalibrate our thoughts when it comes to negative emotions, because it's not necessarily the emotions themselves that are dangerous. What *is* dangerous is choosing to think, feel, or act in ways that conflict with how God thinks, feels, and acts.

As we will see in this session, fear is another emotion that can use some recalibration in the church. Many of us have been taught that fear is always negative—always something to be avoided. In reality, fear is an essential element of life. This is especially true when we consider what the Bible says about the fear of the Lord.

CONNECT | 15 MINUTES

If any of your group members don't know each other, take a few minutes to introduce yourselves. Then, to get things started, discuss one of the following questions:

- Why did you decide to join this study? What do you hope to learn?

— or —

- On a scale of 1 (rarely) to 10 (regularly), how often do you experience the emotion of fear?

WATCH | 20 MINUTES

Now watch the video for this session, which you can access by playing the DVD or through streaming (see the instructions provided on the inside front cover). Below is an outline of the key points covered during the teaching. Record any key concepts that stand out to you on the following page.

OUTLINE

- I.** There is a hidden virtue that, in essence, is the key to all of life.
 - A.** This secret virtue offers the essential ingredient for being close with God.
 - B.** This virtue can help safeguard your faith and the faith of your loved ones.
 - C.** This virtue can help you remove behaviors that harm you spiritually.

- II.** This secret virtue is the fear of God.
 - A.** King Solomon, one of the wisest men to ever live, wrote about this virtue.
 - B.** Solomon was trained in the fear of God and his success as king was largely based on that virtue.
 - C.** Solomon lost sight of this virtue toward the end of his life but didn't die in that state.

- III.** There is a difference between the fear of the Lord and being scared of God.
 - A.** There are harmful fears . . . but there are also healthy fears.
 - B.** The person who is scared of God has something to hide.
 - C.** The fear of God is not being afraid of God but being afraid of being away from Him.

- IV.** The fear of the Lord includes more than just reverence.
 - A.** The fear of God does include esteem, respect, honor, and veneration.
 - B.** To fear God also means to give Him all that belongs to Him.

- V.** The key benefits to fearing God.
 - A.** The fear of God increases our intimacy with Him.
 - B.** The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding.
 - C.** The fear of God provides the pathway for us to mature in our salvation.
 - D.** The fear of God produces authentic holiness.
 - E.** The fear of God swallows up all other fears, including the fear of man.

NOTES

DISCUSS | 35 MINUTES

Take time to discuss what you just watched by answering the following questions.

- 1.** The “fear of God” is one of those terms that gets used a lot in church settings but is rarely defined. In your own words, how would you summarize what you’ve been taught about “the fear of God”? What does it mean? What does it *not* mean?
- 2.** At the end of the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon sums up the wisdom of his experience by saying, “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind” (12:13). How would you describe the connection between fearing God and obeying God?
- 3.** Look again at Hebrews 12:28–29: “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ‘God is a consuming fire.’” How does the fear of God lead to worship, and vice versa?
- 4.** The key idea in this study is that holy fear—what we might call the awe of God—is an incredibly powerful force for good in our lives. When have you experienced benefit or blessing because you chose to fear God?
- 5.** Think back to your first encounters with God and your earliest memories of meeting Him. What emotions were most prominent in those encounters? What thoughts or feelings were most prevalent in those experiences?

RESPOND | 10 MINUTES

When God rescued His people from slavery in Egypt, He did not immediately lead them into the promised land. Instead, He led them to Mount Sinai so they could experience Him. Take a few minutes on your own to read about this encounter and then answer the questions that follow.

¹⁶ On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently. ¹⁹ As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

EXODUS 19:16-19

¹⁸ When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance ¹⁹ and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die." ²⁰ Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." ²¹ The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

EXODUS 20:18-21

How do these passages add to your understanding of what it means to fear God?

What are some ways that the fear of God will keep us from sinning?



SESSION ONE

PERSONAL STUDY

You are on a journey toward a better understanding of what it means to fear the Lord. A key part of that growth, regardless of where you are spiritually, involves studying Scripture. This is the goal of these personal studies—to help you explore what the Bible has to say and how to apply God’s Word to your life. As you work through each of these exercises, be sure to write down your responses to the questions, as you will be given a few minutes to share your insights at the start of the next session if you are doing this study with others. If you are reading *The Awe of God* alongside this study, first review the Introduction and chapters 1–7 of the book.

— STUDY 1 —

WHAT IS HOLY FEAR?

As we study Scripture, it's important to work through any misunderstandings that have the potential to hold us back. For example, as we discussed earlier, many believe fear is always a bad thing—something that is spiritually harmful. In reality, the fear of God is a foundational element of what it means to live out our calling as disciples of Christ.

There are also some who consider the fear of the Lord to be related to Old-Testament times. They perceive God as a figure of wrath and judgment in the Old Testament, while in the New Testament, He demonstrates love and grace. But even a cursory glance through books such as Genesis, Judges, Isaiah, and Psalms reveal the Old Testament is filled with passages about God's love. Furthermore, you can't read through the Gospels or Revelation without being confronted with the reality of God's judgment and wrath.

The author of Hebrews wrote, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (13:8). In other words, the fear of the Lord is not an Old Testament concept or a New Testament concept. It's a *biblical* concept—and one we need to thoroughly understand in order to experience everything God desires for us as His children. So, over the course of this week's personal studies, let's work through what it means to fear God.

1. As you discussed in this week's group time, the fear of the Lord does not mean being *scared* of God so you run from His presence. Rather, the fear of God is a mix of actions and attitudes that draw you *closer* to Him. In fact, fearing the Lord means being terrified of being *apart* from Him. What is one season of your life in which you felt distance or separation between yourself and God? How did that separation affect you?

2. What are some steps you take in your spiritual life to draw near to God? How do you seek out closeness with Him?

It's impossible to define holy fear in a single sentence, paragraph, or chapter. It's no different than attempting to give the full breadth of God's love in the same space. . . . In fact, I believe we'll continue to discover the depths of both holy love and fear throughout eternity. With that said, let me offer a general outline of holy fear's definition. Think back to your childhood when you were given a coloring book and crayons. You opened the book, picked out a page, and found an outline just waiting to be filled in with color. In a similar way, this opening session gives us the borders, but it will take the rest of the study to fill in the colors. If you only go through this session, you'll get a broad idea of holy fear but miss out on its transformational truths.³

3. Start to draw the "boundaries" of your definition of holy fear. First, what would you say the fear of God *is not*?

Let's begin by listing our definitions. To fear God is to *revere* and be in complete *awe* of Him. To fear God is to *hallow* Him. *Hallow* is defined as, "to respect greatly." To fear God is to esteem, respect, honor, venerate, and adore Him above anyone or anything else. When we fear God, we take on His heart. We love what He loves and we hate what He hates. (Notice it is not to "dislike" what He hates, rather it is to "hate" what He hates.) What is important to Him becomes important to us. What is not so important to Him becomes not so important to us.⁴

4. Which of these definitions is most helpful to you in forming your definition of holy fear? Which of these definitions or statements caused you to feel convicted? Why?

5. Reverence for God is part of what it means to fear God. On a practical level, what does it look like for you to esteem, respect, honor, or venerate God above everything else?

— STUDY 2 —

GOD'S TANGIBLE PRESENCE

We've made the case in this first session that a genuine fear of the Lord does not drive us away from Him but instead draws us closer to Him. We will keep reiterating this point throughout this study . . . it's that important! The reason we need to keep returning to this point is because each of us needs God's presence in our lives. We were created to live in community with Him. We were designed to be surrounded and uplifted by His Spirit.

Now, this might sound confusing because of what we know about God's nature: *He is omnipresent*. In other words, He exists everywhere. There is no place we can go here on earth (or anywhere else for that matter) that will be removed from God's presence. So, why do we need holy fear to draw us *into* God's presence and increase our connection with Him?

An understanding can be found in the two definitions for God's presence given in Scripture. The first definition relates to God's omnipresence that we've just discussed. The second definition relates to God's presence with His people. In the story of the Exodus, for example, we read the following interaction between God and Moses:

The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"

And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."

EXODUS 33:14-17

God desires to manifest Himself in the presence of His people—and because of this, we can have a meaning connection with Him. This connection comes when we choose to demonstrate fear of the Lord and draw close in fellowship with Him. As Jesus said about the one who follows Him: “I will love him and manifest Myself to him” (John 14:21 NKJV).

- 1.** When was the last time you felt God’s tangible presence in your life in a meaningful way? What caused you to connect with Him at that moment?

- 2.** What spiritual disciplines help you to experience God’s presence? If you wanted to spend time in His presence right now, what steps would you take to get there?

The fear of God seems counterintuitive. When hearing the word *fear*, our minds go immediately to a detrimental or even damaging state. But I assure you, it’s the greatest force of confidence, comfort, and protection available to any being in the universe. . . . Holy fear can be broken down into two major categories: (1) to *tremble at the presence of God*, and (2) to *tremble at His Word*. . . . Let’s begin by highlighting the first. The psalmist declares, “God is *greatly to be feared* in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in *reverence* by all those around Him” (Psalm 89:7 NKJV). Notice it says not merely feared, but rather, “*greatly*” feared. Here’s a firm truth: you will never find God’s wonderful presence in an atmosphere where He’s not revered and held in awe.⁵

- 3.** How would you describe our culture’s attitude toward God? Individually, what are some ways we display a lack of reverence for God that pushes us away from His presence?

4. Think about worship. When has the act of worshiping God—either corporately or privately—ushered you into a deeper experience with God’s presence and power?

5. Use the following scales to rate the “holy fear factor” in your life. To what degree do you experience holy awe in each of these situations?

How often do you experience holy fear during your personal devotions?



How often do you experience holy fear at church?



How often do you experience holy fear while worshipping?



How often do you experience holy fear in your home?



— STUDY 3 —

THE GLORY OF GOD

In the short history of the United States, there have been many individuals whom we would consider great. People such as George Washington, Harriet Tubman, Abraham Lincoln, Susan B. Anthony, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and so on. They are legends.

These individuals are revered in our society. We celebrate holidays in their honor. We carve their images into statues and monuments. We don't speak about them in the same way that we speak about "normal" folks, because their names and their stories carry a special kind of weight that adds substance to their histories.

You could say that such people have acquired a form of glory, and the reality of that glory changes the ways in which we relate to them as individuals and as a culture. Something similar happens in terms of our relationship with God—except on a grander scale. The more we begin to understand how incomparably great and overwhelmingly awesome God is, the more we will experience holy fear in all of our dealings with Him.

God's glory creates a weight that draws us deeper and deeper into His presence.

1. In your own words, how would you describe the concept of God's "glory"? What is it, and why is it important?

What was Isaiah's response in beholding the Lord's glory? It wasn't, "Wow, there He is!" No, he cried out, "It's all over! I'm doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips" (Isaiah 6:5 NLT). . . .

How about Job? The Almighty says about him, "'Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth'" (Job 1:8 NLT). Can you imagine God saying this about you or me? We would be jumping up and down with joy! Yet, this man

encounters God's glory and cries out, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself" (Job 42:5-6 NKJV).

How about Ezekiel? He saw the Lord and wrote, "This is what the glory of the LORD looked like to me. When I saw it, I fell face down on the ground" (Ezekiel 1:28 NLT).

Or what about Abraham? We read that when he saw God, "Abram fell face down on the ground" (Genesis 17:3 NLT).

When God gloriously manifested on Sinai, we read, "Moses himself was so frightened at the sight that he said, 'I am terrified and trembling'" (Hebrews 12:21 NLT).

John the Apostle, the one Jesus loved, writes of his encounter with our glorified Jesus, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead" (Revelation 1:17 NLT).⁶

2. How do the above verses contribute to your understanding of "the fear of God"? When has the Holy Spirit produced this kind of conviction in your heart and mind?

3. Our culture does not have a problem with recognizing glory and responding with worship. The problem is that we revere the glory of *human beings* rather than God. Where do you see examples of this in the world today? How have you been guilty of following this pattern this in the past?

4. Our holy fear grows proportionally to our comprehension of God's greatness. The more we understand and experience God's greatness, the more we experience holy fear. What steps can you take today to increase your understanding of God's greatness?

CONNECT & DISCUSS

Take time today to connect with a group member and talk about some of the insights from this first session. Use any of these prompts to help guide your discussion.

What is one misperception that you had about the fear of the Lord?

How has practicing the fear of the Lord this week drawn you closer to Him?

What is an area of your life in which you need God's wisdom and knowledge?

What are some of the ways that you want to mature in your relationship with God?

What is something you uncovered this week that made you feel convicted?

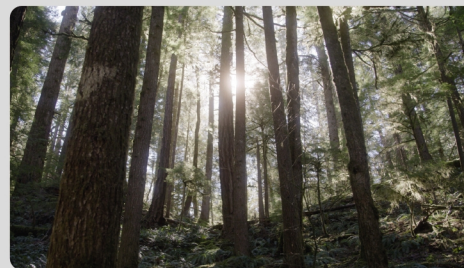
What else do you hope to gain as you go through this study?

CATCH UP & READ AHEAD

Use this time to go back and complete any of the study and reflection questions from previous days that you weren't able to finish. Make a note below of any revelations you've had and reflect on any growth or personal insights you've gained.

Read chapters 8-14 in *The Awe of God* before the next group session. Use the space below to make note of anything that stands out to you or encourages you.

Is the **desire** of your heart to be close to God?



Do you long for an intimate relationship with your Creator but He seems elusive? Perhaps it is because something essential is missing in your life—the *fear of the Lord*. Don't let this frighten you. Fearing God is very different than being afraid of God. It's the key to everything. Holy Fear is not a topic you'll hear much about these days, but if you want to build a faith that stands strong through troubled times, you cannot afford to ignore it.

In this six-session video Bible study, bestselling author John Bevere explores more than forty promises in Scripture given to those who embrace holy fear—rewards such as holiness, wisdom, eternal legacy, confidence, fearlessness, happiness, and security. He invites you to take a fresh look at what it means to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. And he shows how approaching God in this way allows you to discover the deeper relationship with the Lord that your soul longs for and that He desires to have with you.

This study guide includes:

- Individual access to six streaming video sessions
- A how to use this guide section
- Video notes and a comprehensive structure for group discussion time
- Personal study for deeper reflection between sessions

Streaming Video Access Code Included*
WATCH ON ANY DEVICE

DVD also available, sold separately.



Sessions and video run times:

1. Holy Awe (20:30)
2. Revealed as We Are (20:00)
3. Irresistible Holiness (20:30)
4. God's Word (20:00)
5. Intimacy with God (20:30)
6. The Treasure's Benefits (21:00)

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