Can Fear Be Healthy?

Jeremiah 5:22

"Stay away from the air compressor. It's dangerous."

Four-year-old Jason had heard his grandfather's warning countless times. But the compressor was so interesting. The loud, spinning belt and pulley especially intrigued him. Finally, the temptation became too great and, while Grandpa was looking away, Jason grabbed at the spinning belt.

A second later, Grandpa was startled by Jason's terrified scream. His hand had been ripped through the pulley. As blood poured from his fingers, Grandpa gently but quickly picked him up and rushed him to the ER. Two hours and several stitches later, Jason understood his grandfather's wisdom in a way he'd never forget. While the compressor itself wasn't something to be afraid of, he still needed to fear and respect what it could do if he didn't follow instructions.

Jason's story is a good reminder that there is such a thing as healthy fear, especially when it comes to our relationship with God. Listen to the words of the prophet Jeremiah:

"Should you not fear me," declares the Lord.
"Should you not tremble in my presence?"

We must never forget that God is all-loving and filled with compassion and mercy for us. Yet He still calls us to fear Him, and for good reason. God isn't telling to dread Him, or avoid Him like we'd keep our distance from something dangerous. Rather, He instructs us to remember who He is: the all-powerful Creator of the universe. He has the power and the desire to save us, but He also has power to judge and punish if we choose to ignore His plan for our lives. The right choice is to respect Him for who He is, and respond by walking with Him all the days of our lives. That's a decision we never need to fear.

What is the difference between a healthy fear of God and a dreadful fear of something that's bad or dangerous for us?

What are some practical ways your life can reflect a healthy fear of God?

nothing's too hard
for God