

Humility Vs. Pride

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Preacher: Jesse Kincer

[0:00] The announcements for now, we're gonna kick off, we're gonna begin our sermon today and! it's the final one in Proverbs. So Proverbs has been very, very good to us. Very challenging,! I'm sure I know for me it's been very challenging. Proverbs is like, I've come to really enjoy it. I think I've underappreciated Proverbs most of my Christian walk. And what I'm saying is like Proverbs isn't like shallow theology. Proverbs is actually theology lived out. And what undergirds everything that Proverbs calls us to, to walk in the way of wisdom, is actually undergirded by the majesty, the beauty, the holiness, the grandeur, the grace, and the mercy that God has for us to walk in his redemptive purposes. Today we're gonna talk about humility and pride. Fasten your seat belts. Like, I'm like, I'm writing this sermon and I'm just like, oh my goodness, I'm being challenged here. God was convicting me a lot this week. But you know what? When God convicts, he always does it for a good reason. And so just open your hearts, come with humility, all right? Instead of pride. But humility versus pride. Proverbs, how it presents humility and pride, is as opposing forces, in one sense, opposing forces that have radically different outcomes. Proverbs supplies all the reasons and warnings to turn from pride. Bad things happen if you stay in pride. And to turn to the path of humility. It says to us, pride leads to our downfall. And pride, when we are proud, it not only hurts us, it hurts those around us. That's typically what happens. Whereas humility, what it tends to lead to, it tends to lead to honor for ourselves, and it leads to God's favor. You know, there's that famous verse that we know, that many of us know, that if you grew up in church, God resists the proud, but gives to the humble. Yeah, that's right. Okay. So before we jump into Proverbs, it's kind of like a biblical theology of humility and pride. And if you consider all the story of the

Bible, which is God's great arc of redemption, purpose, and plan, the archetype of humility is Jesus. He is the perfect person when we look at what humility looks like and how we're intended to walk in humility. He came as the suffering servant. He humbled himself. He made himself of low estate, like lower than the angels that were in heaven. He became like one of us in every way. He put on our, he chose to put on our weakness and our flesh. And he walked around and lived that way, which led to ultimately his sacrifice of his own choosing for us. But through that, he was exalted, right, to the throne that is over all thrones. He's the king of kings and the Lord of lords. So Jesus is the archetype of humility. The archetype of pride is Satan or Lucifer, one of the angels that God had created, but at some point thought to himself, I am equal with God. And that pride led to his great downfall.

And yet, here's what's interesting. In Satan's downfall, he has never showed remorse or has admitted his error. He still thinks he's okay. And that's the danger of pride, friends, is that it will lead you into a place where you are so blind that you begin to believe that you are rightly discerning what ought to be. And that is where it leads into what the Bible warns about. We call evil good and good evil. And when you're at that place, you are very blind. And it's just like, oh, it's a tough place to be. Spiritually, it's darkness. It's blindness. And unless you and I turn from the path of humility, that trajectory of pride is going to calcify in our hearts to where it will become so unrigid and hard and unchanging, where we are so arrogant and justified in ourselves, just as Satan is in himself. That's the great concern. That's the great warning that pride has for you and me. So we need to take this seriously. So in our sermon today, we're going to consider how Proverbs, how it defines humility and pride, how it shows up in our lives and where it leads to. So let's first look at how the Bible, how Proverbs defines humility and pride. And what it uses is several words, several words for humility, several words for pride, and it helps us shape our understanding. And what's funny is, is when you put these words side by side together, what you get and what you notice is that pride and humility by like what Proverbs is doing, what wisdom is doing, is saying pride and humility are two opposite trajectories, directions of the heart, up and down. The words for humble mean prostration,

which means like to prostrate yourself is to bow yourself down, your body down in another's presence.

What you're saying is you, I'm recognizing that you are greater than I. You know, back in the 90s, we had, not Bill and Ted, who was Mike, it was Mike Myers, we're not worthy. What was that? What's, what was that one? It's probably not even worth knowing, so don't worry about it. But as a whole, we're not worthy. We're, you know, it's this bowing down, you know, we're not worthy. The prostration thing.

[5:12] Another word, it means to be pressed down, to be made low. And also, it means to have self-imposed condescension. Not, you're not condescending down to look upon others in a condescending way, you're looking on yourself with condescension. Or to look at yourself and self-impose modesty. So those are the, those are the words for humility, right? And it's always a downward direction. But the words for pride are translated as loftiness, height, majesty, and exaltation. Humility is the downward trajectory of the heart. Pride is the upward trajectory of the heart. And the wisdom of Proverbs is calling us to stop and consider before our every word or action or thought is to ask yourself, is this taking me up or is this taking me down?

And here's the beautiful mystery God has woven into his way of wisdom. The ancient world, that time that Proverbs was written and preceding that, everything, everything pushed towards thinking about up is the way to go. The ancient world worshiped their deities on the high places. Even for Israel, the tabernacle and the temple, they were put on mountains. They were put in a high place. You're supposed to go up to the place where the gods live. That's what you're supposed to do. The pathway to God, the pathway to success is always up, which makes sense to our minds. Greatness in the mind of humankind for all of history has always been one direction up. We climb the corporate ladder today, don't we? Up to success. Stocks climbing up into the right are where we want them to be going? Because if they're doing that, it's making us wealthy. Where's the penthouse suite where only the rich and powerful can afford to live? It's at the very top. See, we have this sense in ourselves that God's, he's up there. And so to find him, to connect with him, to become more divine, to become more God-like, up seems like the right way to go, the right way to be heading. But we have to remember for you and me, our natural inclinations there are disoriented and corrupted and confused because of sin. Like we can't trust our instincts. Remember the Tower of Babel story? The Tower of Babel story is a bunch of people get together and they're like, you know what? We're going to build this tower up to where God is. We're going to achieve this thing ourselves because going up is the place to be.

Going up is more important. And actually, they were so wrong-minded. When you compare that with with Jacob's ladder and him coming down and Jesus even coming and saying to you, I think it was Nathaniel, it's like, hey, what you're saying is like, I'm coming to meet you. You can't rise up to me. I got to come down to meet you. But our instincts are always wrong that way. Which is why the Bible has to be our authority and not our hearts. It has to instruct us. And wisdom gives us this paradoxical spiritual law. Going up will take you down and going down will take you up.

That's what wisdom says. Going up will take you down. Going down will take you up. Wisdom asks you and me, which direction are you living right now? Are you going up or are you going down? And Proverbs gives us some ways to test that by considering the actions we take, the thoughts we have, our posture, our desires, all which flow from our heart. And so let's look at how pride and humility show up in our lives. How pride shows up. Number one, I'm better than you and one day you'll get it.

[8:51] All right? Proverbs describes the proud as having haughty eyes. And that's not just like a bad mascara job. Proverbs 21.4 says this, haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin.

Proverbs 6.16-17 says, there are six things that the Lord hates. Seven that are an abomination to him. All right? I'm like, already I'm like, okay, I better take these seriously, right? What's number one? Haughty eyes. There's some other stuff in there like murder, different things like that. So that's a pretty big deal. But what are haughty eyes exactly? Haughty eyes is a way of looking at yourself with rose-colored glasses. I'm great. I'm wonderful. I'm popular. Everyone loves me, or at least they should.

My ideas are the best. My opinions are always right. I deserve all the good things to come my way. But here's the thing. It starts with that, but there's another like devious side to thinking that way is that you can't hold that view of yourself very long without looking at others with critique and

judgment.

Because if I'm great, I'm wonderful, ultimately what it kind of softly says is I'm better than you. If you only knew what I knew, if you only had my level of knowledge and understanding, you can't be right when it doesn't agree with me.

You aren't more deserving than I am. And who are you to stand against me? These are all the parts of haughty eyes towards others.

[10:30] When you have haughty eyes, you have a high view of yourself while you're looking down on everyone else. In its most insidious form, it looks at people with contempt, feeling very justified in doing so.

Having haughty eyes is very different from being a confident person. There's a difference there. A confident person, they can be confident in the things they know and who they are, but you know what? They can also admit they're wrong and own up to mistakes.

They're okay with that. A haughty person cannot do that. They work very hard to protect a false image that they are trying to project. And that's how pride shows up. Second way, I really am this amazing.

Trust what I'm letting you see. Enter social media. The greatest platform in history for anyone to be able to project a false image, a false persona.

Our public persona, even beyond social media. How we walk into work, how we walk into church, how we walk into our community groups.

[11:32] Oftentimes, we put forward the best version of ourselves. But that version is very inconsistent with our private life and what lurks in the shadowlands of our hearts.

Proverbs 26, 23 says, Like the glaze covering an earthen vessel are fervent lips with an evil heart.

That's basically like, don't put lipstick on a pig.

What does it mean, fervent lips? To be fervent means to hotly pursue. That's that Hebrew word there.

It's like, you get the idea of a bloodhound. You know a bloodhound, a dog? When they get a scent and you let them go, they will run themselves to death if they're not able to catch that thing.

When they're on the scent, they will run themselves literally to the point of exhaustion that they will fall over and die. That's a bloodhound. The haughty eyes, they have these fervent lips. They run themselves ragged to convince you of their false projection, to convince you of the false persona that they put forward.

[12:39] And they will do it with a passion that seems so sincere. Here's what we have to watch out for. Don't mistake someone's intensity for authenticity.

It's very different. Those are two different things. Someone can be very intense and yet at the same time very insincere. Very false. When you try to get past the veneer of the haughty person, what they do is they deflect and protect because they have this false image that they need to hold up. If you try to reprove a haughty person and do it in love even, with kindness, they can only receive it as an attack on themselves. That's why the proud get stuck in their spiritual maturity.

They can't progress because they always go into defense and self-protection mode and excuse making. And they do that very well and very quickly. I just want to say, this is reading my mail. When I was writing this, I was like, I don't like what I'm writing here, Holy Spirit. Like, you're putting this like, why are you saying this? Why are you making me say this? Just as recently as of this week, I've had to recognize that some of this is in me still.

[13:51] It got pointed out. So why do people like me do that? Because we see life in terms of winning and losing. That's how we approach everything. That's how pride shows up, number three.

I need to win because of course I'm right. All right? Anyone want to testify to that? Pride stunts our growth and creates strife because it looks at everything from the perspective of, am I winning or am I losing?

And we justify that approach because we know we are the right one. We know we are in the right and right should always win at all costs. And often what that means is we ditch patience, mercy, grace, and kindness and we approach our differences with other people already convinced in ourselves that of course we're right, we are right.

And so what we are, we go into our differences not to hear someone else out. We close our ears to them. We're not able to hear them. We're not able to honor where they might be coming from. We are not able to learn from them.

When you consider how pride shows up, it's no surprise that it ends badly for us. Proverbs 11, two says, when pride comes, then comes disgrace. But with the humble there is wisdom.

[15:05] Proverbs 18, 12, before destruction, a man's heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor. The arrogance and obstinance of our pride loses the favor of people and it loses the favor of God.

The proud find themselves isolated in ivory towers of self-righteousness and it's a great price to pay, but you know what? The proud will pay it because they are convinced up in their ivory tower that you know what?

This is where everyone else wants to be. Here's the bad news. You and I, we're all on the proud spectrum, friends. Pride shows up in these ways that we just spoke about to various degrees in our lives.

It just does. We gotta own that. Here's the good news. Wisdom, Jesus is always calling our proud hearts down into the way of humility if we're willing to listen.

So, let's open our hearts. Let's hear the way of humility that God has on offer for us right now. How humility shows up. Number one, it moves lower to bless others.

[16:15] Where the proud are preoccupied with being better than everyone else, the humble are preoccupied with blessing people, blessing others. Proverbs 11.25 says, whoever brings blessing will be enriched and the one who waters himself will be watered.

It's the very thing Jesus came to do. It's how he lived his life. He lowered himself to lift us up out of the pit. He came to serve, not to be served, he said.

And he calls his disciples to follow him, to live in this same way. Humble yourselves. Serve. Here's the thing. As disciples of Jesus, we should love to serve.

Why? Because serving is loving. And serving is spiritual warfare against the lie that I am better.

Serving, it goes a long way to fight back against that lie of the heart that I'm better, that pride wants to stoke within us.

But here's another way of fighting back against that, that humility calls us into. Walk in the light.

Here's how humility shows up. Number two, humility leads us to confess our flaws and our faults.

[17:25] Confesses flaws and faults. We are not made to keep secrets. We aren't. You guys may have heard of this book, The Body Keeps the Score.

So the author wrote this. As long as you keep secrets and suppress information, you are fundamentally at war with yourself. The critical issue is allowing yourself to know what you know.

And that takes an enormous amount of courage. Walking in the light. Step out of the darkness.

Look at yourself in the mirror. Flip the lights on. Really see what's going on. In an article for Psychology Today, Charlie Bloom wrote this.

The article was titled Keeping Secrets is Bad for Your Health. When the commitment to conceal converts to a commitment to reveal, the disclosure releases a great deal of stress that comes from the attempt to suppress memories and emotions.

The talking cure helps us make sense of what we have been experiencing no matter what the intense emotions can be, including but not limited to guilt, shame, fear, sadness, depression, grief, feeling disoriented, abnormal, or crazy.

[18:37] These feelings can actually lighten when you bring them into the light. That agrees with the Bible, friends. Science always seems to be catching up with what's in God's word.

Proverbs 28, 13 says, Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper. But he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. When we don't face our flaws and we choose to keep them in the shadowlands of our hearts, we build and we hold stress, anxiety in the body.

That's why sin is called a burden. We start to feel that weight. You know, we think of sin as only a soul disease, but not so according to the Bible and modern science.

Again, God created us as integrated people. We're soul and body, and those are more intertwined than we tend to realize. Confession brings healing. Confession brings healing.

God made us to walk in the light. Confession is choosing to bring our failures and flaws, sins, the sense of what we feel of shame and guilt that brings it into the light because what remains hidden can't be healed according to the Bible and all that the Bible shouts from Genesis to Revelation.

[19:56] Jesus, he has the power to heal any wound we carry in our hearts, but he says, you got to confess it and you got to repent for those things for me to get in there.

You got to bring things into the light that are hidden in the darkness so I can get my grace around those things and my mercy around those things and you could experience the redemptive healing that I have for you.

Bring it into the light, Jesus says. Bring it to me. And that requires some courage, friends. That requires some real, real courage because it will expose things that tear down the false image that we project to everyone else.

To confess is to risk losing face. It's to risk losing people's praise. It's risking having the upper hand that you enjoy.

It's so nice being right all the time, isn't it? But here's the thing. Those who confess and forsake their sins need mercy and they receive mercy.

[21:00] And I just want to say this to the proud. Mercy is anathema because mercy is only for those people who are wrong. And so the proud, they work hard to make sure everything in their life is beyond scrutiny.

I'm going to have the right world view. I'm going to have the right facts to win every argument. The right way to be a spouse or a parent and it's going to be so perfect. My kids are only ever going to rise up and call me blessed and if they ever say that they were disappointed in me, I'm going to have a sweet answer for them.

Yeah, but, yeah, but, yeah, but, yeah, but, you don't know the right way to do the job that you're doing. And these, what we do when we are proud, we work so flippin' hard to create these security structures around us that we are so beyond any accusation and so beyond anybody coming and saying, hey, Jesse, you know what?

You're kind of blowing it as a dad here. Jesse, you know what? You're kind of, you're kind of letting people down as a pastor here.

And if you, if you live in a way that no one is, I can't, I can't handle that kind of accusation, you're going to have to live life in a way that is going to crush you. Because when you build your false security structures and think they are about as impressive and impenetrable as the walls of Jericho, you don't realize what you are doing is that you are saying, I never need to be an object of mercy.

[22:44] Until you resign that you fall short and need mercy, you're going to over-function, you're going to over-commit, you're going to wear yourself ragged, so that no one can ever accuse you of anything. You'll be hypersensitive to anybody who challenged those places that you build your walls around.

Mm, mm, mm. What happens from that place? You get more tired, you get more convinced you're right, and distance begins to grow between you and any kind of real intimacy with people.

Confession, friends, is a powerful weapon. It is such a powerful weapon. It is a gift from God. Use it. And if you find it difficult to confess, then perhaps what is chained, what has you chained is believing everything comes down to winning or losing, like what we talked about with pride.

And you have to push back on that, and here's humility's approach to push back on that. Here's how humility shows up, is three, believing growing is better than winning. Growing is better than winning.

Pride is always gonna be committed to winning, to being right. Humility is committed to growing. Spiritual maturity. Where confession brings things into the light to reveal what is true about us, repentance is the next step that we have to take in response to that.

[24:09] It's our willingness to change in order to grow. Proverbs 15, 31-32 says, The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise. But whoever ignores instruction despises himself.

But he who listens to reproof gains intelligence. We have to be teachable. The teachable will come to learn that confession and repentance are gifts to be treasured and enjoyed and used.

The teachable will become comfortable with being objects of grace and mercy. for just like, yes, that is who I am. That is what I need. Because when you're there in that space of being comfortable with that, you start to realize that like, hey, I'm a messed up person.

If you want to gauge how teachable you are, try this out and notice how much anxiety you feel at the prospect of asking someone close to you this question. Where can I grow as a spouse?

if you're talking to your spouse or a friend or a disciple of Jesus or maybe a parent or whatever it may be. Ask someone. It's a great question over family dinner time or on a date night or just hanging out with friends.

[25:28] But I dare you to ask that this week and just listen. Don't defend. Don't get into like, whoa, whoa, you just don't understand. Just like, listen. Listen what comes your way. Take it. Receive it and process it with God.

Notice how you feel before and after that. That shows you how teachable your heart is. And as scary as that may be, the teachable live more free, more less stressed, less anxious, less judgmental, less self-righteous because they learned it isn't the proud who earn favor and honor with God and man.

It's actually the humble and the lowly. Proverbs 3, 33 says, the Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked but he blesses the dwelling of the righteous towards the scorners. He is scornful but to the humble he gives favor.

The wise will inherit honor but fools get disgrace. So as we look to respond, I hope you're seeing from what Proverbs has given us that humility is so much better for you in this life.

It is. Going down is way better than going up but even more so for the life that is after this life and that life after this life is never gonna end.

[26:43] The Bible says the wages of sin is death. Quite possibly that is a forever life of being given over to our pride without any constraint. Like right now we live in a world where like, yeah, we're sinful but we're not sinful to the uttermost.

There's a common grace that God keeps us from going buck wild in our sin and we should be thankful for that. Even those who don't recognize God, he is putting us on a leash to constrain us to a degree and I think the ultimate judgment when we think about fire and outer darkness, like those are images Jesus was trying to convey a reality that we just, how do you explain hell to people who have no idea what hell is?

It's a place absent of mercy and grace and you know what? It's a place where you wouldn't want them anyway because you're so proud to the uttermost. It's a place where we become disintegrated as people, right?

Our souls become disintegrated like pride does to our soul what fire does to a log, right? It disintegrates it. It uncreates it and in that place if we don't turn from our pride, if we don't take what God offers to us in the way of humility, the trajectory of our life will continue on in that way forever and ever and ever.

It is, and it's being convinced in that place of I don't need grace and mercy, I don't need anybody helping me that there is nothing to repent of or turn from because you know what?

[28:14] I'm right. It's the ultimate place of spiritual blindness, outer darkness, life without God. So don't, friends, don't let that be your trajectory now and turn from it.

Choose the path of humility and you know what? That starts with faith in Jesus and that faith in Jesus begins with confession and repentance and it comes from the Holy Spirit coming and putting light into our hearts where we begin to see, oh shoot, I didn't know that was there.

Oh my goodness, in the light of God's holiness, I didn't realize these sinful things were lurking in my heart. I was really okay with them but before the presence of a holy God, oh my goodness, I am in huge trouble.

But you know what Jesus offers to you is confession and repentance and he says, you know what? I paid for all of that. I paid for all of those ways of pride that are in you that you are seeing now.

My blood covers those things. I died and sacrificed myself. Put your faith in me. And that's not just for a one-off moment and I'm good to go for the rest of my life. Martin Luther said, fish don't fly, birds fly, fish swim, Christians repent.

[29:29] We live a life of constant confession and repentance. It starts that way, it continues that way. It is the life of humility. It's what living in the light means. That we continue and always forever see ourselves as the object of God's mercy and grace because that is who we truly are.

And when we do that and we see others that way too, it becomes so natural to live out the way of humility of going down, of serving and blessing others and not living for ourselves.

Friends, the paradox of the way of Jesus is that as we humble ourselves, as we follow him into the way down and we go down, that's where Jesus is at. The higher that we rise into the fullness of life and joy and honor and favor with God and man.

Which way will you choose today? As the band comes up and we respond in a moment, we're gonna take communion but I just wanna offer to you today, if you're here, you're not a follower of Jesus.

Maybe anybody listening to this later on in the week or some other time, if you are listening to this, you're not a follower of Jesus, there has been a very clear display of God's warning to those who walk in pride and choose to turn and repent and it's not a good place, it's not a good trajectory and Jesus is offering to you today the way of salvation.

[30:47] Maybe you didn't know that or maybe you heard it a thousand times before but Jesus says, come to me, come to me in faith, trust in me, put your faith in what I have done, the blood that I shed for every sin of pride, every wayward way that you have walked and misstepped, bring that to me and lay it at my feet, I will cover it.

come and put your faith in me and follow my way, my way into humility, my way into constantly going down to go up and if you're already a follower of Jesus, there's a good, sorry, for those that are in that place that I just spoke to you, if you're there, there's gonna be a prayer on the screen for you to pray.

If you're already a follower of Jesus, as we prepare ourselves to take communion, we are coming to what reminds us of how low Jesus got. His most exalted place on this earth was on a cross and it was a place of utter humility.

Like even His going up was going down. His body broken for you and for me. His blood shed for you and for me because not only are we, we are not hopeless objects of grace and mercy, we have the most hope as objects of His grace and mercy because you know what?

He has done it. He said it is finished. He offered a sacrifice once for all for you and for me. And so we come to the communion table as objects of mercy saying, Jesus, thank you that you say, come to me to eat and drink of this freely.

[32:17] And the only thing that requires of us to come is faith in Him. That is it. So we get to come in our wonderful humility bowing down, we're not worthy to the one who is worthy, who has qualified us to be sons and daughters of the Father.

It's a call and a reminder to say, you know what? I'm a disciple of Jesus and as I drink and eat of His humility, I am declaring to all the other disciples in this room that I am continuing to follow the way down, to serve, to love, to bless, to follow Jesus.

Pray with me. Lord, we come to you right now. Jesus, we are so amazed at your gospel of truth. Lord, it confounds the proud.

It makes no sense to the proud. It makes no sense to those who say, no, no, no, this is the way the world works, but you say, no, there's a way in which you do not know and I know and I'm calling you into it.

Lord, call us, you're calling us into the way of humility right now, but you're calling us into the way of humility every single day hereafter and may we heed that call.

[33:34] Kill our pride in us. Continue to kill our pride in us. We pray that in your name. Amen. You can continue to respond prayerfully in your seats if you want, but whenever you're ready to come to the communion table, if you're a follower of Jesus, there are communion tables at the corners of the seating areas that you can get to.

You go to the one nearest you. Grab the cup and the bread and you can take it when you're back at your seat. Thank you.