

Proverbs

“Pride and Humility”

Selected Proverbs

Delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic via Livestream
at Central Baptist Church on March 14, 2021

INTRODUCTION

- **(SHOW SLIDE 1)** We are doing a series through the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is all about wisdom. Wisdom is the skill of navigating the complexities of life so that things go well and so that you don't wreck your life.
 - What we have been seeing is that Proverbs does not fit so well with our how-to oriented culture. We want techniques. We want methods. We want action plans.
 - Yet, Proverbs says that becoming wise is not so much about learning the right techniques as it is about becoming the right kind of person.
- This makes perfect sense because life is very complex. You can't make a book of answers for what to do in each and every situation you face in life because that book would have to be billions of pages long. Rather, Proverbs says that wise people know how to read each and every new situation and act rightly in it.
 - So that is why becoming wise has a lot to do with character. Wise people are patient, and thus avoid wrecking their lives with anger. Wise people are thankful and content, and thus avoid ruining their lives with bitter envy.
 - So if you want to be able to make wise decisions in life then the key is becoming the right kind of person.
- Today we come to look at the one character trait that is the *most* important in becoming a wise person, and that is humility.
 - Everywhere the book of Proverbs says that it is our pride that makes us foolish. We think too highly of ourselves and our own opinions. As a result, we make foolish decisions that ruin our lives and the lives of others. That is why humility is the greatest of all character traits and the key to becoming wise. For instance, Proverbs 16:19 says. **(SHOW SLIDE 2)**
 - **It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud.**
 - Humility is better than having mansions, yachts, and partying with the proud people of the world.
- **(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 3)** There was once a man who was famous for his abilities in public speaking. Someone asked him, *“what is the first rule for being a great public speaker?”* He answered, *“delivery.”* It's how you say what you want to say, so that it is not boring but engages people to listen. *“What is the second rule?”* To everyone's surprise he answered, *“Delivery.”* *“What is the third rule?”* *“Delivery.”*
 - Reflecting on this, one of the greatest early church leaders named Augustine said, *“in the same way, if you ask me what are the great principles of*

Christianity, I will answer, first, 'humility,' second, 'humility,' and third, 'humility.'"¹

- So today I aim to help us become wise by helping us to put the pride in our lives to death and to cultivate a life of humility. Let's do this in three parts.
 - First, *why you should kill pride in your life.* Second, *how to cultivate humility over your lifetime.* Third, *how to cultivate humility on a daily basis.*

WHY YOU SHOULD KILL PRIDE IN YOUR LIFE

- So in the first place let me show you **(SHOW SLIDE 4)** **why you should kill pride in your life.**
 - Notice I did not say, "be careful of pride in your life." I chose the word "kill." I chose this word because, as we will see, pride is your greatest enemy. This is so serious because, as we will see, pride can ultimately cause you to end up in hell.
 - That is the why the apostle Paul says that by the Spirit we are to put to death things like pride in our lives. Proverbs gives at least two reasons why you should kill pride in your life.
- **First, (SHOW SLIDE 5) God hates pride.** Look at Proverbs 6:16. **(SHOW SLIDE 6)**
 - **¹⁶There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him:**
¹⁷haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
and hands that shed innocent blood . . .
 - He goes on to give all seven but I want us to notice that at the very top of the list is "haughty eyes." Proud eyes. Eyes that reveal a person thinks quite highly of themselves.
- Or listen to Proverbs 8:13 says this: **(SHOW SLIDE 7)**
 - **The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil.**
Pride and arrogance and the way of evil
and perverted speech I hate.
- If that is not clear enough, Proverbs 16:5 says this: **(SHOW SLIDE 8)**
 - **Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD;**
be assured, he will not go unpunished.
 - In the New Testament, James and Peter both quote Proverbs 3:34 when they write, **(SHOW SLIDE 9) "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6; 1 Pt 5:5)**
- **(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 10)** Why kill pride? Because God hates it. It makes God your enemy. God himself will oppose you.
 - We're not talking here about the good pride that you take in a job well done. We are talking about pride that makes self the centre.
 - It is pride that causes us to ignore our Creator and live each as if he does not even exist. It is pride that says, "I will live life how I want to live my life." It is pride that boasts about what we have accomplished as if we did it all on our own. Pride exalts the self and lives for the self.

¹ Cited in John Calvin, "Institutes of the Christian Religion", 2.2.11.

- If pride wasn't so tragic, it would be funny. How can any of us be filled with pride? We are little creatures who can't even live without breathing every few seconds. We are fragile beings who have to spend 1/3 of our lives sleeping because we are too weak to stay awake even 24hrs. We can't even go more than a few days without water or we will die.
 - And yet we boast of how strong we are. We make ourselves the sun and think everyone else should orbit around our needs and wants. And most amazing of all, we shake our puny little fists in God's face and say, **"I will live my life how I want to. I will decide what is right and wrong for myself."**
 - Oh what arrogance that we, mere creatures, would think that we can be our own gods. It was pride that made the devil the devil. Pride is the very definition of an anti-God state of mind for it exalts self to the place of God.
- So, the first reason you should kill pride in your life is because God hates it.

PRIDE WILL DESTROY YOU

- **(SHOW SLIDE 11)** Pride will destroy you.
 - Here is probably the one verse in Proverbs that most people know. Proverbs 16:18 says, **(SHOW SLIDE 12)**
 - **Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.**
- In our pride we refuse to listen to others who try to correct us and so we lack wisdom. We think we see our lives and choices clearly, but pride blinds us and we end up falling.
 - We had married friend who started hanging out with another man. She insisted it was just friendship but they were texting, talking, and hanging out all the time. A bunch of people tried to talk to her to say she should not do this as it would lead to an affair. In her pride she refused to listen and argued that it was no big deal. It did end up in an affair. Pride goes before destruction.
- **(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 13)** This is true in our personal lives and it is true in relationship to God.
 - The proud person sees no need for God. The proud person makes fun of the idea of sin and sees no need for Jesus to save them. It is pride that leads people to hell.
- You see this is why true Christianity is both hard *and* easy to accept. Genuine Christianity is *hard* for proud people to accept because they choke on the idea that they are sinners and under judgement for their sins. They choke on the idea that someone must rescue them - that their sins need atoning for through Jesus' death of the cross. But this is simply pride. Proud people always find it impossible to kneel and admit their sin and need for mercy. If there is one sign above the gates of hell it will read, **"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."**
 - But true Christianity is also extremely *easy* to accept. Genuine Christianity is *easy* to accept because as soon as you stop justifying yourself and admit that you are sinner, you turn your eyes to God and say, **"Is there any hope for someone like me?"**

- God’s answer is, **“yes! I sent my Son to die for sinners. My offer is that if you will turn away from sin and trust in Jesus you will have your sins totally forgiven. You will escape hell and will be given eternal life with me where there will be joy forever more.”** Then God says to you, **“Would you like to have all this?”** When a person has been humbled that is the easiest answer in the world. It is like asking a starving man if he would like some bread. It is so easy to accept. As Jesus said, **“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”**
- So there are two reasons to kill pride in your life. Kill it because God hates it. And secondly, kill it because it destroys your life.

HOW TO CULTIVATE HUMILITY OVER A LIFETIME

- Alright that’s the negative side about pride. Now let’s turn to talk about the positive side, which is how we can cultivate humility. This is what will make you wise for a humble person admits they can’t see everything clearly, is open to correction, and see their need for God. This is to see life clearly and when you see life clearly you will make much wiser decisions.
 - So how do we cultivate humility? A man named C.J. Mahaney wrote a great little book entitled, **“Humility.”** Here I am borrowing some of his thoughts and adding a bunch of my own.
- So let’s come to the second point now and talk about **(SHOW SLIDE 14) how to cultivate humility over a lifetime.** Let me give you three areas that you can give special focus to over your lifetime.

STUDY THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

- First, **(SHOW SLIDE 15) study the attributes of God.**
 - Remember the key to wisdom is to grow in “the fear of the LORD.” This is also the key to humility. Proverbs is always connecting the fear of the LORD and humility. For instance, Proverbs 25:27 says **(SHOW SLIDE 16)**
 - **The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.**
 - Humility is here stated as almost a synonym for the fear of the LORD. Then Proverbs 15:33 says, **(SHOW SLIDE 17)**
 - **The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor.**
- **(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 18)** Remember that fearing God does not mean being scared of him. It means that who God is influences every part of your life. What you fear controls you and in this sense we are saying that to fear God means He is the controlling factor in every area of your life. To fear God means you stand in awe of him and so it impacts how you live.
 - So how can you grow in your awe of God? How can you grow in knowing what God is like? Study what God is like, which means studying his attributes.

- This will kill your pride and it will cultivate humility in your heart. Let's do that right now. Let's do a quick 2 min study of the fact that God is self-existent and show how it cultivates humility. Listen to what the late theologian RC Sproul writes:
 - **(SHOW SLIDE 19)** "The grand difference between a human being and a supreme being is precisely this: Apart from God, I cannot exist. Apart from me, God does exist. God does not need me in order for Him to be. This is the difference between what we call a self-existent being and a dependent being. We are dependent. We are fragile. We cannot live without air, without water, without food. No human being has the power of being within himself. . . . We are like flowers that bloom and then wither and fade. This is how we differ from God. God does not wither, God does not fade, God is not fragile."
 - That single attribute humbles us. Study all of God's attributes and each one will do this. **(SHOW SLIDE 20)** One book I would suggest here is J.I. Packer's "Knowing God."

REFLECT ON THE WONDER OF THE CROSS

- Second, **(SHOW SLIDE 21)** reflect on the wonder of the cross.
 - The great preacher Martyn Lloyd Jones wrote, **(SHOW SLIDE 22)** "There is only one thing I know of that crushes me to the ground and humbles me to the dust, and that is to look at the Son of God, and especially contemplate the cross. 'When I survey the wondrous cross/on which the prince of glory died/my richest gain I count but loss/and pour contempt on all my pride'. Nothing else can do it. When I see that I am a sinner . . . that nothing but the Son of God on the cross can save me, I'm humbled to the dust . . . nothing but the cross can give us this spirit of humility."²
 - **(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 23)** Why the cross? Because we all have inflated views of ourselves but when we behold the cross we see Christ suffering brutally suffering. Why? For our sins. This breaks our pride for it shows us how sinful we are. And yet it also cultivates humility for we see that he did it for us. He put our interests above his own and so it changes us to do the same with others.
 - So always reflect on the wonder of the cross.

RECEIVE CORRECTION FROM OTHERS

- Third, **(SHOW SLIDE 24)** receive correction from others.
 - Proverbs 12:15 says, **(SHOW SLIDE 25)**
 - ¹⁵ The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.
 - Proverbs 15:31 says, **(SHOW SLIDE 26)**
 - ³¹ The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise.

² Cited in C.J. Mahaney, *Humility*, 66.

- So cultivating humility means listening well to others because you can learn from them. It also means receiving their correction and constructive criticism.
 - Now of course some people lack tact or just are mean, but I am thinking here of people who love you and offer correction.
 - You can see pride in your heart because when they offer correction you often get your back up or start justifying yourself. You don't usually say, ***"Oh I have not seen that before. Please tell me more."***
- This is vital. You cannot kill pride by yourself. Why do I say that? Listen to this story.
 - ***"As I sat with my family at a local breakfast establishment, I noticed a finely dressed man at an adjacent table. His Armani suit and stiffly pressed shirt coordinated perfectly with a power tie. His wing-tip shoes sparkled from a recent shine, every hair was in place, including his perfectly groomed moustache. The man sat alone eating a bagel as he prepared for a meeting. As he reviewed the papers before him, he appeared nervous, glancing frequently at his Rolex watch. It was obvious he had an important meeting ahead. The man stood up and I watched as he straightened his tie and prepared to leave. Immediately I noticed a blob of cream cheese attached to his finely groomed moustache. He was about to go into the world dressed in his finest with cream cheese on his face. I thought of the business meeting he was about to attend. Who would tell him? Should I? What if no one did?"***³
 - Why receive correction? Because pride deceives us. We who can point out the cream cheese on everyone else's faces are blind to our own cream cheese. Your flaws are obvious to everyone else but you. David Tripp says, **(SHOW SLIDE 27) "My self-perception is about as accurate as a carnival mirror."**⁴
- Try this: sometime this week go to someone you trust and say this: **(SHOW SLIDE 28) "I want to ask you a question and I promise not to get upset by how you answer. Can you clearly define one or two areas where you think I need to grow?"**
 - That reaction you are feeling right now to ignore this suggestion – that's pride. How serious do you want to be about killing pride and cultivating humility?
 - Invite correction and receive it.

DAILY PRACTICES FOR CULTIVATING HUMILITY

- So there are three things to focus on over a lifetime. Let's turn in the last place to talk about **(SHOW SLIDE 29) how to cultivate humility on a daily basis.**
 - This begins right when you wake up in the morning. This is the most decisive moment.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 30) First, begin your day by acknowledging your dependence upon God.**
 - Do not look at your phone first. Rather, begin by posturing yourself before God in a place of need. As soon as you wake up pray, ***"Father, I need you today. I***

³ Ibid. 124.

⁴ Ibid. 127.

am dependent on you for everything. I look to you for help.” Put Proverbs 3:5-6 into practice right away: **(SHOW SLIDE 31)**

- ⁵ **Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.**
- ⁶ **In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.**

- **(SHOW SLIDE 32) Second, begin your day expressing thanks to God.**
 - Michael Ramsey reminds us that, **(SHOW SLIDE 33) “Thankfulness is a soil in which pride does not easily grow.”**⁵ Ungrateful people are arrogant. They think they deserve everything as if the world revolves around them.
 - Thankfulness helps cultivate humility because it makes the heart affirm where all good things come from.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 34) Third, begin your day with spiritual disciplines.**
 - Spiritual disciplines are things such as reading the Bible and prayer. It is because our hearts are proud that we do not do these things but rather start scrolling through our social media or just rush into the day. Why is it pride? Because you are saying, *“I have life figured out. I am self-sufficient.”*
 - But every time you crack open the Bible or physically kneel before God in prayer you are taking a step toward humility because you are saying, *“God, I need you to give me the right heart, to help me live the way you want, to assist me in all things.”*
- **(SHOW SLIDE 35) Fourth, cast your anxieties on God throughout the day.**
 - Peter clearly tells us how we can practically go about humbling ourselves daily. 1 Peter 5:6-7. **(SHOW SLIDE 36) “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.”** How do we do that Peter? **(SHOW SLIDE 37) “Casting all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”**
 - Worrying is actually a form of pride because it is a lack of trust in God. It is trying to be self-sufficient. The good news is that humbling ourselves and casting our cares on him frees us from anxiety.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 38) Fifth, transfer all glory to God at the end of the day.**
 - If you are walking by a pond with a fence around it and suddenly you see a turtle sitting on top of a six-foot-tall fence post, what would think? How in the world did it get there? You would not think, “Oh wow, that turtle learned how to climb!” No, you would know that a turtle can only get to the top of a fence post if someone helped it get there.
 - As you lay down to sleep think of all that God gave you during the day. Pride starts to congratulate self on a job well done. But we cultivate humility by remembering that all have has been given to us and so we should transfer the glory to God.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 39) Finally, receive the gift of sleep.**
 - As you lay exhausted at the end of the day, realize that every day you are being forced to realize that you are not all-powerful, that you cannot keep working,

⁵ Ibid. 70.

that you are weak and must rest. This humbles us when we remember Psalm 121, which says that God ***“will neither slumber nor sleep.”*** Pray something like this:

- ***“Father, thank you for this gift. The fact that I’m so tired is a reminder that I am a creature and only You are the Creator. Only you neither slumber nor sleep, while for me, sleep is something I cannot go without. Thank you for this gracious humbling refreshing gift.”***⁶

CONCLUSION

- **(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 40)** So, there you have it. The key to becoming wise is not techniques or methods. It is becoming the right kind of person. The right kind of person knows what to say and what to do when there is no clear technique.
 - The most important character trait of wise people is humility. So kill pride. Cultivate humility. And you will be a wise person who knows how to live for Christ in the many complex situations that life will bring your way.

⁶ Ibid., 84.