

Proverbs on Pride

PREACH IT, TEACH IT DEVOTIONAL PART FOUR

SCRIPTURE STUDY

Proverbs 15:33; 18:12; 22:4
Proverbs 11:2; 16:18-19; 29:23
Matthew 11:29
James 4:10
Psalm 37:7
Psalm 113:5-9
Psalm 138:6-7
1 Kings 21:18-27
2 Chronicles 12
2 Chronicles 34
Acts 1:8; 8:8-17
Isaiah 56:3-5
Matthew 16:24
Romans 12:3

PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,
Help me to see the beauty of
Christ's condescension and
servanthood. Teach me to model
His character.
Amen



THE ANTIDOTE FOR PRIDE

“...humility comes before honor.” Proverbs 15:33 NIV

“Before his downfall a man’s heart is proud,
but humility comes before honor.” Proverbs 18:12 NIV

“Humility and the fear of the LORD
bring wealth and honor and life.” Proverbs 22:4 NIV

Humility is the essence of Christlike character. Jesus described himself in Matthew 11:29 as “meek and lowly of heart.” The Greek synonyms can also be interpreted as “humble, mild and gentle.” According to Holman’s Bible Dictionary, humility is “...a personal quality in which an individual shows dependence on God and respect for other persons.”

Humility is the antithesis of pride. How do we become humble? By surrendering to the refining work of God in our lives. When we allow God to strip away our stubborn self-dependence, we become pliable in the hands of the Great Potter. God also instructs us to humble *ourselves*. (James 4:10) Every time a person comes into the presence of a holy, glorious God, they are humbled-completely aware of their sinfulness and frailty. God further promises that He will honor those who bow before Him. In Proverbs 22:4, the fear of God is connected to the virtue of humility. Godly fear is a clear recognition of God’s character and will, and a continuous communion with Him.

God's condescension is found throughout the scriptures. In the Old Testament, God is often pictured as a compassionate Father reaching down to aid his suffering children. He is caring and intimately involved in their lives. Read these verses from the Psalms. We see God the Father reaching out to the poor and the needy in the following two Psalms:

“Who is like the Lord our God,
 the **One who sits enthroned on high**,
 who **stoops down** to look
 on the heavens and the earth?
 He **raises the poor from the dust**
 and **lifts the needy from the ash heap**;
 he seats them with princes,
 with the princes of their people.
 He settles the barren woman in her home
 as a happy mother of children.” Psalm 113:5-9 NIV (emphasis added)

“Though the **LORD is on high**,
 he **looks upon the lowly**
 but the proud he knows from afar.
 Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
 you preserve my life;” Psalm 138:6-7 NIV (emphasis added)

- List the actions of God recorded in Psalm 113:5-9. List the verbs in the poem. What do these “action words” tell us about who God is? List the kind acts of God in this passage. Have you experienced God’s kindness in your life? Write down some examples.
- Consider carefully David’s words in Psalm 138:6-7. What are the contrasting words used in these verses? Why would He know the proud from afar? Is it God’s choice to know the proud from afar? How can we push God away by our prideful attitudes and actions?
- Jesus embodied humility and obedience for us. Who are the Christians you know that exemplify humility in their everyday lives. How do they demonstrate this character trait? What are some ways that you can walk in humility today? (confession, worship, lifting others up, etc.)

CALLED TO GODLY HUMILITY

In the Old Testament three kings deserved judgment for their moral depravity and idolatry. Faced with the consequences of their behavior, they repented before God and received a reprieve. God forgave them and the people they governed.

Ahab, King of Israel who ruled in Samaria

Through the prophet Elijah, God told Ahab that he would bring disaster on him and his descendants and “cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel—slave or free.” There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife. He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the LORD drove out before Israel. “When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and went around meekly.” God noticed Ahab being humble and forgave him.

(Quotes from 1 Kings 21:18-27 NIV)

Rehoboam, the King of Judah

Rehoboam and the leaders of Judah were in Jerusalem when the prophet Shemaiah said to them, “This is what the LORD says, ‘You have abandoned me; therefore I now abandon you...’ All of them humbled themselves saying “The LORD is just.” When God saw that they humbled themselves he sent the prophet back to them saying: “Since they have humbled themselves, I will not destroy them but will soon give them deliverance.” (Quotes from 2 Chronicles 12 NIV)

Josiah, King of Judah

During his reign the Book of the Law was found and read before him.

“Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard: Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before me and tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the LORD.’” (Quotes from 2 Chronicles 34 NIV)

- As Christians, we are all influencers. Our lives impact our families, friends, neighbors and co-workers. When we sense the conviction of the Holy Spirit concerning our pride, arrogance, self-reliance or disobedience, we can repent and receive grace to change. List some ways you can help others to see the character of Christ in you.
- Notice what each king did to repent in the above passages. What kind of behaviors and attitudes would that look like today?

SIGNS OF HUMILITY

Humility is total dependence on God. We trust God completely and respond to His Word and to His promptings. When we are sensitive to His leadership, we see open doors in our lives to share His love with others. We also trust Him to use us at the right time in the right way. The humble person patiently waits on the Lord until He says, “Now is the time.”

“Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.” Psalm 37:7 NIV

The person with humility accepts help from others, puts others first, brings out the best in others, accepts God’s timing and God’s leading even when the plan is beyond human understanding.

Philip is a good example of a servant of God who followed God’s leading even when it didn’t make sense to him. In Acts 8:8-17, Philip was preaching to the Samaritans about salvation through Jesus and many were being saved. Peter and John joined Philip testifying and preaching, and after awhile they returned to Jerusalem (Acts 8:25). We would assume at that point Philip would continue in Samaria because God had called him there and *many* were being saved. But God had other plans in mind. In verse 26 we read:

“Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (NIV)

Not only did God remove Philip from an active, thriving ministry, but He sent him alone to a desert road! Sometimes God allows us to minister in unexpected places to unexpected people. That was exactly where God wanted Philip. God knew that traveling on that road was an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official who was in charge of the treasury for the queen. He was reading from the book of Isaiah. God put Philip at the exact place in the road to meet the official. Philip explained the passage and clearly shared the gospel with the curious man. The official received Christ and asked to be baptized in the water along the road. He wasted no time in surrendering to his new Master! (Acts 8:26-39) Ethiopia was located in Africa, south of the Egyptian border. Philip’s divine appointment with the Queen’s treasurer was the beginning of the spread of the gospel “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

- Have you ever experienced God leading you to share your faith with unexpected people in unexpected places? When and where? If you have not had such an opportunity, spend some time praying for God to open your eyes to each opportunity He has for you.

- What would qualities of humility and meekness look like in your life? How would you develop those qualities? Who could you emulate? Spend time each day, laying your life before Jesus, asking Him to make you “meek and lowly of heart.”

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Proverbs 11:2, 16:18-19, 29:23; Isaiah 56:3-5; Matthew 16:24; Romans 12:3