

# Pride

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[ 0 : 00 ] So, we are in the summertime working through a series on the book of Proverbs where we are looking at the most common vices and virtues that we see across the book of Proverbs.

And the reason we're doing this is because the mark of a heart that's been changed by the grace of God is something more than just behavior modification. It's that the grace of the gospel goes all the way down to the bottom, and it starts to work back up through the heart, and we see us putting away the vices that God calls us to leave behind and putting on the virtues that God calls us to.

And today, as you will have noticed from the reading, the most basic—we're dealing with the most basic issue in Proverbs, and that's the problem of pride, which is the most basic problem of the human being itself.

Now, in our late modern world, the 21st century world that we live in, especially in a place like Edinburgh, all of you will know very well that in the public square, pride today is presented as a virtue.

But for thousands and thousands of years, both Christians and non-Christians alike have all said the same thing, and you can know by empirical experience alone that pride is not a virtue, pride is what's wrong, pride is the problem, pride is the fundamental issue with what's wrong with the world.

[ 1 : 17 ] And Proverbs goes so far as to say that pride is in fact the power, it calls it, of destruction. That pride can destroy a life, it can destroy a family, it can destroy a business, it can destroy a society, it can destroy a church, it can get in the bones of a church and destroy a church from the inside out.

And we're going to see the reason for that today is because pride actually, Proverbs teaches, blinds us to what is real. It creates an illusion and a fantasy life, and that's the main idea here in the book of Proverbs.

There's another way that Proverbs also hits modern people like us really hard, and that's, Proverbs teaches that the only people who struggle with pride are people that were born of a woman.

Okay, so now that's a large group, the people born of a woman. It says in other words that there is no space at all for, even asking the question, do I struggle with pride?

The question is only were you ever born? And if you were, then pride is your issue. That's what Proverbs says. It goes that far that it's a problem for all of us. Charles Spurgeon, this is a paraphrase of what he says about it.

[ 2 : 29 ] Pride is a rich man's problem and the poor man too. Pride spans every socioeconomic status. It spans every culture, every age, and every stage of life.

Pride gets into the bones of every person. Female and female, every age, and Christianity comes today to say that pride destroys and that there's a way out.

There's a path back to reality. And so let's see three things this morning, three questions. What is pride? What is it? The definition will spend most of our time there. What's the opposite of pride?

And then how can we get it? How can we grow? All right, so first, what is it? What's pride? And we'll take a deep dive for a moment into the painful surgery of hearing what Proverbs says about us and who we are.

The term pride in a text like chapter 8 verse 13 says pride is the way of evil. And that word pride there, the most common term that's used across the Old Testament and in Proverbs is actually a metaphor.

[ 3 : 33 ] It's very literally the word height. So it says something like being tall is the way of evil. Now I've believed that for years, for years and years, and I've known that, but I'm here to tell you today that that's what it says.

Now, of course, it's talking about the inside. It's using a metaphor and saying to be tall of heart is the way of evil. And it says basically that pride is when you think you're six foot four on the inside, but you're not even close to that.

That's the way Proverbs talks about pride. And it says that, well, that's the reason I should say that in 2923, for example, and this is very common across Proverbs and the whole Bible, pride, height and heart brings low, but being low and heart will get you, will bring you up, will bring you high.

And so that height metaphor runs throughout the whole Bible all the way into Jesus's mouth and Matthew 23 when he says the exalted in heart will be made low, but the low and heart will be raised up so that height metaphor is the common way the whole Bible really talks about it.

Now, we could stop right there and say that just the way the Bible chooses its metaphor really matters for today because for thousands of years across thousands of civilizations, as I mentioned, it's been common knowledge that pride will bring down an empire.

[ 4 : 57 ] And today in the Western mindset, actually, we're told, we're taught that the reason we have problems in modern society is not because of pride, it's because of a lack of pride.

It's that if you want to fix the problems of the current order, actually you need to have more pride, not less. And so whether you're dealing with a very common broken heart all the way to patterns of criminality, the way that that is often treated in the contemporary world is actually to say, well, you need more self-esteem, you need more pride, you need to think more of yourself, you need to stop listening what other people say about you and know that what you think is all that really matters.

And that's a really attractive model because what it says is that bad deeds don't come from who you are, they don't come from the inside out, they come from a lack of confidence. And so if you can have more confidence, more esteem, then you can put away the bad parts of society.

Now Proverbs comes and says, not only pride is what's fundamentally wrong with us, it also says that it is the natural condition of the human heart from birth.

And let me give you three things that it says more specifically about pride. It says that pride creates in us a heart that is deceived, disordered, and divisive.

[ 6 : 16 ] So the first thing it tells us is we have a heart because of pride that is deceived. One of the most common ways that the Scriptures talk about it in Proverbs is through another metaphor having pride is to be quote, wise in your own eyes.

And that shows up in chapter 3, 5 to 8, really famous passage that we read, trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding. We usually don't go past that part.

The next part says be not wise in your own eyes, meaning the opposite of trusting in the Lord with all your heart is being prideful. Be not wise in your own eyes. And so it casts the language of pride there in a metaphor for vision.

So it's saying not only is pride being tall of heart, but it's a certain way of seeing the world, being wise in your own eyes. In other words, pride is like putting on rose-tinted glasses, goggles, where you see the world in one color.

And that one color that we see the world in according to Proverbs is entitlement. Being wise in your own eyes means wearing the glasses of entitlement and seeing the world in all its ways through that lens.

[ 7 : 24 ] Now the illusion of entitlement says this, I'm my own master. I'm my own master. I'm in charge and I'm a self-made person. And even more specifically than that, especially for today, the illusion of entitlement says, I determined my own identity and all good things that come from me are because of me, or come for me, I should say.

All good things that happen to me are because of me. I determined my own identity and what's good in my life is because I've made it happen. I've determined it. And that's what Proverbs says is the illusion of entitlement, of being wise in your own eyes.

And that means that we are naturally self-deceived people from the time of our birth. And the truth is this, that both our identity and almost everything that good that happens in our life doesn't really come from us.

Almost everything we have that's good in our life is what we've received. We don't really determine who we are. We don't determine where we were born and when we were born, who our parents are going to be, our socioeconomic status, our race, our gender, none of it.

We don't determine any of it. And the truth is that we're not self-made people, but pride makes us put on these illusory goggles that projects that we're self-made. That's why Paul in 1 Corinthians 4-7 says, what do you have people of God that you did not receive?

[ 8 : 46 ] And so instead, Paul flips it around and says, no, everything you have has been given to you. You're not a self-made person. You've received it. Now the second thing is we move from the eyes, vision down to the heart.

The other way Proverbs talks about pride is it says that we're also disordered. And the way that it gets at that is in a place like chapter 8, verse 13, pride and arrogance are quote, the way of evil.

Now evil in the Bible in the Old Testament is a technical term. It doesn't just mean the worst type of sins you can think about, you can imagine.

Instead what evil means in the Old Testament is taking what God has made, creation order, as we call it, and flipping it upside down, flipping it onside. That's the way of evil.

And so it says that pride is the way of evil. In other words, pride is the great distortion of reality. It takes the order of things as God has put it and flips it on its head, an order that we might be deceived.

[ 9 : 47 ] All right? So in other words, what does it mean? It means it's when the heart says to God, it's when the heart says to God, you might have created me but you don't define me.

I'm going to be my own master. I'm going to be my own God. I'm going to determine who I am and how I'm going to live my life. And that means that pride. That pride before God is the way of evil. It is flipping the order of creation on its head.

Even though God made me, God tells me who I am. God is first, I am second. When I say I'm going to determine who I am, how I live, then that's flipping everything upside down.

It's disordered. Now, the Tower of Babel is the great example of this. In the Bible, you remember in the Tower of Babel story in Genesis 11, humanity wants to build a tower up to the heavens in order to actually displace God and kill God and make God second, not first, but how do they do it?

They have to take all the things that God has given them as a gift in order to build the tower in the first place. They have to use their bodies and their intellectual capacity and their engineering gifts and the bitumen and mortar and all the things that God blessed the world with in order to go up to the heavens and slap God in the face.

[10:58] And that's pride. Like Charles Spurgeon puts it like this, he says, pride, in other words, is like trying to stand on top of bursting bubbles. It's there's no, there's no reality under your feet.

It's illusory. It's flipped the world upside down. It's living in a fantasy world, a disordered fantasy world and a deceived fantasy world. And it's when we say, I'm going to take all the things that God has given me, the gifts of God, and I'm going to do what I want with them.

I'm going to take money, which God has blessed me with, and I'm going to decide where it goes. I'm going to take, I'm going to take my work and my efforts and my success, which God has blessed me with, and I'm going to decide what to do with them.

I'm going to take sex, a gift of God, and I'm going to decide what to do with it. That's pride. It's the disordered reality that we see through when we put on the illusory goggles.

All right. Thirdly and finally here is pride makes us divisive. Verse six, verse 16 to 19, that is the actual seven deadly sins.

[12:00] So you'll hear in popular culture talk about the seven deadly sins that were developed in the Middle Ages, but the Bible doesn't have the pop culture version. It has this version in chapter six, verses 16 to 19.

It says, there are six things the Lord hates, then seven that are an abomination to him. That little literary phrase in Proverbs is important. The commentators will say that whenever you see a, there are six things, no, there are seven things.

Proverbs also does it with three and four. There are three things, no, there are four things. That's a literary device. And what it's doing is it's trying to say that the very first item introduced is the principal sin.

What's wrong? And then items two through six are what flow from the principal sin, but item seven is the great consequence of the sin. So if you look at number one and number seven and six, 16 to 19, number one, haughty eyes.

And haughty eyes is another metaphor in the Bible for pride, and it's the same idea of height. Haughty eyes is the way I took all of my high school pictures with my eyes up and my chin lifted, you know, like this.

[13:11] That's what we all did when we were young, right? That's what haughty eyes means. Haughty eyes, pride, leads all the way to number seven. First number seven, one who sows discord among the brothers.

In other words, pride, one of the great results of pride, the great damage that it does to the world is that it sows discord. It's divisive. And the reason that it's divisive is because pride is fundamentally competitive.

That pride builds competition deep down in our heart where we're always competing with other people. Now, C.S. Lewis has a great section on pride and mere Christianity. And this is what he says about that, pride is by nature competitive.

There's, when we're prideful, he writes, we have no pleasure in having a thing, something, but only in having more of that thing than the next person.

It's not that we're proud of being rich. We're only proud of being more rich than the next person. Our pleasure is not in what we have and what we are, but in what we have and what we are compared to everybody else around us.

[ 14 : 18 ] And so this is the result of pride's divisiveness. Pride's divisiveness steps into every room and sees the world in hierarchies. So we step into every room, every community, every club, every clique, every group, and we compare ourselves with other people.

And we're testing each other, ranking each other in knowledge, beauty, fitness, esteem, popularity, wisdom, maturity, stage of life, and the list goes on and on. And because of that competitiveness, actually pride does something to us that's the opposite of its intention.

It actually makes us really fragile, and it gets our feelings hurt really easily and really often, because as soon as we're in a space where we see people that are greater than us, immediately we're broken by it.

Or if we're, or if we have an inflated sense of self, and then somebody puts healthy criticism into our ear, if we live in the illusion that we are self-made people, we can't hear it.

We can't hear criticism. It crushes us, because we've built our own self. And so to criticize that is to criticize most fundamentally who we are, and so we can't deal with it, and that's what the divisiveness of pride does.

[ 15 : 33 ] That's why the last thing here, one of the words that we read, chapter 3, verse 34, it shows up four times in Proverbs, is pride is described, the prideful person as the scornor, scornful one.

Not really a word that we use very often anymore, but a scornor in Proverbs is a person who is angry because of arrogant competition with other people, who's fundamentally angry.

It's a competitive, prideful person, a scornor. Now, before we move on, I just to much briefer point two and three, I just want to mention this, there is one more thing.

There's one more thing across Proverbs that we do see, and that's fundamental, and that's that Proverbs teaches the outcome of pride is destruction.

So you see this in chapter 11, verse 2, chapter 18, verse 12, that the way of pride leads to destruction. The most famous example of what pride does to us ultimately is the case of Nebuchadnezzar in the Old Testament.

[ 16 : 38 ] Daniel chapter 4, 29 to 33, Nebuchadnezzar, he is the most powerful man, perhaps so far in human history, but definitely at the time that he lived.

He steps out onto his balcony, he looks over Babylon, his great empire, and he says, look what I've built. I'm a self-made man. I'm the king of all the earth.

And God immediately strikes his mind to where he becomes like a beast. He eats of the grass like cattle. He acts like a bird.

He loses himself. And you see, what the Bible is trying to point us to is that the ultimate consequence of pride. You see, pride before God is a sin against creation order itself.

It's flipping the world upside down, and that means it's saying to God, I don't want to be what you've called me to be. I don't want to be your image. I want to be more than that.

[ 17 : 35 ] I want to be God. I want to be you. I want to take your place. And so God, when Nebuchadnezzar stands up and says, I don't want to be the image of God, that's just human. I want to be more than that.

I want to be God himself. Nebuchadnezzar says, I'll give you what God says to Nebuchadnezzar. I'll give you what you want. And so God actually takes away his image from Nebuchadnezzar, and he becomes like a beast.

And you see, there's a close connection between the path of pride and beastliness and our humanity. It makes us almost less than human. It takes away what we really are, because what we really are is the image of God, not God himself.

And so that's how it ultimately flips creation order on its head, and that means that what we face in the problem of pride is a cosmic injustice. We've committed a cosmic sin against the Creator.

We flipped the world on its head, and that means that we've created a breach of injustice that is a deep chasm and a problem. All right, secondly and very briefly, what's the opposite to come out of the hard words?

[ 18 : 37 ] What's the opposite of pride? Now all of you can answer that without looking, right? It's well known. We read it many times here. Chapter 3, verse 34, instead of being proud to the humble, God gives favor.

Chapter 11, verse 2, with pride there's disgrace, but in humility there's wisdom. Chapter 18, verse 12, humility comes before honor in several more. The answer of the opposite of pride, of course, is humility, but the question is then what is humility?

What's biblical humility? And remember the late modern mindset of the 21st century, the secular Western world we live in? It says that our problems come actually from thinking too little of ourselves.

And then Proverbs comes and says, no, here's the old wisdom, pride is thinking too much of yourself, and it's the great problem of human history. The modern world says you need more self-esteem, you need more confidence, you need to think less about what other people think about you and know that no one can define you.

Only you can define you. And so if you believe that, if you had that confidence, your self-worth comes from the inside out and never from anywhere else. And that's how you can really overcome your problems in life.

[ 19 : 52 ] Now it's tempting to say, well, the Bible must be saying the exact opposite of that. It must be saying that the way forward, the way of true happiness and peace in the midst of this is actually to come and say, it's to come and say, I'm a nobody.

That's the way forward is to say, I have no self-worth. I don't want any of that. I want to be as low as possible. I want to be destroyed. I want to be nobody. But actually, the Bible doesn't do that.

It actually calls that out too. It says that that's pride wearing the dress of humility. And we see that play out just one example how we know that's true.

It's a form of self-centeredness because what it does is that when it gets into conversation with other people, we will self-deprecate in order to actually fish for compliments from other people.

You know, we say that we're nobody in order that the next person says, no, no, no, you are. You're somebody. And that's actually pride. It's not biblical humility. It's pride disguised as humility.

[ 20 : 57 ] And the Bible instead holds two truths together. And here they are. It cuts through all the noise of both of the West of everything that we hear in the late modern world.

It says this, one, you are the image of God. You're the image of God. And so you bear God's image in the world unlike all the other creatures. Are you worth it?

Are you worth something? God has poured out his love on you. Yes, God says a massive yes. You have a mint self-worth. And at the same time, you are more morally bankrupt and corrupt from top to bottom than you can ever imagine.

You're ethically corrupted. You're pride all the way down. You're broken and bent. And yet God looks at you and says you were worth it. You're full of so much worth and dignity.

Image of God and sin at the same time. And it cuts through both sides. It says no to both kinds of pride. And so what is biblical humility? And we can end the second point with just saying this.

[ 21 : 55 ] It's very easy. Biblical humility is to quote a famous misquote of C.S. Lewis. He never said this, but people always say he did.

Humility in the Bible is not thinking less of yourself, but it's thinking of yourself less. In other words, to put it in biblical language, biblical humility is simply this.

It's love. Humility is when you love God and love other people to the point that you forget yourself in the midst of love.

It's loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and loving your neighbor as yourself to the point where you stop thinking about yourself. And you're about other people. You're about God and you're about other people. It's as simple as that.

That's biblical humility. And that's why in Philippians 2, we're told humility is when you count others more significant. When you lose yourself for the sake of others. Now thirdly and finally, how can we grow into this?

[ 22 : 54 ] We've said already that the Bible teaches us. Human experience tells us the philosophy of all ages says the same thing. Our problem is pride. And it's big.

It's a huge problem. It's at the core of who we are. And we can say on the one hand that that means we've got a great problem.

And that great problem is that we have committed cosmic sin. We've disordered reality. We've committed an injustice against God himself and our pride. We flipped the order of creation upside down.

And how are we going to heal the breach? What are we going to do about it? And then secondly, it gets worse because you say, well, the answer must surely be put on as much humility as possible.

You know, bathe yourself in humility. But if you're like me and I've tried this, you know that you sit there and you try and try and try to be humble and to move yourself, your heart away from self-centeredness and towards other people and towards God.

[ 23 : 58 ] And you find yourself just running right back to the base to self-centeredness all over again. And you see, the answer cannot just be put on a lot of humility because number one, we're not good at it.

And we can't do it anyway. And number two, even if you could, even if for the rest of your life you could just be humble, you would have the problem that you've already created a chasm of injustice before the Creator God with the pride you've already committed.

And so what to do about it? And this is what Proverbs says. And we'll close with this. Proverbs three, five to eight, the very famous text we read at the beginning.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding and all your ways, acknowledge him. He will make straight your path. Be not wise in your own eyes. Put away your pride.

Be not wise in your own eyes. Trust in the Lord with all your heart in every aspect of who you are, acknowledge him and he will make your path straight. All right. Did you hear that?

[ 25 : 00 ] Trust, you need to trust in the Lord with everything you are and all of who you are. Top to bottom, acknowledge him at all times and he can make your path straight. And then lastly it ends and says that would be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

Now, if you want to have healing to your flesh, refreshment to your bones, it says you need to give yourself to the Lord. You need to trust. You need to have trust in every way. And look, we've thrown the problem back a layer because it says trust in the Lord with all your heart.

And you say, I've been trying to. And I can't, just like I can't put away my pride, I can't trust in the Lord with all my heart. My heart is my flesh going to be healed and my bones be restored.

And this is how, look, in the New Testament, in Philippians chapter two, the entire message and essence of Christianity itself, the good news, is framed in the language and speech of pride and humility.

God comes to us in his gift and says, let me address you in this language exactly by telling you what makes Christianity unique in terms of pride and humility.

[ 26 : 13 ] And this is what it says. It says, in the face of our pride, and this is so important, that God chose to become human, that he, we call this his humiliation, the humiliation of the Son of God in becoming Jesus Christ is the ultimate humbling.

He, God wanted, God the Son wanted to become humble for us. And so he came to earth and it says that it, look, if you could trust in the Lord with all your heart, he would heal your flesh and give life to your bones again.

Because we could not swallow our pride, Jesus Christ did. Because we could not heal our flesh, his flesh was crushed.

He underwent, God the Son underwent in Jesus Christ the wrath of God himself for your pride, for our pride. This is the good news at the center of all of human history.

It took him to the point of being judged by God the Father for our pride. And he set things to right. He closed the breach. He established justice. The cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ brings order to the disorder that our pride has created in the world.

[ 27 : 28 ] And so we can come back now again. Lastly, let me in two minutes tell you three things to do. One, come back to Proverbs 3, 3 to 5, 5 to 8 I should say.

And when it says put away your pride and trust in the Lord, here's what it means. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. It means, it doesn't mean, look, try your best to be as humble as possible over the rest of your life and hope for the best that God would decide to heal you.

That's not what it means. It said what it means is this, give yourself and your heart to Jesus Christ cross. Trust in Christ himself with, give it to him.

Give everything you are over to him and he can heal your bones. Say that I know I don't have the resources from within me to deal with the problem of pride. I can't become humble.

I need, I need an, I need alien help, help that is outside of me. Trust in the Lord with all your heart means turn today to Jesus Christ. And today that might be, some of you here might be coming in curious from the streets today.

[ 28 : 37 ] That's an invitation to do that for the first time or for the millionth if you're a 50 year Christian. But today is the day to trust in Jesus Christ and give him your pride.

Today's the day for all of us to do that. Today of three, then turn to God for help with a life of prayer. So I know that you can say, of course the application is going to be prayer.

It seems to always be, but here's why. Prayer is the best thing that we have to daily turn our own selves away from ourselves.

And the Bible gives us three things that can help humble us every single day as we step out the door to pray for. The first is to say, Lord, I'm a creature and you're the creator.

I didn't make myself. I'm not a self made person. Almost all I have, I've received. It's a gift. The second thing to say is, Lord, I'm a sinner.

[ 29 : 37 ] And the very fact that I'm breathing today is something more than I deserve. And then thirdly to say, I can't fix my problem.

Jesus Christ, you humbled yourself to the point of swallowing my pride. So I can walk out the doors today with humility. Those are the three things to pray for every day to bring humility to the heart.



Lastly, make humility actually a spiritual discipline in your life by vowing and resolving to think about God and other people and serve God and other people more than you do yourself.

Because action like that in our daily lives, even when we don't desire it becomes habit. And habit becomes disposition and disposition changes the will.

And so Christ Jesus says to you today, if you believe and trust on him, that he swallowed your pride and gifted you in him humility. He now says, put on the mind of Jesus Christ, which is humility, Philippians 2.

[ 30 : 41 ] And so there's work to do. There is. There's not to get a seat at the table of God's kingdom, but because you have one, there's work to do. So take up the discipline of humility.

Put it on. You've got to do it. You've got to go for it. You've got to repent when you fail and get back up again and strive after it. That's what Paul calls us to. Here's a question to test if there's growth.

This is the question I'm asking myself this week. Can I truly enjoy other people's success around me more today than when I first became a Christian?

If I am, then I know that I'm slowly growing in this. Or secondly, my money, you know, true humility, growing humility starts to be willing to let go of their things more and more.

Because it says I know that everything I have is the gift of God. And so can you gladly and generously and joyfully give away your stuff to God and people more today than when you first believed?

[ 31 : 41 ] All right. This is truly the last word. This is why Christ's refreshment of prideful bones is so important at a very practical level.

Pride makes it so difficult to deal with reality. Because when pain and loss and crisis come into our lives, and it will, and maybe it already has and it is today for you, pride says in the midst of crisis, you know what, I have not gotten the good things in life that I deserve.

And that means that pain and suffering becomes anger. And anger becomes more pain. And that kind of pain can snowball into contempt for life itself.

But when you trust in Jesus Christ, he shows us that we can instead save this in the midst of pain and loss. By the grace of God, the world is better than I deserve.

And so when pain and loss come, even though it hurts, even though there's deep suffering and crisis, you say, look, I know what I deserve and I know what I've received.

[ 32 : 54 ] And by the grace of God, it's more. It's more than I deserved. And that means that a humble heart actually has the practical power. The humble heart that comes through Christ alone has the practical power of giving you the great gifts of endurance, of patience, and joy in the midst of a very hard world.

Let's pray together. Father, we ask now that you would give us the humility of heart that can only come through Jesus. And we ask for a great gift of the Spirit today in that.

And I pray, Father, for those who might be coming today to explore this gospel, we pray, Lord, that you would meet with them and show them who you are and reveal yourself. Lord, we pray for us to have believed this gospel for a long time, perhaps, that you would remove coldness and hardness of heart, perhaps, and refresh us with the depth of our pride problem and the great healing to our bones that is the humility of Jesus.

And so we ask for this heart in Christ's name. Amen.