

Proverbs: Pride and Humility

Proverbs 18

Proverbs makes it clear that navigating our way through life with wisdom and being proud are mutually incompatible; and proverbs suggests pride has many disguises. We're going to look at some of them.

The Varied Faces of Pride: Like a disease that has different symptoms, pride manifests itself in a multitude of different guises.

1. The Pride of Success: Proverbs 18:11 says that 'a rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his imagination.' And if we derive our significance from what we have, from our success, then pride can get a foot-hold. But it's a slippery slope: what happens when the success dries up? Either our pride takes a crushing blow or the proud person struggles to maintain appearances.

2. The Pride of the Intellect: Proverbs 18:2 'A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his own opinions'. Pride is at the root of the attitude that thinks 'they can't teach me anything'. The intellectually proud person considers themselves self-sufficient in the area of their mind. That can quickly morph into scoffing at others and at truth itself.

3. The Pride of Offense: Proverbs 18:19 'A brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city, and quarrelling is like the bars of a castle.' That reaction – taking offense- comes from pride.

4. The Pride of the Tribe: Proverbs 21:4 'Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin.' Haughty eyes are about how you see others, especially outsiders. They're not 'one of us' so you look down on them.

5. The Pride of Personal Sovereignty: Proverbs 27:1 'Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.' The person who boasts about their plans for the future has forgotten that they are not the boss. God is.

Choose your opponent wisely: Allow pride to get a foothold and danger is lurking. Proverbs 18:12 'Before destruction a man's heart is haughty.' Why does pride precede the fall? Because pride convinces us we are immune, don't need others, have nothing to learn and can play with fire. But ultimately the proud fall because God brings about the fall: Proverbs 15:25 '*the Lord* tears down the house of the proud.' So the wise person chooses their opponent: they make pride their opponent, not God. And Proverbs offers a better way than the way of pride: humility, which has a reward.

Living for Another's Glory

Proverbs 25:27 says 'It is not good to eat much honey nor is it glorious to seek one's own glory.' Just like honey tastes good to start with but keep on eating and you feel sick, so living for your own glory seems great at first but in the long run will make you sick. Through the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 9:23-24) God tells us whose glory we should live for – His. The apostle Paul knew what that meant. In 1 Timothy 1:15-16 he tells how he came to see himself as the worst of sinners, for whom Christ had died. He had nothing to be proud of in himself but he could boast in God's grace to him in Jesus, through the cross. But you can't live for God's glory in your own strength, you have to come to Christ, and take his yoke on you and learn from Him who is the humble one (Matt 11:28-29).