

PROVERBS: ETERNAL WISDOM FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

Growing in the Fear of the Lord and Godly Character for Life in a Fallen World

The Way of Wisdom — Pride and Humility

Key Idea:

The proud and foolish trust in their own wisdom at the expense of their own downfall; the humble and wise put their trust in God and receive His blessings at Christ's expense.

Key Text:

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.

[Proverbs 3:5–6 ESV](#)

Key Points:

- **Pride Leans on Its Own Understanding** — To “lean” on something is to put your full weight on it — remove it suddenly, and you fall. The proud lean on their own intellect, judgment, and ability to discern the right course of action. They credit their own understanding for their successes and either excuse or blame it for their failures. Everything always comes back to them. This posture makes the proud impossible to correct — because you cannot remove and fix the very thing they are resting their full weight upon. The closer you get to a proud spirit, the more they resist. Some proud people are loud and harsh; others are quiet people-pleasers who labor constantly to earn others' favor — which is a more convenient arrangement to get what they want.
- **Proverbs Is Full of Warnings to the Proud** — The warnings come from every direction. “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” ([Prov 16:18](#)). “When pride comes, then comes disgrace” ([Prov 11:2](#)). “He who trusts in himself is a fool” ([Prov 28:26a](#)). “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” ([Prov 16:25](#)). The proud scoffer will not go to the wise ([Prov 15:12](#)), and whoever corrects a scoffer gets abuse in return ([Prov 9:7–8](#)). Proverbs 1:24–33 ([Prov 1:24–33](#)) gives the terrifying end of those who refuse wisdom's call: they will cry out and not be heard, because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. We must avoid this attitude at all costs.
- **Humility Leans on God** — The heart, in the Hebrew sense, is the center of emotions, will, and intellect. To trust in the Lord “with all your heart” is to lean your full weight on Him rather than on your own understanding. The humble person does not need to justify themselves constantly. They have no weight on their own understanding — so when it is pointed out and corrected, they receive it gladly rather than fighting back. The only time the humble person is truly distraught is when the One they are leaning on — God — seems hidden from them. Give

instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser ([Prov 9:9](#)); reprove a wise man and he will love you ([Prov 9:8b](#)).

- **Proverbs Is Full of Blessings to the Humble** — “Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life” ([Prov 10:17](#)). “If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you” ([Prov 1:23](#)). “Whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster” ([Prov 1:33](#)). “He who walks in wisdom will be delivered” ([Prov 28:26b](#)). The pattern is consistent: humility receives correction, correction produces wisdom, wisdom produces life and blessing.
- **Three Important Clarifications** — First, understanding is not the enemy. Gaining understanding is the whole point of Proverbs ([Prov 1:2](#)), and Hebrews rebukes those who remain on spiritual milk when they should be solid-food eaters ([Heb 5:11–14](#)). “Childlike faith” is not the mark of maturity. Second, confidence is not arrogance. You can stand next to a wall without leaning on it. We can be bold and confident in what God has revealed ([Titus 2:15](#); [Jude 3](#)) while still not trusting in ourselves. Third, agreeableness and religious language are not the same as humility. Jonathan Edwards warned that the devil deceives multitudes about the state of their souls by making them think they are something when they are nothing — establishing people in a strong confidence of their own holiness who are in God’s sight some of the vilest hypocrites ([Prov 30:12](#)).
- **Acknowledge Him in ALL Your Ways** — The command is comprehensive: “in all your ways acknowledge him.” No area of life is exempt — spiritual life, family life, friendships, work, church, seasons of blessing, and seasons of suffering. The humble person does not acknowledge God in the “spiritual” areas while leaning on their own understanding everywhere else. The promise is equally comprehensive: “he will make straight your paths.” The God who is acknowledged is the God who directs.
- **The Gospel: Blessings at Christ’s Expense** — Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone — “trust in the Lord with all your heart.” There are no additional requirements for justification ([Rom 10:10–11](#)), and there are no additional requirements to maintain it. Grace alone does not nullify the pursuit of holiness — but it means the pursuit flows from gratitude, not from earning. The proud trust in themselves and bear the consequences alone. The humble trust in Christ, who bore the consequences in their place, and receive His blessings at His expense.

Discussion Questions:

- The teaching opened by noting that our culture holds out technology — especially AI — as the coming solution to humanity’s problems, but that technology is utterly powerless to combat human pride. Do you agree? Why is pride uniquely resistant to technological or educational solutions? What does that tell us about where the real problem lies?
- The image of “leaning” is central to [Proverbs 3:5–6](#): pride leans on its own understanding; humility leans on God. What is the difference between using your understanding and leaning on it? Can you think of an area of your life right now where you are leaning on your own judgment in a way that is shutting God out?

- Two types of proud people were described: the disagreeable type (harsh, dismissive, quick to shut down others' ideas) and the people-pleasing type (constantly offering help so nearly everyone is in their debt). Which type is easier to recognize as pride? Which is more dangerous, and why? Do you see either pattern in yourself?
- The proud person cannot receive correction because they are leaning on the very thing being corrected. [Proverbs 9:7–8](#) says whoever corrects a scoffer gets abuse, while [Proverbs 9:8b–9](#) says the wise person who is reproved will love you for it. Honestly: how do you typically respond when your judgment is corrected or your idea is challenged? What does your response reveal about where your weight is resting?
- The warnings to the proud in Proverbs are severe — destruction, disgrace, death, and finally [Proverbs 1:24–33](#), in which wisdom laughs at the calamity of those who refused her call. Why do you think God takes pride so seriously? In what ways does pride function as a form of practical atheism — living as if God's wisdom and ways are irrelevant?
- The blessings promised to the humble are equally striking: the Spirit poured out, words made known, security without dread of disaster ([Prov 1:23, 1:33](#)). What would it look like practically for a person to experience these blessings in their daily life? Have you ever experienced a season where humility before God produced this kind of fruit? What was different about that season?
- The teaching clarified that “childlike faith” is not the mark of Christian maturity — [Hebrews 5:11–14](#) actually rebukes those who remain on spiritual milk. There is a common tendency to treat intellectual and theological growth as somehow arrogant or proud. Where do you see that tendency in Christian culture? How do you hold together genuine intellectual growth and study with genuine humility before God?
- Confidence is not the same as pride. [Titus 2:15](#) and [Jude 3](#) call believers to bold, authoritative declaration of the faith. [Hebrews 10:35–36](#) says not to throw away your confidence. Where do you find it hardest to hold together genuine confidence in God's Word with genuine humility about your own understanding? Are there areas where false humility has made you less bold than you should be?
- Jonathan Edwards warned that the devil deceives people about the state of their souls by making them think they are something when they are nothing — establishing a strong confidence of holiness in people who are actually hypocrites. What are the telltale signs that a person's apparent humility is actually a form of spiritual pride? How do we guard against self-deception in this area?
- The command in [Proverbs 3:6](#) is to acknowledge God in “all” your ways — spiritual life, family, friendships, work, church, blessings, and sufferings. Which of these areas do you find it easiest to acknowledge God? Which do you most tend to handle on your own? What would it look like to specifically acknowledge Him in that area this week?
- The Table: The theme statement captures the gospel perfectly — the humble and wise receive God's blessings at Christ's expense. At the Lord's Table, we confess that we have leaned on our own understanding and come empty-handed to receive what only Christ can give. How does coming to the Table week after week form us in humility? What do you need to lay down — what are you leaning on — as you come to receive from Him today?

For Further Study:

- Read [Proverbs 3:1–12](#) in full this week, paying attention to the structure of the passage: each command is paired with a promise. How many times does the pattern of “trust/acknowledge/fear” followed by a specific blessing appear? What does the cumulative weight of these promises tell you about what God is eager to give to the humble?
- Study the cluster of Proverbs on pride and humility cited in this teaching: [9:7–9](#), [11:2](#), [12:1](#), [15:12](#), [16:18](#), [16:25](#), [21:2](#), [28:26](#). For each one, ask: is this a warning or a blessing? What specific form of pride or humility does it address? Where does it most directly apply to my own life?
- Read [Proverbs 1:20–33](#) — Wisdom’s long speech to those who have refused her call. Notice both the severity of the consequences (vv24–31) and the tenderness of the original invitation (vv23, 33). What does this passage tell us about the character of the God who calls us to humility? How does it change your understanding of pride to see it in light of a God who has been calling and stretching out His hand all along?
- This week, do an honest audit of the two “telltale areas” the teaching identified: your relationships and your response to correction. In your closest relationships, are there patterns of self-seeking, bitterness, people-pleasing, or dismissiveness that may indicate pride? When was the last time someone corrected you? How did you respond? Bring what you find honestly before God.
- Visit the church website to explore teachings organized by [series](#), by [Scripture](#), or by [topic](#) for deeper study of [humility and pride](#), [correction](#), [wisdom and knowledge](#), and [grace](#).