

Gleanings from the Book of Proverbs: Pride and Humility

Scripture Reading: Psalm 10:1-18

Though Psalm 10 is not attributed to David, it is very relevant to this study on pride and humility.

- Proverbs 10:1-2 – Pride is central to trouble and oppression that is in the world (I John 2:15-16).
- Proverbs 10:3 – Pride is central to selfishness and unholy alliances.
- Proverbs 10:4-5 – Pride is central to Atheism and godless thoughts.
- Proverbs 10:5-6 – Pride is central to fatal vain confidence.
- Proverbs 10:7-10 – Pride is a central motive of those who act as threatening adversaries / predators.
- Proverbs 10:11, 13 – Pride is central to a false view of God, which leads to fatal vain confidence.
- Proverbs 10:12, 14-18 – God is the hope of the humble. They seek Him and He delivers them.

Our study of pride and humility dovetails with a previous study on *“The Fear of the Lord.”* Pride and humility are subjects which must primarily deal with how we see ourselves before God (Proverbs 8:13; 16:5 cp. Proverbs 3:34; Psalm 138:6; James 4:6-10). Subsequently, pride and humility become subjects that deal with how men see themselves among their fellow men. So much of the time, as men ignore / disregard God, they also become apathetic and / or adversarial towards man (Proverbs 13:10; 21:24; 28:25 cp. Psalm 86:14).

Pride originates with our ignorance of God and our contempt for God. Pride is then extended to our attitude towards man: a foolish independence of others, an indifference or apathy for others, an extreme competitiveness – which can lead to an aggressive, even a predatory relationship with others. Humility originates with our conscious effort to know, honor, and submit to God. It is a sense of living in the presence of God. Humility is not timidness, fearfulness, or low self-esteem. Humility is a God-honoring sense of appreciation and respect for others. The behavior of humility is to be considerate of others, and to seek to fulfil the Golden Rule – “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” See Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31. Those who are humble will, as much as possible, seek to cooperate with others (Romans 12:3-10, 18; I Peter 5:5-6).

The Hebrew and Aramaic words that are used for *“pride / proud”* refer to arrogant boasting, lifting up oneself, and impiety / irreverence. As a matter of fact, pride is the opposite of reverence and worship for God (Psalm 34:1-3).

The Hebrew words that are used for *“humble / humility”* refer to being lowly (knowing your place), modesty, gentleness, and meekness. Note David’s heart before God in Psalm 131:1-3.

Other Hebrew words that relate to pride or to humility:

- Scorer – One who mocks and speaks arrogantly (Proverbs 3:34; 21:24 cp. Psalm 1:1).
- Lowly / lowliness – One who is humble, poor, needy, weak, and afflicted (Proverbs 3:34; 11:2; 16:19 cp. Psalm 138:6).
- Poor – One who is needy / who is in a humble, lowly state of being (Proverbs 18:23; 28:11 cp. Psalm 9:17-18; 41:1). It is not just that they are needy, but they understand their neediness. Consider Matthew 5:3. The Greek word used for “*poor in spirit*” means to be a beggar – one who has to ask for things.

Here are things that the Book of Proverbs says about those who are proud and those who are humble:

- God hates and condemns pride – Proverbs 8:13; 15:25; 16:5; 21:4 [cp. Psalm 129:1-4]; 6:16-19 (Note vs. 17 & 19 cp. Proverbs 13:10; 22:10).
- In life, the general outcome for the proud will be bad. The general outcome of those who are humble will be good. Even though the proud seem to prosper, the humble have a better quality of life (Proverbs 3:34 [James 4:6; I Peter 5:5]; Proverbs 11:2; 13:10; 14:3; 15:33; 16:18-19; 18:12; 22:4; 28:25; 29:23).
- Those who are proud and arrogant are often contentious and have a bad reputation with other people. They get embroiled in strife and difficult situations (Proverbs 13:10; 14:3; 21:24; 24:9; 28:25).
- The proud are difficult / impossible to teach. The humble tend to be willing to listen, learn, and even ask for advice / help (Proverbs 13:1,10; 14:6; 15:12; 18:23; 28:11).
- It takes humility to correct ourselves and work on our mistakes (Proverbs 6:1-5 [note vs. 3 in KJV, NKJV, NASB, NLT – “...*humble yourself / swallow your pride* ...” In some other translations, look at the foot note.])

For a closing thought, here is a quote from C. S. Lewis:

“... Pride is spiritual cancer: It eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense.”