



LESSON 2: "Proud of It!" **Date:** _____
KEY VERSE: Proverbs 11:2 – "When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom."

INTRODUCTION

Isn't the monkey house everyone's favorite exhibit in the zoo? I recently visited the monkey house and learned a valuable lesson. On one side of the house stood a great crowd of people laughing and throwing peanuts into the cage of an entertaining orangutan. Meanwhile, all was quiet on the other side of the monkey house. No one was interested in the massive form of the gorilla who sat behind a glass panel with his back turned to the viewing section. The proud gorilla was disinterested in the spectators and blatantly portrayed his disgust. But the humble orangutan did almost anything to attract attention. The orangutan swallowed his pride and several peanuts as well. As I watched these two animals, I was reminded of the comparison of the proud and the humble made by the book of Proverbs.

One of the most striking contrasts featured in the book of Proverbs is the contrast between the proud and the humble. It was pride that caused Satan to fall. In pride Satan said, "I will be like the most High" (Is. 14:14). Satan appealed to Eve's pride when he told her to eat so that she and her husband would be "as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5). In 1 John 2:15-17, the Apostle John warns us that we should not love the world. He goes on to list the three primary temptations of the world. According to the Word of God, mankind is tempted by three primary desires. They are, "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Just as pride caused Satan to fall and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit; it is pride that trips up many wise men today.

Theme: God promises to resist the proud and give grace to the humble.

Let's carefully consider the pitfall of pride as it is contrasted with the honor of humility in the book of Proverbs.

THE PITFALL OF PRIDE

Before we can discuss the topic of pride, it is necessary for us to formulate a working description of this character trait. Proverbs paints an unforgettable picture of pride by using terms that draw three unique images.

1. **A proud person has an inflated estimation of his worth.**

The Hebrew word, *rawkhawb*, is used twice in the book of Proverbs to describe the proud (Prov. 21:4 and 28:5). The word pictures something large or broad (Note: This same word is used in Ex. 3:8 and translated "large" and in Neh. 3:8 where it is translated "broad.")

You have probably heard the expression "He is so big-headed that they have to grease the door frame to allow him entrance." This is the very picture of the proud man in Proverbs 21:4 and 28:5. In these verses the term carries the idea of being as proud or as wide as an invading army. Often men find themselves attempting to work with someone who feels qualified to accomplish any task no matter how difficult. The over-inflated estimate of one's abilities is a characteristic of pride.

2. **A proud person has an elevated estimation of his worth.**

The Hebrew word, *gayeh*, is frequently used in Proverbs to speak of the proud (Prov. 8:13; 14:3; 15:25; 16:5, 17, 18, 19; 21:24).

Turkey farmers must be careful not to allow their turkeys to be out in a rainstorm? Believe it or not, turkeys can drown in the rain! You have probably met some "proud turkeys." They are easy to spot. They carry their noses so high that they are in danger when the rain falls. Proverbs tells us that pride will make a man assume himself to be higher in worth than all of his associates.

3. **A proud person has an agitated spirit.**

The Hebrew word, *zawdone*, pictures the idea of boiling. This word is used in Prov. 11:2; 13:10, and 21:24 to speak of the rebellious, insolent, presumption of pride. The proud man boils with rebellion and willful sin. Those that associate with the proud man will undoubtedly experience a scalding boil-over.

By placing these three descriptions into a composite picture, we can see that the man of pride is one who feels himself to be broad in ability and tall in worth. Because of his self-evaluation, he allows himself to boil with rage, rebellion, and willful sin. With this in mind, let's take the time to note the representations of pride described by the book of Proverbs.

THE REPRESENTATIONS OF PRIDE

Much study has been done on the message that we deliver to others through bodily movements and postures. Our bodies relay messages without words. For instance, if a man fidgets with his hands, we think him to be nervous. If a man folds his arms and turns away from us, we consider him to be hostile. If a man rubs his temples, we assume that he is thinking. Proverbs describes three bodily parts that may display pride.

1. *The eyes*

God has listed seven things that He hates. This list is found in Proverbs 6:16-17. On the top of the list is a "proud look." In other words, God hates those that display pride in their eyes. Yes, one can literally "look down" on someone. According to Proverbs, this proud look is an abomination to God.

2. *The tongue*

Not only does God hate a proud look, God also hates a proud tongue (Prov. 21:23-24). Nothing gives proof of pride more than a man's words!

The story is told of a poor, ragged little Sunday school student in Chicago who almost accepted Christ as his Savior. Apparently, this child attended Sunday School one Sunday and was deeply impressed by the love of his teacher. Her words brought conviction to his tender heart. After class was dismissed he returned to speak to her about his need for salvation. As the young boy walked toward his Sunday School room, he heard his beloved teacher in conversation with another "godly" woman. The other woman was complaining about the dirty little children that were attending her class. Without comment, the scruffy little boy turned away in tears and left the church. Many years later the kind Sunday School teacher read about her ragged little student in a newspaper. He had turned from Christ to

crime. The story of his death had made the front page. The FBI had finally caught up John Dillinger. As a boy, Dillinger had felt the full impact of the mouth of pride! It is no wonder that the Lord puts such emphasis upon His hatred of pride.

3. *The heart*

The eye and the mouth are both affected by pride that bubbles within a man's heart (Prov. 18:12). Be careful and consider your estimation of your own worth. Realize that all have sinned (Rom. 3:23) and that all you possess is by God's mercy (Ps. 119:64). Remember God hates the proud look, the proud tongue, and the proud heart (Prov. 8:13).

THE RESULTS OF PRIDE

God has promised a painful end to those who are proud.

1. *The proud will make irrational decisions (Prov. 21:24).*

Proverbs tells us that the scorner "dealeth in proud wrath" (Prov. 21:24). There are many times in the life of any individual when he simply needs to stand back and think a situation through rather than impulsively jumping to an irrational decision. Pride causes a "boiling" of the emotions so that immediate, angry, and harmful decisions are made. Peer pressure seems to work heavily on this weakness in the character of the proud man. The taunting of a "friend" causes the proud man to attempt a feat that far surpasses his normal abilities. How very dangerous pride can become!

2. *The proud will live a life full of strife (Prov. 13:10, 28:25).*

An argument rarely begins when one of the parties is willing to swallow his pride and say some of the most hard-to-pronounce words in the English language, such as "I'm sorry," or "You're right," or "It's my fault." These words are not present in the vocabulary of the man of pride. Consequently, he is constantly finding himself in bitter confrontation.

3. *The proud will find shame (Prov. 11:2).*

4. ***The proud will fall (Prov. 15:25; 16:18; 29:23).***

I think I shocked a young lady one day as she sat complaining to me about someone that had told on her when she had done wrong. I looked right at the complaining young lady and explained that she hadn't been "turned in," but that God had simply kept His promise. "You see," I said, "God promises that the proud will fall, and you have finally fallen" (Prov. 15:25, 16:18, 29:23). This particular young lady had demonstrated a proud spirit for some time. Now she was experiencing the fall that her pride had earned.

Transition: As with many other characters in the Proverbs, the proud man has a contrasting character. The opposite of the man of pride is the man of humility. Let's attempt to define what a humble man is and look into the gifts and instructions that God delivers to him.

THE HONOR OF HUMILITY

Though the writers of Proverbs used several Hebrew words to express the idea of humility or lowliness, two primary ideas are seen.

- ***Some are made humble because of circumstances.*** The Hebrew word, *anawvaw*, bears the idea of being humbled through circumstances from without and is found in Proverbs 11:3; 15:33, 18:12 and 22:4. The humble man is made humble because something has happened to him by the will of others.
- ***Some become humble by personal decision.*** In Proverbs 3:34, 6:3, 16:19, and 29:23, humility (Heb. *rooakh*) is a result of a personal decision or a physical or mental condition that has come into the life of an individual.

Humility can be caused by circumstance or by decision. The oppression is from without; the decision is from within and is brought about by conviction or by divinely appointed trials.

Bullies are great ones to cause humility. Almost every grade school child has been made to humbly cry "Uncle!" while the class bully sits on his chest. This is humility produced by the will of others.

The Apostle Paul is an example of a man who decided to agree with the Spirit of God and become humble. In Ephesians 3:8, he confessed that

he felt himself to be "less than the least of all saints." Perhaps this humility was a result of the physical affliction that God had allowed to come into the life the Apostle (2 Cor. 12), or as a result of a self-determined decision.

Whether man-induced or God-produced, God loves humility. This fact can be seen in the life of Jesus Christ. "Though he was rich, yet...He became poor" (2 Cor. 8:9). Likewise, Christ commands that all of those who desire greatness must first learn humility (Luke 14:11). Now it is time that we ask the question, "How can I become a person of genuine humility; and if I do become that sort of person, how will it profit me?"

1. ***Instructions are given to those who would be humble.***

a. ***You must be willing (Prov 6:3).***

This truth is revealed to us in Proverbs 6:3. In this passage the man who has made a foolish business transaction is instructed to humbly confess his mistake. Few men enjoy confessing their mistakes; but in order to learn humility, the wise man must learn to confess errors. Many people never accept Christ as their Savior because they will not humbly confess their inability to earn their own salvation (Eph. 2:8-9).

b. ***You must choose the right companions (Prov. 16:19).***

It would be hard to count the number of lives that have turned in the wrong direction because of the influence of wrong friends. Five minutes with the wrong friend can destroy months and years of spiritual growth. Five minutes with an immoral young man can destroy the purity of a godly young woman. Five minutes with a drug-pushing peer can destroy a potentially great mind. Five minutes with a teenage alcoholic can end a life! We must guard our friendships carefully.

Humility, as with so many Christian virtues, does not come easily. There is a price to pay. Sometimes that price is simply the cost of a bit of pride. Sometimes that price is the cost of a proud friend, but through it all God promises His reward.

2. Gifts are promised for those who would be humble.

a. Grace (Prov 3:34)

Proverbs 3:34 says, “He giveth grace unto the lowly.” The lowly man needs God’s favor, for he is oppressed. In times when humility is caused by affliction, God gives His undeserved favor. The Apostle Paul witnesses to this truth. Paul asked the Lord on three different occasions to deliver him from a difficult physical infirmity (2 Cor. 12:7-8). Instead of deliverance, Paul received grace (2 Cor. 12:9).

b. Honor (Prov 29:23)

The proud man searches for honor, but the man of humility finds it. “Man’s pride shall bring him low: but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit” (Prov. 29:23). Honor is one of God’s gifts to the lowly. The path of greatness in God’s eyes is the path of service. God does not measure a man by the number of people he commands but by the number of people he serves.

c. Wisdom (Prov 11:2)

God gives the humble man wisdom. “When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom” (Prov. 11:2). As is pointed out in Proverbs 1, wisdom is the goal set before the godly man. As the godly man progresses towards his goal of wisdom he will come face-to-face with the cross roads of pride and humility. To choose the pathway of pride will bring a fall, but to choose the way of humility will bring grace, honor, and wisdom.

CONCLUSION

Proverbs 11:2 – “When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.”