

Proverbs 15:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.

Analysis

This verse pairs fear of God with humility: 'The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.' Fear of Yahweh functions as wisdom's curriculum (musar chokhmah)—the disciplinary instruction that produces wise living. This reiterates the book's central thesis (1:7, 9:10). The second phrase presents sequence: humility precedes honor. Those who humble themselves will be exalted; those who exalt themselves will be humbled (Luke 14:11, 18:14; James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6). This counterintuitive principle reverses worldly wisdom that seeks honor through self-promotion. God's kingdom operates by different values—humble yourself and God will lift you up.

Historical Context

Ancient honor-shame cultures valued honor as supreme good, pursued through various means (military prowess, wealth display, social position). Proverbs insists the path to genuine honor runs through humility, not self-exaltation. This anticipates Jesus' teaching that the first shall be last and the last first (Matthew 20:16) and His own example of humbling Himself unto death (Philippians 2:5-11).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does understanding that the fear of the LORD is wisdom's instruction affect your approach to spiritual growth?
2. In what specific areas are you tempted to pursue honor through self-promotion rather than trusting God to exalt you in due time?

Interlinear Text

יִרְאַת	יְהוָה	מוֹסֵר	חֲכָמָה	וְלִפְנֵי	כָּבוֹד
The fear	of the LORD	is the instruction	of wisdom	and before	honour
H3374	H3068	H4148	H2451	H6440	H3519

עֲנוּהָ:
is humility
H6038

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 18:12 (Parallel theme): Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.

1 Peter 5:5 (Parallel theme): Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

Proverbs 1:7 (References Lord): The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Psalms 111:10 (References Lord): The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

James 4:10 (References Lord): Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

Psalms 34:11 (References Lord): Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

Job 28:28 (References Lord): And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

Proverbs 29:23 (Parallel theme): A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

Proverbs 8:13 (References Lord): The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

Luke 14:11 (Parallel theme): For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.