

# The Bible Unpacked

## Comprehensive Study Series

A compilation of the Bible's teaching  
for believers established in the faith

paul mallison

## 38. Major Pitfalls

This series of studies is based on the  
*Comprehensive Edition of The Bible Unpacked.*

There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked.*  
These aim to address the needs of  
NON-CHRISTIANS through to MATURE CHRISTIANS,  
from TEENAGERS to ADULTS.

For more information and free downloads go to:  
[www.thebibleunpacked.net](http://www.thebibleunpacked.net)



## An Appeal on Behalf of Persecuted Christians

Over 200 million Christians in at least 60 countries are denied basic human rights solely because of their faith. (Source: World Evangelical Alliance) Every year many Christians are killed because of their faith.

Through prayer, encouragement and practical assistance we can assist and fellowship with persecuted Christians in their suffering. You can play a vital part in this through contacting one of the organizations listed below. Most produce regular news/prayer letters.

### **Barnabas Fund** – [www.barnabasfund.org](http://www.barnabasfund.org)

It provides material and spiritual support in response to needs identified by local Christian leaders.

### **Christian Faith and Freedom** – [www.cffreedom.org](http://www.cffreedom.org)

It advocates on behalf of and aids persecuted Christians.

### **Christian Solidarity International** – [www.csi-int.org](http://www.csi-int.org)

CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

### **Christian Solidarity Worldwide** – [www.csw.org.uk](http://www.csw.org.uk)

It advocates for freedom of religion and justice for persecuted believers.

### **Compass Direct** – [www.compassdirect.org](http://www.compassdirect.org)

This is a Christian news service providing news, reports, interviews and analyses of situations facing persecuted Christians.

### **Open Doors** – [sb.od.org](http://sb.od.org); [www.opendoors.org.au](http://www.opendoors.org.au)

It provides Bibles and other Christian materials, to prepare believers for persecution and equip them to maintain a witness to the Gospel.

### **Religious Liberty Commission** – [www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc/](http://www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc/); [www.ea.org.au/ea-family/Religious-Liberty.aspx](http://www.ea.org.au/ea-family/Religious-Liberty.aspx)

RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. See also [www.idop.org](http://www.idop.org)  
Receive weekly updates by sending a blank email to [join-rpb@hub.xc.org](mailto:join-rpb@hub.xc.org).

### **The Bible League** – [www.bibleleague.org/persecuted](http://www.bibleleague.org/persecuted); [www.bibleleague.com](http://www.bibleleague.com)

It supplies Bibles to persecuted Christians and also provides training.

### **Voice of the Martyrs** – [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com); [www.persecution.com.au](http://www.persecution.com.au)

VOM provides Bibles, literature, radio broadcasts and other assistance to help persecuted Christians spread the gospel. They also send material aid.

*Then the King will answer, 'I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.'* Matthew 25:40 NCV

# The Bible Unpacked™

## Comprehensive Study Series

A compilation of the Bible's teaching for believers established in the faith

## 38. Major Pitfalls

Composed by Paul Mallison

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## Overview of *The Bible Unpacked*


There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked*, as shown below. Each edition is an abbreviated version of the next longest edition. As such they have similar structures. Four of the editions have studies based on them, with the same text along with questions. For more details and free downloads of all the material, go to [www.thebibleunpacked.net](http://www.thebibleunpacked.net).

 **Two-Minute Edition:** Key Bible teachings for people “on the run”  
For giving to non-Christians.


 **Pocket Edition:** Key Bible teachings for seekers of truth  
Largely for giving to inquiring non-Christians or young new Christians.

 **Concise Edition:** A look at the Bible’s teaching for new and young believers. For either new or young Christians. Suitable to give to non-Christian friends. Has study series based on it.




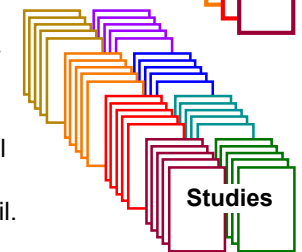
 **Foundations Edition:** A compilation of the Bible’s teaching for believers consolidating their faith. For newer Christians. Study series is ideal for studies with newer believers.




 **Intermediate Edition:** A compilation of the Bible’s teaching for believers growing in the faith. For developing a sound understanding of the faith. Studies are excellent for Bible study groups.



 **Comprehensive Edition:** A compilation of the Bible’s teaching for believers established in the faith. For a comprehensive knowledge of the faith. Useful as a study or a devotional tool - and preparing talks. Studies are ideal for studying topics in detail.



 **In-Depth Edition:** A compilation of the Bible’s teaching for teachers and students of the Bible. For Christians keen to gain a deep understanding of their faith. Useful for speakers preparing talks, study groups leaders, Bible students and Bible colleges. It is also in an electronic version, which is a PDF file.



## Section II. What to Do

### Part E. Relating to God

#### 21. Being Right with God

- I. Getting Right with God
- II. Staying Right with God

#### 22. Having Faith in God

- I. Faith and Hope
- II. What Not to Do

#### 23. Loving, Fearing and Obeying God

- I. Loving and Fearing God
- II. Obeying God

#### 24. Connecting with God

- I. Being Close to God
- II. Praying to God

#### 25. Exalting God

- I. Instructions
- II. Reasons to Exalt God

### Part F. Church Life

#### 26. Being One Body

- I. General
- II. Caring for the Body

#### 27. Worshiping God

- I. General
- II. Offerings

#### 28. Serving God

- I. Preliminary Instructions and Insights
- II. Doing God's Work

#### 29. Significant Practices

- I. Symbolic Rites
- II. Other Significant Practices

#### 30. Church Leadership

- I. General
- II. Teaching in the Church

### Part G. Relating to People

#### 31. Love

- I. Loving Qualities
- II. Antitheses of Love

#### 32. Justice

- I. Justice in Action
- II. Being True

#### 33. Wisdom

- I. Being Wise
- II. Antitheses of Wisdom and Knowledge

#### 34. Common Relationships

- I. Family Relationships
- II. Civil Relationships

#### 35. Spreading the Gospel

- I. Instructions
- II. Insights

### Part H. Persevering

#### 36. Standing Firm

- I. General
- II. Spiritual Warfare

#### 37. Rejecting Sin

- I. Encountering Sin
- II. Avoiding Sin and Being Holy

#### 38. Major Pitfalls

- I. Pride
- II. Riches and Sex

#### 39. Hard Times

- I. General
- II. Praying in Hard Times

#### 40. Persecution

- I. The Persecution of God's People
- II. What to Do in Persecution

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## A Quick Word

This series of studies aims to present a compilation of the Bible's teachings in a clear and readable order. There are 40 booklets in the series, based on the 40 chapters of the book *The Bible Unpacked - Comprehensive Edition*. Each booklet has two sections, which can be used for two or more studies.

See *Topics in This Series* towards the end of this booklet for a full listing of all the topics. Note that studying booklets alternatively from the two major sections (*What to Know* and *What to Do*) would add variety.

The material contains Bible verses. Before the verses are headings, which reflect what the verses say – in particular the parts of the verses in *italics*. The verses are sometimes followed by a comment.

The verses often have a brief introduction. Usually these state who is speaking and often who they are speaking to. Apart from God and Jesus Christ, the main speakers are:

- Moses – who led the Israelites out of Egypt and taught them God's laws;
- David – Israel's greatest king who wrote many of the psalms, most of which are essentially prayers;
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and other prophets – who spoke to the people of Israel on God's behalf; and
- Paul, Peter, John and other leaders of the early church – who spoke to various groups and wrote letters to believers.

Much care has been taken in order to correctly interpret the verses. Nevertheless, if you encounter a verse that is used to teach something that is contrary to or goes beyond your understanding, assess its use by doing such things as: reading the passage it is from; and considering how its teaching fits in with Scripture as a whole (e.g. interpret OT teaching in the light of NT teaching).

For more information on *The Bible Unpacked* and free downloads, go to the website: [www.thebibleunpacked.net](http://www.thebibleunpacked.net)

Paul Mallison

## Topics in This Series

### Section I: What to Know

#### Part A. God and Spiritual Powers    Part C. God and the World: Jesus Christ

##### 1. God's Being

- I. Basics
- II. God's Pre-Eminence

##### 2. God's Character

- I. Holy Characteristics
- II. Loving Characteristics

##### 3. Jesus Christ

- I. General
- II. Jesus Christ and God

##### 4. The Holy Spirit

- I. General
- II. God, Christ and the Holy Spirit as One

##### 5. Angels, Satan and Demons

- I. Angels
- II. Satan and Demons

##### 11. God's Promised Messiah

- I. The Messiah's Identity
- II. The Messiah's Purpose and Person

##### 12. Jesus Christ's Mission

- I. God's Enablement of Jesus Christ
- II. Jesus Christ's Ministry, Death and Resurrection

##### 13. Salvation through Jesus Christ

- I. Salvation from Sin
- II. Salvation for the World

##### 14. The New Order

- I. Jesus Christ and the Law's Diminished Role
- II. Key Elements of the New Order

##### 15. 'The Last Things'

- I. Jesus Christ's Return and the Final Judgment
- II. The Afterlife

#### Part B. God and the World: Basics    Part D. God and His Own People

##### 6. God's Creation

- I. General
- II. God's Creation of People

##### 7. God's Sovereignty

- I. God's Supreme Authority
- II. God's Control over the World

##### 8. God's Word

- I. General
- II. Key Old Testament Covenants

##### 9. The Problem of Sin

- I. General
- II. The Law's Provision for Israel's Sin

##### 10. God's Judgment

- I. Basics
- II. The Manifestation of God's Judgment

##### 16. The Standing of God's People

- I. Belonging to God
- II. Being 'in' Jesus Christ

##### 17. Keys to God's Interaction with His People

- I. Basics
- II. God's Holy Spirit in His People

##### 18. God's Transformation of His People

- I. General
- II. Spiritual Attributes

##### 19. God's Care of His People

- I. God's Saving of His People
- II. God's Preservation of His People

##### 20. God's Plans for His People

- I. General
- II. God's Plans for Israel

What should we do in order to examine ourselves (cf. Lam 3:40)?

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How can we maintain a clear conscience?

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How is sin deceptive? What can we do to guard against its deceptiveness?

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## Suggestions for Study Groups

### Preliminary matters:

- Beforehand the leader should: check the context of any verses they are not familiar with; and review the questions. If need be, they should compose questions more applicable to the group.
- Each person should have a Bible, for things such as checking a verse's context. It would also be helpful to have Bible commentaries on hand.
- Pray before beginning the study. Ask God for help in understanding the meaning of the verses and to affect your lives through them. Also pray together at the end.

### Doing the study:

- Ideally, read the material and answer the questions prior to the meeting. Then share answers and discuss any issues arising from the material in the meeting.
- Alternatively, read the material and answer the questions in the meeting – reading either aloud as a group or individually (prior to sharing answers). If reading as a group, **try having one person read the headings, another read the verses and another read the comments.** Additionally, a fourth person could read the Bible references.
- Answers need not be limited to only what is mentioned in the material.
- The group should feel free to diverge from the study if related issues arise.

### General or concluding questions:

If time permits, conclude with one or more of the following questions:

- What is something that you either: **did not know** before; gained **greater insight** into; or **needed reminding** of?
- What verse would be helpful to memorize and bear in mind during the next week?
- In taking the verses seriously, is there anything you should change in:
  - (a) how you relate to God or to other people; or
  - (b) any other area of your life (e.g. attitudes, values or behavior)?

If so, are there any specific steps you could take to do this?

*sincerity*, by the power of God's grace, and not by human wisdom.

GNT

### **Evaluate all things**

**1THES 5:21** *Test all things*; hold fast what is good. NKJV

**HEB 5:14** But solid food is for the mature, for those [believers] who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to *distinguish good from evil*. ESV

### **Do not be deceived, nor deceive yourself . . .**

**JAMES 1:16** *Do not be deceived*, my dear brothers and sisters! GNT

**1JN 1:8** [JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves*, and the truth is not in us. ESV

### **. . . Beware, sin is deceptive**

**HEB 3:13** [THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] But exhort one another each day, as long as it is called "Today," that none of you may become hardened by *sin's deception*.

## e) Epilogue: Be Wary

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### Be alert and sober

**1THESS 5:6** So then we must not sleep as the rest, but must *stay alert and sober*.

### Watch yourself . . .

**ACTS 20:28** So *keep watch over yourselves* and over all the flock which the Holy Spirit has placed in your care. GNT

### . . . In particular, watch and guard yourself against sinning

**Ps 39:1A** [DAVID:] I decided, “*I will watch what I say and make sure I do not sin with my tongue*.”

**MAL 2:16** So *guard yourselves in your spirit*, and do not be faithless. ESV

To “guard yourself in your spirit” involves watching and evaluating such things as one’s attitudes, motives and conscience – effectively one’s thoughts.

### Examine and evaluate yourself

**LAM 3:40** *Let us test and examine our ways*, and return to the LORD! ESV

### Keep a clear conscience, . . .

**ACTS 23:1** Paul looked straight at the Council and said, “Brothers, *with a clear conscience I have done my duty before God up to this very day*.” ISV

### . . . for a good conscience is vital for governing ourselves in pleasing God

**2COR 1:12** [PAUL, TO THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS:] We are proud that *our conscience assures us that our lives in this world, and especially our relations with you, have been ruled by God-given frankness and*

## I. Pride

Pride is one of the greatest dangers to one’s life as a believer, yet it is also one of the most subtle. Pride has an adverse effect on both one’s relationship with God and one’s relationships with others. The opposite to pride is humility, which correspondingly is very much a key factor in living an ongoing and effective Christian life.

## a) Pride in Thought

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### Do not be proud or conceited, . . .

**JER 13:15** [JEREMIAH:] Hear and give ear; *be not proud*, for the LORD has spoken. ESV

**GAL 5:26** *Let us not become conceited*, provoking one another, being jealous of one another.

### . . . nor be arrogant

**1COR 13:4** Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; *it is not arrogant* . . . ESV

### Do not think you are better than others

**DEUT 17:20** *He* [the king] *should not think he is better than his fellow Israelites*, and he must not stop obeying the law in any way so that he and his descendants may rule the kingdom for a long time. NCV™

### Do not be wise in your own eyes . . .

**ISA 5:21** *How horrible it will be for those who think they are wise and consider themselves to be clever.* GW

### . . . Seeing yourself as wise is in fact associated with foolishness

**PROV 26:12** *Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

### Do not be self-righteous

**LUKE 18:9–14** *Jesus also told this parable to some who were confident that they were righteous and looked down on everyone else.* <sup>10</sup>“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup>*The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself like this: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people: extortionists, unrighteous people, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup>I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.’*

What is lust? Is a guy able to look at a pretty lady without lust? If so, what's the difference between a guy looking at a pretty lady with lust and looking without lust?

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Is it wrong to have sex before marriage? Why or why not?

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Do you think homosexual acts are okay or wrong? Why?

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*shameless acts with men and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.*

This indicates that homosexual relations are unnatural. In v. 27, the phrase “received in themselves the due penalty” implies that the committing of such acts carries its own natural consequences.

### **Incest**

**LEV 18:6** *No man is to approach any close relative to have sexual intercourse with her. I am the LORD.*

### **Bestiality**

**LEV 18:23A** *And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion.* ESV

<sup>13</sup>The tax collector, however, stood far off and would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, be merciful to me, sinner that I am!’ <sup>14</sup>*I tell you that this man went down to his home justified rather than the Pharisee. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

### **Do not embrace praise from people – particularly in preference to praise from God**

**JOHN 5:41, 44** [JESUS, TO THE JEWS:] *I do not accept praise from people, ... ..<sup>44</sup>How can you believe, if you accept praise from one another and don’t seek the praise that comes from the only God?*

### **Note: Pride can easily stem from riches and power**

**EZEK 28:5** [GOD, TO THE RULER OF TYRE:] *By your great skill in trade you have increased your wealth, and your heart is proud because of your wealth.*

**2CHR 26:16A** *But once he became powerful, his pride destroyed him [Uzziah].*

What are some things we should bear in mind any time we start to think we are better than others?

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Why is there is more hope for a fool than for one wise in his/her own eyes (cf. Proverbs 26:12)?

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How should we respond to praise from people?

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## d) Prohibited Forms of Sex

(⇒ Do not rape, in 31. Love; Do not commit adultery – which brings God's judgment, in 34. Common Relationships)

### Lust

**JOB 31:1** [JOB:] *But I made an agreement with my eyes not to look with desire at a girl.* NCV™

**MATT 5:27–28** [JESUS:] You have heard that it was said, ‘You must not commit adultery.’ <sup>28</sup>*But I say to you, anyone who stares at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.* ISV

Gazing longingly at a woman with sexual desire, is committing adultery in one's heart and in a spiritual sense.

### Sex apart from marriage

**DEUT 22:21B** [MOSES, SPEAKING OF ANY WOMAN WHO HAD HAD PREMARITAL SEX:] *She has done a disgraceful thing in Israel by having sexual relations before she was married.* You must get rid of the evil among you. NCV™

Moses' words are of course also applicable to males.

### Prostitution

**1COR 6:15** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *Surely you know that your bodies are parts of Christ himself. So I must never take the parts of Christ and join them to a prostitute!* NCV™

**PROV 23:27** *A prostitute is a deep pit.* GW

### Homosexual acts

**ROM 1:26–27** [PAUL, SPEAKING OF UNGODLY PEOPLE:] For this reason God gave them over to dishonorable passions. For *their women exchanged the natural sexual relations for unnatural ones,* <sup>27</sup>*and likewise the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed in their passions for one another. Men committed*

Explain the irony spoken of in 2 Peter 2:19a.

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How else is sexual sin detrimental to oneself?

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What things can we do to avoid sexual sin? What are some preventative measures?

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## b) Pride in Action: Self-Exaltation and Boasting

(⇒ So, one's righteous standing is no reason to boast, as it is not due to what one does – but to faith, in 14. The New Order)

### Do not exalt yourself . . .

**PROV 25:6** *Do not exalt yourself in the presence of the king, And do not stand in the place of the great; . . .* NKJV

### . . . Honor others, rather than yourself

**ROM 12:10** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Love each other as brothers and sisters and *honor others more than you do yourself.* CEV

**PHIL 2:3** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility, be moved to *treat one another as more important than yourself.*

In accordance with honoring others rather than ourselves, we should treat others as more important.

### Do not dress lavishly for outward appearances

**1PET 3:3–4** [PETER, ADDRESSING WIVES:] *You should not use outward aids to make yourselves beautiful, such as the way you do your hair, or the jewelry you put on, or the dresses you wear. <sup>4</sup>Instead, your beauty should consist of your true inner self, the ageless beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of the greatest value in God's sight.*

GNT

To dress lavishly is in effect an attempt to exalt ourselves in the eyes of others. Correspondingly, it evidences vanity, which is also closely associated with pride.

### Those who exalt themselves will be humbled – and those who humble themselves will be exalted

**MATT 23:12** *And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*

## Do not boast about yourself . . .

**1COR 13:4B** *Love does not brag, it is not puffed up.*

**PROV 27:2** *Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips.*

## . . . Only boast about God

**JER 9:23–24** The LORD says, “*Wise people should not boast that they are wise. Powerful people should not boast that they are powerful. Rich people should not boast that they are rich.* <sup>24</sup>*If people want to boast, they should boast about this: They should boast that they understand and know me. They should boast that they know and understand that I, the LORD, act out of faithfulness, fairness, and justice in the earth and that I desire people to do these things,*” says the LORD.

If one has to boast, one should boast about matters that count, primarily knowledge of God and his attributes and deeds.

## Boasting about oneself typically is bad

**JAMES 4:16** [JAMES, TO SOME OF HIS READERS:] *But now you are proud, and you boast; all such boasting is wrong.* GNT

## Boasting is of no benefit . . .

**JER 48:30** I know his [Moab’s] gall,” declares the LORD, “and it’s futile; *the boasting that they do is futile.* ISV

## . . . Moreover, boasting leads to trouble

**PROV 17:19B** *Whoever brags a lot is asking for trouble.* NCV™

**2PET 2:18–19** [PETER, SPEAKING OF FALSE TEACHERS:] For by speaking high-sounding but empty words they are able to entice, with fleshly desires and with debauchery, people who have just escaped from those who reside in error. <sup>19</sup>*Although these false teachers promise such people freedom, they themselves are enslaved to immorality. For whatever a person succumbs to, to that he is enslaved.*

The false teachers promised that their immoral way would bring freedom, but ironically they themselves had become subject to and controlled by such immorality (v. 19; cf. 1Cor 6:12 ↑). Presumably sexual sin is primarily in view.

## . . . Sexual sin ultimately results in God’s judgment

**HEB 13:4** Marriage must be honored among all and the marriage bed kept undefiled, for *God will judge sexually immoral people and adulterers.*

## Note: The sexually immoral who believe and repent are forgiven

**LUKE 7:37–38, 47–50** *Then when a woman of that town, who was a sinner, learned that Jesus was dining at the Pharisee’s house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfumed oil.* <sup>38</sup>*As she stood behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. She wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the perfumed oil.* . . . [Jesus:] <sup>47</sup>*Therefore I tell you, her sins, which were many, are forgiven, thus she loved much; but the one who is forgiven little loves little.”* <sup>48</sup>*Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”* <sup>49</sup>*But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?”* <sup>50</sup>*He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”*

In being described as “a sinner” (v. 37), the woman was likely a prostitute. In v. 47a, Jesus is saying that the great love she had shown him (vv. 37–38) demonstrated that her many sins had been forgiven – rather than saying that it was the reason for why they were forgiven; for it was her faith that saved her (v. 50). One can infer that the love she showed Jesus was an expression of her faith – and presumably of her repentance as well.

## c) Sexual Sin

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### Avoid sexual sin . . .

**EPH 5:3** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] But *among you there must not be either sexual immorality, impurity of any kind, or greed, as these are not fitting for the saints.*

**JOHN 8:3–4, 7–11** The experts in the law and the Pharisees *brought a woman who had been caught committing adultery.* They made her stand in front of them <sup>4</sup>and said to Jesus, “Teacher, *this woman was caught in the very act of adultery.* . . . <sup>7</sup>When they persisted in asking him, he stood up straight and replied, “Whoever among you is guiltless may be the first to throw a stone at her.” <sup>8</sup>Then he bent over again and wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup>Now when they heard this, they began to drift away one at a time, starting with the older ones, until Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. <sup>10</sup>Jesus stood up straight and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” <sup>11</sup>She replied, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you either. *Go, and from now on do not sin any more.*”

### . . . Instead, be pure

**2COR 7:1** [PAUL:] Dear friends, we have these promises from God, so *we should make ourselves pure—free from anything that makes body or soul unclean. We should try to become holy in the way we live, because we respect God.* NCV™

### Sexual sin has ill consequences . . .

**1COR 6:18** Keep on running away from sexual immorality. *Any other sin that a person commits is outside his body, but the person who sins sexually sins against his own body.* ISV

In contrast to other sins, sexual sin involves the misuse and mistreatment of one's own body. Moreover, Paul seems to imply that sexual sin adversely affects the body or one's being in a deeper way than any other sin (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

Think of one person who you do not treat “as more important than yourself” (Phil 2:3). What would you do differently if you did treat them as such?

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How much time and money do you spend on your outward appearance? Should you cut back?

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Why is it the case that: “whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matt 23:12)? Is it solely due to God's intervention/judgment or is it in part (or at times) due to natural consequences?

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### c) Outcomes of Pride

#### Pride is very detrimental to a relationship with God . . .

**DEUT 8:14** [MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] ... *make sure that you do not become proud and forget the LORD your God who rescued you from Egypt, where you were slaves.* GNT

**Ps 10:4** [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *The wicked are too proud to turn to you or even think about you.* CEV

In their pride, the wicked have no desire and see no need to seek God, often due to a perceived self-sufficiency. Being “full of themselves” they have no room for God in their lives.

#### . . . Arrogance is similarly detrimental – notably in not obeying God’s commands

**NEH 9:16, 29A** [LEVITES, TO GOD:] But *they—our own ancestors—acted arrogantly. They became stubborn and wouldn’t obey your commands. . . .*<sup>29</sup>*You warned them in order to bring them back to your teachings, but they became arrogant and would not obey your commandments.* GW

#### Pride and arrogance lead to ill treatment of others

**Ps 31:18** Silence those liars— *all the proud and arrogant who speak with contempt about the righteous.* GNT

**Ps 10:2** *In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor . . .* ESV

#### Pride is associated with self-deception and flawed understanding

**OBAD 1:3–4** [GOD, TO THE NATION OF EDOM:] *Your pride has deceived you. Your capital is a fortress of solid rock; your home is high in the mountains, and so you say to yourself, ‘Who can ever pull me down?’*<sup>4</sup>*Even though you make your home as high as an eagle’s nest, so that it seems to be among the stars, yet I will pull you down.* GNT

**1TIM 6:4A** [PAUL, SPEAKING OF A TYPICAL FALSE TEACHER:] *This person is full of pride and understands nothing, but is sick with a love for arguing and fighting about words.* NCV™

What are the advantages and the disadvantages of riches? (Do not limit your answer to what is mentioned in this study.)

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Either explain Jesus’ words in Luke 6:24 or rewrite it in your own words to show your understanding of it.

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Do you use/invest your money primarily for your future on earth or your future in the afterlife?

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Verse 9 indicates that the afterlife is primarily in view. One must use worldly wealth for the benefit of others (v. 9), as opposed to hoarding it. Those who have not used worldly wealth – comparatively “very little” (v. 10) – as they ought to have, will not be given the “true riches” (v. 11) of God’s kingdom – i.e. “much” (v. 10) wealth. Note that in v. 10, “unrighteous” (NASB) and “unjust” (NKJV) are alternative translations to “dishonest”.

### Other shortcomings of riches

**PROV 11:4** *Wealth won’t help in the time of judgment, but righteousness will deliver from death.* ISV

**PROV 13:8** *The rich may have to pay a ransom for their lives, but the poor will face no such danger.* NCV™

**ECCL 5:11** *The more wealth people have, the more friends they have to help spend it. So what do people really gain? They gain nothing except to look at their riches.* NCV™

### Pride leads to one’s downfall – in contrast to humility

**PROV 18:12** *Before destruction the heart of a person is proud, but humility comes before honor.*

### God punishes the proud and arrogant . . .

**PROV 16:5** *The LORD detests those who are proud; truly they will not go unpunished.* ISV

**MAL 4:1A** *“Certainly the day is coming! It will burn like a furnace. All arrogant people and all evildoers will be like straw. The day that is coming will burn them up completely,” says the LORD of Armies.*

GW

### . . . As such, God humbles the proud

**ISA 2:11–12** *A day is coming when human pride will be ended and human arrogance destroyed. Then the LORD alone will be exalted.<sup>12</sup> On that day the LORD Almighty will humble everyone who is powerful, everyone who is proud and conceited.* GNT

Why is pride so detrimental to a relationship with God?

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How does pride lead to ill treatment of others?

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What is the connection between pride and self-deception?

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## b) Further Warnings about Riches

### Riches are not secure . . .

**1TIM 6:17** [PAUL, INSTRUCTING TIMOTHY WHAT TO TEACH BELIEVERS:] Tell those who have the riches of this world not to be arrogant and *not to place their confidence in anything as uncertain as riches*. Instead, they should place their confidence in God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. GW

### . . . and we do not know what the future holds

**PROV 27:1** *Do not boast about tomorrow; for you do not know what a day may bring forth.*

We do not know what the future holds, for ourselves or our riches.

### Life does not last and the dead cannot take their riches with them . . .

**PS 49:10** *Surely one sees that even wise people die; fools and spiritually insensitive people all pass away and leave their wealth to others.*

**1TIM 6:7** *For we did not bring anything into the world, and surely we cannot take anything out of it.* ISV

### . . . Moreover, hoarding riches will bring ill consequences in the afterlife

**LUKE 6:24–25A** [JESUS:] *But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your comfort already.* <sup>25</sup>*“Woe to you who are well satisfied with food now, for you will be hungry.*

**LUKE 16:9–12** [JESUS:] *And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by how you use worldly wealth, so that when it runs out you will be welcomed into the eternal homes.* <sup>10</sup>*“The one who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and the one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.* <sup>11</sup>*If then you haven’t been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will entrust you with the true riches?* <sup>12</sup>*And if you haven’t been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you your own?*

Bear in mind that the knowledge that wealth ultimately comes from God is no reason to keep it for oneself. Rather, one must use wealth wisely, remembering that: riches give one great potential for good – for God’s kingdom and for helping others; and there are grave potential pitfalls associated with accumulating riches (as the other subsections in this and the following section indicate). Also note that the knowledge that wealth ultimately comes from God rather than our own efforts, should encourage us to not be focused on chasing wealth.

How do riches form a barrier to our relationship with God?

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How can we assess if we love money? If a person comes to the realization that they do love money, what could they do about it?

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If you are presently contemplating buying new clothes or making costly renovations to your house, how necessary are these? What steps can we take in order to be content with what we have?

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## d) Antithesis of Pride: Humility

Humility is the opposite of pride. It is a most critical attitude for maintaining one’s guard against things that can cause one to fall – spiritually and otherwise. This is in contrast to pride which opens oneself up to many kinds of destructive dangers (as reflected in the previous section, *Outcomes of Pride*).

### Be humble, particularly before God

**MIC 6:8B** This is what the LORD requires from you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to *live humbly with your God*. GW

**DAN 10:12** Then he [an angelic messenger] said to me, “Don’t be afraid, Daniel, for from the very first day you applied your mind to understand and to *humble yourself before your God*, your words were heard. I have come in response to your words.

### Humbly acknowledge your unworthiness before God

**GEN 18:27** Abraham spoke again: “*Please forgive my boldness in continuing to speak to you, Lord. I am only a man and have no right to say anything*. GNT

**LUKE 7:6–7** So Jesus went with them. When Jesus wasn’t far from the house, *the officer sent some friends to tell him, “Lord, don’t go to any trouble for me! I am not good enough for you to come into my house. <sup>7</sup>And I am certainly not worthy to come to you.* Just say the word, and my servant will get well. CEV

### Fast as a means of humbling yourself before God

**EZRA 8:21** [EZRA THE PRIEST:] *I called for a fast there by the Ahava Canal, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and seek from him a safe journey for us, our children, and all our property.*

Possibly fasting is seen as a means of humbling oneself as it heightens our sense of our own weakness and insufficiency, particularly as we come before God.

## Be humble towards others

**EPH 4:2A** *Be humble and gentle in every way.* GW

**1PET 5:5B** *And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*

## Humility is important for obeying and serving God

**PHIL 2:5–8** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had, <sup>6</sup>who though he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave, by looking like other men, and by sharing in human nature. <sup>8</sup>He humbled himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross!*

Jesus Christ's example illustrates the role of humility in obeying and serving God, thus pointing to the importance of humility for doing so.

## God cares for and blesses the humble

**Ps 18:27** [DAVID, TO GOD:] *You rescue the humble, but you put down all who are proud.* CEV

**Ps 25:9** [DAVID, SPEAKING OF GOD:] *He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.* ESV

**1PET 5:6** [PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] *Humble yourselves, then, under God's mighty hand, so that he will lift you up in his own good time.*

GNT

It would appear that James is making a generalization, as obviously not all who are poor are rich in faith, and presumably some who are not poor will have a part in the kingdom.

## Desire for riches can also lead to mistreatment of others

**2PET 2:3A** [PETER, SPEAKING OF FALSE TEACHERS:] *And in their greed they will exploit you with deceptive words.*

**PROV 18:23** *The poor person pleads for mercy, the wealthy man responds harshly.* ISV

The rich are often unmerciful in their pursuit of increased wealth.

## So, do not love money . . .

**1TIM 3:2–3** [PAUL, SPEAKING OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS:] *The overseer then must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, an able teacher, <sup>3</sup>not a drunkard, not violent, but gentle, not contentious, *free from the love of money.**

**ECCL 5:10** *The one who loves money will never be satisfied with money, he who loves wealth will never be satisfied with his income. This also is futile.*

## . . . Be content with what you have

**HEB 13:5** *Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for God has said, "I will never leave you or abandon you."* ISV

**1TIM 6:6–8** *Now godliness combined with contentment brings great profit. <sup>7</sup>For we have brought nothing into this world and so we cannot take a single thing out either. <sup>8</sup>But if we have food and shelter, we will be satisfied with that.*

## Note: Wealth ultimately comes from God

**1CHR 29:12** [DAVID, TO GOD:] *You are the source of wealth and honor; you rule over all. You possess strength and might to magnify and give strength to all.*

## a) Riches and Godliness

(⇒ *Justice and the Needy (I): Instructions*, in 32. *Justice*; *Justice and the Needy (II): Insights*, in 32. *Justice*)

### Riches are a barrier to a relationship with God

**MATT 6:19–21, 24** *Do not accumulate for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup>But accumulate for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ... <sup>24</sup>“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.*

**MARK 10:23, 25** Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “*How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! ... <sup>25</sup>It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.*”

### Riches in fact draw one away from God . . .

**1TIM 6:9–10** *But people who want to get rich keep toppling into temptation and are trapped by many stupid and harmful desires that plunge them into destruction and ruin. <sup>10</sup>For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, in their eagerness to get rich, have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with much pain.* ISV

### . . . Contrastingly, the poor are given prominence as recipients of the gospel and God’s kingdom

**LUKE 4:18A** [JESUS:] The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because *he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.*

**JAMES 2:5** Listen, my dear brothers and sisters! *Did not God choose the poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him?*

How does one “be humble”? What attitudes and actions does it involve?

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Why do you think we need to be humble before God? How does it help us?

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How could you show more humility in your relationships with others? (For example, do you need to change your attitude to yourself or certain other people, or start/stop doing particular things?)

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## II. Riches and Sex

Riches and sex are both good in themselves; in fact they are blessings from God. However they both are easily and often misused, bringing ill effects for both ourselves and others. Indeed, few things have the capacity of riches or sex for both good and harm. So it should be no surprise that they feature so prominently in the Bible's teaching on our relationships with others and moreover our relationship with God.