

How to Live a Life That Honors God

July 12, 2026

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Proverbs 11:1-7

Session Outline

1. His Delight (Proverbs 11:1)
2. The Integrity of the Upright (Proverbs 11:2-3)
3. Righteousness Rescues (Proverbs 11:4-7)

Theological Theme

Beware of the allure of wealth, it can't save us. Only Jesus can.

Call to Action

Identify one area where you need to display godly character this week and then respond in action.

How to Live a Life That Honors God

Introduction

The 1980s produced some classic movies. The fact that we still watch (and quote) them today is a testament to the characters and themes in the movies. Though our outfits of choice (mostly) look vastly different, human nature doesn't change.

With the easy-to-love Mr. Miyagi and classic lines like “wax on, wax off,” one such beloved 80s film is *The Karate Kid*.

In it, the main character, Daniel, finds himself as the target of school bullies from the Cobra Kai dojo. Looking to learn self-defense, Daniel turns to Mr. Miyagi. But instead of only developing the skills to defend himself, thanks to hard work and perseverance in the mundane moments, Daniel develops something far more important: character.

In the karate championship, when Daniel's teen nemesis is encouraged to win their final fight at all costs (even if it means cheating), Daniel plays by the rules and still comes out on top.¹

Where the karate kid had to fight literally to build his character, we, as believers, often must fight figuratively. We must fight against the desires of our flesh and against what culture tells us is right. Instead, we are to choose righteousness as defined by God.

- ❓ How would you define a person of good character?
- ❓ How do you think our world defines good character? Is there a difference?

Session Summary

Proverbs 11 teaches to be fair and honest in our dealings, not cheating others out of what they are owed. It teaches us to live an upright life, guided by integrity and honesty (rather than treachery or arrogance).

This proverb also warns us that the path of the wicked is not worth it. Wealth unjustly gained won't help us on judgment day. Wicked living will cause a person to fall and get trapped by their own ambition. No amount of worldly wealth will matter for eternity. This isn't the path to take. The key to a flourishing character is following Jesus.

1. His Delight (Proverbs 11:1)

- ❓ What do we learn from these verses about what God values in a person's character?
- ❓ What type of character trait does the person with dishonest scales display?

This verse tells us that “dishonest scales are detestable” to God. Detestable. In the ancient Near East, sellers would sometimes keep two different sets of stones for weighing goods (one for when they were buying, and a different one for when they were selling, both designed to, literally, tip the scales in their favor).²

God made His detestation of such practices known through His law:

“Do not have differing weights in your bag, one heavy and one light. Do not have differing dry measures in your house, a larger and a smaller. You must have a full and honest weight, a full and honest dry measure, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. For everyone who does such things and acts unfairly is detestable to the LORD your God.”

—Deuteronomy 25:13-16

Do not be unfair in measurements of length, weight, or volume. You are to have honest balances, honest weights, an honest dry measure, and an honest liquid measure; I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

—Leviticus 19:35–36

In fact, this was apparently such a concern that it's listed more than once throughout Proverbs (16:11; 20:10,23). Dishonest scales were a form of stealing, and therefore in direct opposition of God's commandment in Exodus 20:15.

- ❓ What frees believers to be honest with others, even when it is not personally beneficial?

The Righteous and Wicked

The righteous follow a clear path in life, are delivered from troubles, are generous, and strengthen their communities. The wicked hoard money but are not saved by it, are a curse to their families and communities, and face certain punishment.

Rather than dishonest scales, tipped in whatever direction provides the seller the most benefit, God delights in “an accurate weight.” God desires honesty in dealings and that we conduct ourselves honestly and with fairness and integrity. Even though cheating the system might be the norm, God delights in integrity of character (even when not necessarily expected by our culture).

Most of us probably don’t use literal scales for business dealings today, but we can still heed the wisdom in this proverb to be honest and fair in our dealings with others (even when it is not advantageous to us). God delights in this type of integrity of character.

2. The Integrity of the Upright (Proverbs 11:2-3)

- ❓ What do we learn from these verses about what God values in a person’s character?
- ❓ What do these verses warn against?

We have all encountered the pitfalls of arrogance (either in ourselves or in others). Nothing good comes of arrogance, but verse two specifically calls out disgrace as a side effect. Proverbs 13:10 speaks of arrogance, too:

*Arrogance leads to nothing but strife,
but wisdom is gained by those who take advice.*
—Proverbs 13:10

The dishonest scales from verse one are used by an arrogant heart. Conversely, the humble heart (which has given up the temptation of arrogance) is wise. Humility is a simple thing, but that doesn’t make it easy. Humility is always worth pursuing because it is vital for a flourishing, godly character!

In this verse, we are reminded of a similar teaching in Proverbs:

*Pride comes before destruction,
and an arrogant spirit before a fall.*
—Proverbs 16:18

- ❓ How does personal arrogance show a lack of trust in God and dependence on Him?

Rather than behaving arrogantly, the upright person is guided by integrity. They are genuine and reliable. They do the right thing, even when no one is watching. The Hebrew word used here (*tummâ*) is also used to describe Job’s strength of character:

Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? No one else on earth is like him, a man of perfect integrity, who fears God and turns away from evil. He still retains his integrity, even though you incited me against him, to destroy him for no good reason."

—Job 2:3

Just as Job's integrity guided him to worship through great tragedy instead of cursing God (Job 1:20-22), our integrity should guide us to do right, even when it's difficult (and sometimes, it is incredibly difficult). This type of integrity is a sign of a flourishing character! Conversely, the dishonesty of the treacherous person destroys them.

3. Righteousness Rescues (Proverbs 11:4-7)

- ❓ What do we learn from these verses about what God values in a person's character?
- ❓ What point did the writer make about wealth?

The "wealth" in view in verse four should be understood as wealth obtained by dishonest and wicked means (like the wealth obtained by the "dishonest scales" in verse one).³ As we've studied earlier in this series, money in and of itself is morally neutral. When we manage our wealth in partnership with the Lord, He can do great things with it!

Still, no amount of wealth will help our position on judgment day. Amassing great quantities of wealth dishonestly may help you in life (money often makes life easier), but it offers no protection from God's wrath. Believers know that the only thing that can save us is belief in Jesus. When we believe in Him and walk faithfully and intentionally with Him, we naturally become more righteous in character.

The next two verses compare the fate of the righteous person with the fate of the wicked person.⁴ The NLT translation is helpful for understanding:

*The godly are directed by honesty;
the wicked fall beneath their load of sin.*

—Proverbs 11:5 (NLT)

The righteous person is guided by honesty. This is the way of Christ. The wicked person, in contrast, will eventually fall because of his or her wickedness.

Similarly, verse six teaches that a person living righteously will be rescued because of how they live. The wicked person, in contrast, is the architect of their own demise. We don't have to look too far to know this to be true. Repeatedly, people are found out by their sinful deeds.



What are some ways you have seen that the wicked fall beneath a load of sin?

Followers of Christ are called to live according to wisdom throughout the Bible:

Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be sober-minded and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires of your former ignorance. But as the one who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct; for it is written, Be holy, because I am holy.

—1 Peter 1:13-16

But that is not how you came to know Christ, assuming you heard about him and were taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, to take off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires, to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth.

—Ephesians 4:20-14

Righteous living isn't just a good idea, it is foundational to the Christian life. This is the true key to developing a flourishing character: being rooted in Christ.

A bleak outlook remains for the wicked. When they die, all their scheming, plans, and ambitions die with them, along with all hope they placed in their wealth. The point is clear: Dishonest living just isn't worth it.

Conclusion

Our exploration of a righteous character today began with a reminder that God delights in our honest and fair dealings with others, even when everyone around us might not hold themselves to as high of a standard. This is such an important idea that it is echoed several times throughout Proverbs and mandated in God's law!

We live as people of character by being humble and upright. The humble person is wise (compared to the arrogant person, who is destined for disgrace). The upright person makes decisions based on their integrity (compared to the treacherous person, who is on a road to destruction). As believers, we live further as people of integrity as we live more like Jesus.

Our final section of verses compared righteous living and wicked living. The wealth unjustly accumulated by the wicked won't save them. In fact, this pursuit will eventually trap them and cause them to fall and fail. When they die, all their aspirations die with them. The wealth they gained dishonestly can't help them any further.

The righteous, however, are guided by honesty. Their path is clear. Their right living saves them! (Because it exhibits living by grace through faith in Jesus.) This is the path to take. This is the path of a person of true flourishing character.

- ❓ What might be the modern-day equivalent of using “honest scales?”
- ❓ How can we encourage one another on toward strong, Christlike character?
- ❓ How does living honestly give us opportunity to share our hope with others?

Prayer of Response

Thank God that He loves righteousness, honesty, and justice. Ask for His help living a life of righteousness and integrity (whether in public or in private). Ask Him to reveal any areas you might be trying to retain control over your life and follow your own desires rather than submit to Him that you might turn those over to Him.

Memory Verse

*Dishonest scales are detestable to the LORD,
but an accurate weight is his delight.*
—Proverbs 11:1

Additional Resources

- *Proverbs* by J. Vernon McGee
- *Exalting Jesus in Proverbs* by Daniel Akin and Jonathan Akin
- *Be Skillful* by Warren Wiersbe



Historical Context of Proverbs

Purpose

Because these proverbs are in the Bible, they do not just entertain; they exhort, encourage, and offer hope. Solomon called readers, especially youth, to pursue wisdom rather than foolishness. He encouraged the inexperienced to become wise rather than mockers, to be teachable rather than incorrigible, to live rather than to die. He predicted that people who pursued wisdom would generally find success and happiness in this life, but he promised that they would absolutely find joy and blessing in eternity.

Author

Solomon is credited with the proverbs in chaps. 1–29 of the book of Proverbs (1:1; 10:1). There is biblical evidence that Solomon was wise and a collector of wise sayings (1Kg 3:5–14; 4:29–34; 5:7, 12; 10:2–3, 23–24; 11:41). Chapters 1–24 may have been written down during his reign, 970–931 BC. The proverbs in chaps. 25–29 were Solomon’s proverbs collected by King Hezekiah, who reigned 716–687 BC (25:1). The last two chapters are credited to Agur and Lemuel (30:1; 31:1), about whom nothing else is known. An editor was inspired to collect the proverbs of Solomon, Agur, and Lemuel into the book we now have.

Setting

The reign of Solomon represented the peak of prosperity for the nation of Israel. The period saw the greatest extent of Israel’s territory, and there was peace and international trade (1Kg 4:20–25; 10:21–29). It is likely Solomon knew about the ancient tradition of wisdom in Egypt (1Kg 3:1), but through inspiration and God’s gift he composed even better sayings (1Kg 3:12; 10:6–7, 23). Solomon addressed his teaching to his son or sons, but these inspired wise sayings are applicable to all people. The book of Proverbs, like the rest of the Bible, contains stories, teaching, and examples. People should make appropriate application of these truths to their own situations (1Co 10:11).

Special Features

What is a proverb? A secular proverb seeks to state a general (not absolute) truth, such as “a fool and his money are soon parted.” It is typically pithy, that is, it is brief but rich in meaning: “No pain, no gain.” A proverb is practical; it gives advice that is useful in the real world: “A stitch in time saves nine.” It should be applied; the reader should consider what changes he should make in his own life in light of the proverb: “Charity begins at home.” A proverb is derived from astute observations about how life usually works; the creator of a proverb shows himself very knowledgeable and perceptive, able to see what is generally true and to draw conclusions from it: “The pen is mightier than the sword.”

Extended Commentary

Proverbs 11:1-7

11:1 On dishonest scales, see Dt 25:13–16.

11:2 Arrogance makes a person an obstinate fool or mocker (see 1:22) who will be disgraced (13:18). Wisdom comes from the fear of the Lord (9:10), which comes from faith and presupposes humility—giving up arrogance and self-sufficiency.

11:3 Integrity implies genuineness and reliability. Perversity implies subversion and deceit, treachery (see 2:20–22), and destructiveness.

11:4 Wealth here should be understood to refer to wealth obtained by wickedness.

11:5 To clear a path is literally to make it straight, to improve it so it is easy to walk on. A blameless person will not grow weary or fall on such a path and so will reach his destination.

11:6 Verse 6b is a version of the theme that the wicked are caught by their own malicious schemes.

11:7–8 Verse 7 implies that when a righteous person dies, his hope does not vanish. The book of Proverbs supports this implication of eternal rewards, including vv. 6, 8 here (see 3:22).⁵

References

1. *The Karate Kid*. Directed by John G. Avildsen. Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures, 1984.
2. Christopher A. Beetham and Nancy L. Erickson, eds., *The NIV Application Commentary on the Bible, One-Volume Edition*, NIV Application Commentary (Zondervan Academic, 2024), 500.
3. David K. Stabnow, “Proverbs,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 967.
4. Beetham and Erickson.
5. Stabnow.