

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues

Topic 14 – Pride

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Introduction

“Self-centered indulgence, pride and a lack of shame over sin are now emblems of the American lifestyle.” -Billy Graham

“Pride must die in you, or nothing of heaven can live in you.” -Andrew Murray, *Humility*

“A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you.” -C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Stuart Scott in his pamphlet on pride and humility said this of humility: “It is probably safe to say that humility is the one character quality that will enable us to be all Christ wants us to be. We cannot come to God without it. We cannot love God supremely without it. We cannot be an effective witness for Christ without it. We cannot love and serve others without it. We cannot lead in a godly way without it. We cannot communicate properly without it. We cannot resolve conflict without it. We cannot deal with the sin of others rightly without it. We especially cannot resist sin without it. In short, we must embrace and live out humility in order to truly live and be who God means for us to be.”¹

He then went on to define pride as, “The mindset of self (a master’s mindset rather than that of a servant): a focus on self and the service of self, a pursuit of self-recognition and self-exaltation, and a desire to control and use all things for self.”²

Biblical Terms for Pride

Hebrew: Various words are used to convey the concept of pride, and all have very similar meanings.

1. גָּאָה – *ga'ah* – verb: to rise up, grow up, be exalted in triumph
2. גָּוֹן – *ga'own* – noun: exaltation, majesty, pride
3. גָּבַחַ – *gabahh* – verb: to be high, be exalted
4. גִּבְהַ – *gobahh* – noun: height, exaltation
5. גֵּוָה – *gevah* – noun: pride, lifting up
6. רֹהַב – *rohab* – noun: arrogance, pride, object of pride

Greek: The words used in the New Testament for pride fall into two separate categories. One depicts the stretching of the neck as if to hold one’s head up high. The other carries the idea of blindness, or being blinded by a cloud of smoke.

1. Τυφώω – *tuphoó* – verb: puff up, make haughty; (from *typhos* “smoke”)
2. ὑπερήφανος – *hyperēphanos* – adjective: “showing one's self above others, overtopping, conspicuous above others, pre-eminent”
3. καύχησις – *kauchēsis* – noun: “the act of glorying”
4. ἀλαζονεία – *alazoneia* – noun: “empty, braggart talk; an insolent and empty assurance, which trusts in its own power and resources and shamefully despises and violates divine laws and human rights”

¹ Stuart Scott, *From Pride to Humility* (USA: Focus Publishing Inc., 2002), 1.

² *Ibid.*, 6.

Pride is...

1. A worldly temptation – “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the **boastful pride of life**, is not from the Father, but is from the world.” (1 Jn. 2:16)
2. Hated by God – “**Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD**; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished.” (Prov. 16:5)
3. Sin – “Haughty eyes and **a proud heart**, the lamp of the wicked, **is sin**.” (Prov. 21:4)
4. Defiling – “And He was saying, “That which proceeds out of the man, that is **what defiles the man**. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, **pride** and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”” (Mk. 7:20-23)
5. A hindrance to seeking God – “The wicked, in the **haughtiness** of his countenance, **does not seek Him**. All his thoughts are, ‘There is no God.’” (Ps. 10:4)
6. Destructive – “Pride goes before **destruction**, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.” (Prov. 16:18)
7. Divisive – “**Be of the same mind** towards one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.” (Rom. 12:16)
8. Obstructing to love – “Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; **love does not brag and is not arrogant**.” (1 Cor. 13:4)
9. A sign of the last days – “For we realize that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be **lovers of self**, lovers of money, **boastful, arrogant**, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy.” (2 Tim. 3:1-2)

Manifestations of Pride

Pride can be a very deceptive sin, making it difficult to recognize when we are guilty of it. What follows is a list of *possible* manifestations of pride. Not all of the items in this list definitely indicate that you are a proud person. Rather, if you see one or some of them in your life you can examine your heart motives in that/those area(s) and ask God to search your heart and see if there is any pride in it.

1. Self-Righteousness – The Pharisees, Lk. 18:11-13
2. Unsanctified Knowledge – This kind of knowledge puffs up, 1 Cor. 8:1-2
3. Desire for a Position – Wanting the seat of honor, Matt. 23:6
4. Ability & Accomplishments – King Uzziah, 2 Chron. 26:16
5. Wealth – Timothy was to warn others about this, 1 Tim. 6:17
6. Comparing Yourself to Others – When it is done for the sake of making yourself look better than someone else.
7. ³Complaining Against God – You think you deserve better than what God has given you to endure in life. (Num. 14:1-11; Rom. 9:20)
8. Anger – When your rights or expectations are not met, you use anger to get things to be how you think they should be.
9. Inflated View of Your Value – Your pride can make you think the very unreasonable thought that you are worth more than others. (Gal. 6:3)
10. Focusing on Your Lack of Abilities and Gifts/Self-Pity – You may not seem proud, but that’s because you’re so self-focused and carrying a “woe is me” attitude with you.
11. Perfectionism – When this is done for recognition and not for God’s glory, it is pride.

³ Manifestations from “Complaining Against God” onward have been selected in part from Stuart Scott’s *From Pride to Humility* Pamphlet.

12. Talking Too Much (about yourself) – In conversation you aren't usually listening when the other person is talking, rather you are thinking of the next thing you will say. (Prov. 10:19; 27:2)
13. Devastation over Criticism – You have put so much value in your own abilities and performance that criticism rocks this idol you have erected to and for yourself.
14. Unteachable – What could someone possibly teach you? You've heard it all. (Prov. 19:20)
15. Sarcastic, Degrading, Hurtful – You put others down to build yourself up. (Prov. 12:18)
16. Defensiveness or Blame-shifting – Nothing could ever really be *your* fault.
17. Lack of Gratitude – You think you deserve the good things that come your way in life, so you are not thankful. (2 Chron. 32:25)
18. Lack of Service – You either are not thinking of others or you will only serve if someone asks you and only as long as you receive praise. (Gal. 5:13)
19. Lack of Compassion – You own problems and desires blind you to others'. (Matt. 18:23-35)
20. Lack of Confession and Asking Forgiveness – You are too blinded by your pride to see the need. (Matt. 5:23-24; Rom. 12:18)
21. Lack of Biblical Prayer – If you do pray, it's about yourself rather than God or others. (Lk. 18:10-14)
22. Lack of Close Relationships – You are so self-sufficient, you don't need the intimate fellowship God designed for you. (Prov. 18:1; Heb. 10:24-25)
23. Disrespect for Authority – You do not like being told what to do by others, even if they are God-appointed authorities. (1 Pet. 2:13-17)
24. Giving Your Opinion When No One Has Asked For It – Your opinions are just that good. (Phil. 2:1-4)
25. Impatience or Irritability with Others – You cannot be interrupted or thrown off your schedule. People are cones through which to be maneuvered. (Eph. 4:31-32; Phil. 2:1-4)
26. Jealousy – You cannot be happy for other people's success. (1 Cor. 13:4)
27. Manipulation – You view people in terms of what they can do for you.
28. Drawing Attention to Yourself – Since you believe people should be paying attention to you, your dress, speech, or actions are means to get that attention. You might also have a tendency to just talk about your problems all the time. (1 Pet. 3:3-4)

It's plain to see why pride is such a common and endemic vice in the world, since it has so many subtle and not so subtle manifestations. This means that we have the responsibility to examine our hearts and ask God to do the same so that a root of pride does not grow up within us.

Biblical Examples of How God Handles Pride

As was aforementioned, God hates pride. In the Old Testament verses about God not wanting to give his glory to another or about him acting for his name's sake are abundant. Throughout the Bible there are many examples of how God handles pride, but two seem to stand out from the rest as glaring warnings to the pride.

*Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4)*⁴

Context: Judah in exile in Babylon and Daniel is a young man who has been selected to serve high in the Babylonian court. In Daniel 4:10-17 King Nebuchadnezzar's dream is relayed. Daniel is the interpreter. He says: "The tree you saw" (v. 20), "it is you" (4:22). You have a chance to repent (4:27) and acknowledge that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He will (4:25). It has been a year (4:29). What will the king do? From his response and the consequences of that response, we can learn four lessons about pride.

⁴ Kyle Jenison, "From Pride to Humility", DCHS Chapel, Daniel 4:28-37, 2013.

-Lesson 1: *Those who walk in pride worship self* (vv. 28-30).

Nebuchadnezzar was looking over the kingdom he had built. In human terms, he probably had much in which to boast. This is the man who built the famed Hanging Gardens of Babylon for one of his foreign wives whose homeland was greener and lusher than Babylon.

Do we not look over our lives at times and begin to see how much we've done to build our little kingdoms of self? Do we not count up our accomplishments, and convince ourselves that "we've done alright!"? It could even be the degree to which you are involved in or have served the Lord! Falling into this line of thinking is easier than it may seem.

-Lesson 2: *Those who walk in pride will be humbled* (vv. 31-33).

You can see the purpose of this humiliation in verse 32, "...until you know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes." Notice that the change sought deals with the mind, which is the driving force behind repentance. You could change your behavior to put on the façade of repentance, but unless your mind is changed on the matter genuine repentance is still far off.

So the picture of Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation was: "Ate grass...hair grew as long as eagles' feathers...nails were like birds' claws" (4:33). Embarrassing, humiliating. Then there is the transition to humility, and the next two lessons lay out that path.

-Lesson 3: *Those who walk in humility worship God* (vv. 34-35, 37).

Note the contrast between these verses and verse 30. Nebuchadnezzar has had a change of mind and heart towards himself and Yahweh. When we consider God as he considers God in this passage, it makes our pride and our efforts to control our little kingdoms seem so pathetic! Instead, we should recognize his dominion over our lives and the circumstances (past, present, and future) of our lives.

-Lesson 4: *Those who walk in humility will be honored* (v. 36).

He has his reason and his reign re-established once he humbled himself before God. While this part is not a guarantee and should definitely not be the driving force of humbling ourselves before an almighty God, the Bible often speaks about God blessing those who serve him wholeheartedly and in humility. Though that *may* occur somewhat in this life, it *will* occur in the next when we reign with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom.

Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:20-23)

Circa AD 44, Herod Agrippa had become very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. Consequently Herod had done something to limit their supply of grain from Galilee, which they had relied on for thousands of years (1 Kings 5:9). In Acts 12, we see the people from Tyre and Sidon coming to make peace with Herod and as he addressed them in his royal attire they began to honor him as a god saying, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"

Luke records that Herod Agrippa was then struck "immediately" by an angel of the Lord because he had not given glory to God. Later he was eaten by worms and died. Josephus records the same events in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, writing that Herod was struck down during his oration and after five days of suffering, he died.

Pride is a disgusting sin in the eyes of God. He will not tolerate it because he is the only one worthy of praise and glory. When men seek to honor themselves, they are all eventually

humbled. Consider any ruler at any time in history. All of them have died and many of them suffered great humiliation before their death.

Pride is a destructive sin about which the Bible says much. Therefore it is critical to understand how to fight against it in our lives as we seek to honor the Lord. As we have seen in previous studies, fighting sin is done by putting off old ways of sin (e.g., pride) and putting on new ways of righteousness (e.g., humility). Once we see the fruit of humility in our lives, we can know that we are properly combatting the sin of pride.

Humility

If we are to successfully fight the sin of pride, we need to start with cultivating a proper view of self in relation to God and to other people. We need to remember the transcendence of our God and our equality among others around us.

1. *A right view of self before God.* We cannot expect humility to grow in us if we do not first grow in our appreciation for the transcendence and majesty of our Creator. When we actually understand and think about our God for how he has been revealed in Scripture, in creation, and in our own lives, then we are in the right place to genuinely consider true humility. When the Psalmist in Psalm 8 considered God's creative power, he was drawn to realize his own lowliness in contrast. It is truly a mystery as to why God would consider us at all.

“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained; What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him?” (Ps. 8:3-4)

The truth is that God does consider us, his lowly creation. He has graciously chosen to bless us with various gifts to be used for his service. Too often we take these gifts, abilities, and accomplishments and think that we have in some way earned them. We tend to take prideful possession of the things God has allowed us to possess in his grace. Paul recognized this danger as he wrote to the Corinthians.

“For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive?” (1 Cor. 4:7a)

Later on in his letter, as he recounted to whom Jesus revealed himself and when, Paul humbly admitted that he was the least of the apostles since he had persecuted the church previous to his conversion. Paul then made clear that he was nothing without the grace of God. Of all of the early church leaders, Paul potentially had the most in which to boast. Yet, he was careful to remember and bring to his readers' attention that while he did the work, it was according to the grace of God in him.

For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. **But by the grace of God I am what I am**, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet **not I, but the grace of God with me.** (1 Cor. 15:9-10)

In the book of Job, God interrupts Job and his friends as they debate the cause(s) of all of Job's suffering. God presents himself as an omniscient, eternal, and omnipotent ruler of the universe. In response, Job said the following:

"I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' "Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know." 'Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and **You instruct me.**' "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You; **Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes.**" (Job 42:2-6)

This should be our constant mindset in life. We should yearn to be instructed by our Creator, and we should be always ready to retract our pride and come before him humbly, for we cannot be truly instructed if we do not hold a heart attitude of repentance and the humility that requires. Having a right view of ourselves before God will lead us to have a right view of ourselves in relation to the other people God has placed around us according to his sovereignty.

2. *A right view of self before others.* God did not create us in isolation, rather in community with other believers. The sooner we can come to the realization of this reality, the better. Very familiar to Christians are Paul's quotation of Psalm 14 and 53 in Romans 3. No one is righteous. This reminder to the church at Rome comes on the heels of the point that Jews are not better than Gentiles. The line of thinking is this: Jews (although God's chosen people in the Old Testament) are not better than Greeks (and other Gentiles) because all of mankind is wicked and totally depraved.

What then? **Are we better than they? Not at all;** for we have already charged that **both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;** as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." (Rom. 3:9-12)

We must remember this spiritual reality as we live among other people who have also been created in his image. When we begin to view ourselves as more righteous than others, we are committing the sin of pride and we need to remember that we are equally as wicked and depraved. This is where self-righteous judgmentalism is most often seen, when we compare ourselves to others and convince ourselves that we are better than them because we do not sin as often or as badly as they do.

Paul urged the believers at Philippi to be united and humility was the path to this destination. In Philippians 2:2 Paul exhorts them to be united in mind, love, spirit, and purpose and then he wrote the following:

"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with **humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;** do not merely look out for your own personal interests but also for the interests of others." (Phil. 2:3-4)

Not only should we view others as equal with us in regard to our total depravity, we should go a step further and consider them as more important than ourselves. Surely this mindset, if put into action, would revolutionize homes, communities, churches, schools...etc. for God's glory. We know this is how we should view other people because this is how Christ viewed other people. Paul went on to explain:

"**Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,** who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but

emptied Himself, taking the form of a **bond-servant**, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, **He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**” (Phil. 2:5-8)

Christ had every right to demand that people respect and look up to him, yet he never exercised that right. What an incredible example to us!

Ultimately, growing in humility is all about God’s glory. When we are proud, we are not giving glory to God, the One who is all deserving of it. Instead, we are trying to take that glory for ourselves because we believe in our pride that we deserve it. When we are humble, God gets the glory he rightfully deserves. This should play a large part in our motivation to pursue humility. God loves the humble because he gets more glory as he uses them for his purposes. The more humble we are the more God will use us to accomplish his will.

Real Life Scenarios

Yourself: You have been going to church faithfully for as long as you can remember. You’re involved in a growth group that you attend faithfully as well. However, when you look at your spiritual life over the last ten years it is hard to see any evidence that you have applied anything you’ve learned at either growth group or at church. In addition, there have been multiple times when people have tried to talk to you about potential sin issues in your life, but you quickly excuse yourself from any guilt because it makes you feel uncomfortable.

- A. What are possible reasons for this lack of growth?
- B. What manifestations of pride exist in this scenario?
- C. Where would be a good starting point to begin dealing with your pride?

Someone Else: Amy is single and for a long time wanted to get married, but things just never worked out that way. After her last potential relationship fell apart, she decided to take her career more seriously and decided to take on another job as well to “stay busy” since she was having a hard time coming to grips with the possibility of remaining single. As she spent more time at these jobs, she seemed to attract promotions and succeeds in every facet of her work. Her attitude towards her co-workers has become cold because she finds herself competing with them constantly. Her local church involvement has dwindled because she often has work that needs to get done on the weekends. She has started to view her family as unimportant since they don’t take their careers as seriously as she does.

- A. When did Amy’s problems begin? At what point did she go down the wrong path?
- B. What is the most effective way to reach out to her at this point?
- C. Where would you begin if she agreed to sit down to coffee with you and “talk about life?”

Conclusion

Pride has often been called the most common sin or even the root of every sin. On the other hand, humility is that quality displayed most magnificently by our Savior Jesus Christ. It is that character trait that allows us to function according to God’s moral will for our lives most effectively. When we accurately appreciate the majesty, power, and glory of our God we will begin to walk down the path of true humility. Additionally, as we consider what humility looks like among the people God has placed in our path every day we should see that we are all sinners and equally deserving of God’s judgment. Moreover, we should consider the interests of others as more important than our own. If we do this, God will be glorified and we will be satisfied in him.

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues
Topic 14 – Pride – Additional Study

1. Read over the passages on pride and humility from the study above and choose one or two to memorize. Write out what they mean in your own words as well to make sure you understand.

2. Who is God?

3. Who are you?

4. After reading over the manifestations of pride, which one(s) do you find yourself doing or thinking most?

5. What does God's word have to say about the ways you manifest pride?

6. How can you move in a Godward direction in these areas?

7. Take time to praise God for who he is and what he has done.