

OVERCOMING PRIDE

**Breaking the Spirit of Pride within
and having the Devil under your feet**



Timely Inspiration

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Ann's heart pounded in her chest. Her palms were sweaty. She'd kept a secret from her husband, and he found out. Ann was relieved, to say the least. This secret had been eating at her for weeks. But she was too afraid, to tell the truth.

Problems sometimes get to that point, don't they? We allow them to tag along in our lives for so long, that by the time we're finally ready to fess up, we've been exposed.

Instead of confessing, Ann wallowed, and her relationship with her husband suffered, and trust was severed. In short, Ann's pride got the best of her. Prideful thinking ruined a relationship with someone she loved and cared for deeply.

What is Pride, Anyway?

As hard as it is to admit, pride is essentially an inflated ego. But more importantly, it's being pleased with ourselves, our accomplishments; it's putting ourselves first. Hannah Anderson, in her book, *Humble Roots* describes pride: "Pride confuses our identity with God's and makes us think of ourselves as larger than we really are."

But sometimes pride can get tricky. Shouldn't we feel a sense of accomplishment when we complete a project or mission? It feels good to work hard and receive a reward!

I do think this a healthy attitude. When you've worked hard or accomplished a goal, feeling good about crossing the finish line is great! For the Christian, though, pride is looking to ourselves and not acknowledging God (or others who might have helped us!). It's saying that you can do everything on your own, and there's no reason to have God in your life. (Psalm 10:4) And when we believe we can have salvation apart from Christ, we are treading dangerous waters, friend. It can develop into the worship of the self.

The Bible cautions us against the sin of pride:

Proverbs 11:2: "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom."

Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."

Romans 12:16: “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.”

Proverbs 29:23: “Pride brings a person low, but the lowly in spirit gain honor.”

Galatians 6:3: “If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves.”

Prideful Characters

Even though we often feel alone in our struggles, we can learn a lot about some characters of the Bible who wrestled with pride. King Nebuchadnezzar; Saul; the kings of Israel; King Herod, Pharaoh, and Adam and Eve to name a few.

In the book of Daniel, we meet King Nebuchadnezzar, who worships other gods and tosses Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the furnace for refusing to bow to his massive gold statue. Daniel even prophesies to King Nebuchadnezzar, that unless he recognizes the God of heaven and earth as the only real god, God himself will bring destruction to him. Many months pass, and one day while Nebuchadnezzar is bragging about his spectacular kingdom, his time has expired. God sends him to the wilderness to have the mind of a wild animal.

Adam and Eve were tempted in the Garden of Eden to become more like God and know the difference between good and evil. And this is the starting line for pride.

Both the Pharaoh of Egypt and King Herod during the time of Christ's birth declared themselves of the highest rule, by initiating the execution of all baby boys. Ancient history tells us that both of these men deemed themselves god-like or, in Pharaoh's case, the Egyptians believed Pharaoh himself was a god.

Christ Can Redeem

Thankfully, for those that are in Christ, we have a way out of our pride. Once we recognize that Jesus is Lord and he alone has overcome the sin in our lives, our boasting should come to a screeching halt.

But it often doesn't. Pride is "the great sin" per C.S. Lewis who says in his famous work, *Mere Christianity*: "According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that are mere fleabites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind... it is pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began."

We live in what theologians call the "now and not yet." What this means, is that though we have access to Christ's power and are fully redeemed by his blood, we still wrestle with the sins of the flesh, because Christ has not yet returned to reclaim all of creation. Pride is one of those sins.

Pride can overwhelm us greatly, but nothing is too great for God! The good news is that pride can be overcome with the help

of Christ. Here are four ways to go to battle with pride when it arouses in your soul.

1. Remembering Who God Is

God is infinite. He created the Earth, space, time, and humanity. He is the creator. He has no beginning and no end. We are entirely dependent on him for everything.

In her book, *Free of Me* by Sharon Hodde Miller writes that an antidote to a prideful heart is praise, or better known as worship. She writes how praising God is good FOR us:

“When we praise God, it nourishes us. It gives us healing and peace. That’s not to say that praising God always feels good and natural, or that it comes easily. Sometimes I recite my list of (God’s) attributes with a reluctant heart and a stiff upper lip, taking it as medicine for my soul. But over time, through this discipline, God has set me free from “me.” ”

Though it can feel wrong and aching sometimes (because of our sinful nature), to acknowledge God first as creator, sustainer, and an all-knowing being, during this process, we free ourselves. Our pride is slowly quenched, and God is better revealed. Praise is like medicine for our soul, given to us by the God of the universe!

Praise can take years of practice and most likely will not happen overnight! But taking steps to read scripture, know more about who God is and coming close to the person of Jesus, we can better affirm his goodness. And this is a beautiful thing.

The Bible is a perfect place to start when we're confused about how to begin our praise. Here are some fantastic Bible verses that highlight the magnificence of God and his character:

Psalm 145:3

Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.

2 Timothy 2:13

...if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

Ephesians 2:4-5

4. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,
5. made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Psalm 144:2

He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me.

Isaiah 55:8-9

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

When you find yourself believing the best about yourself, thinking more highly of yourself than you should (which I do almost ALWAYS!), pause to remember who God is. Start by memorizing a Bible verse and give him praise. You are saved through grace by faith in Christ, from His sacrifice and love. Nothing we have done has earned us this favor; it's merely God's redeeming love for humanity.

The Bible says God draws near to us when we praise him. (Psalm 22:3) Praising him for who he is and for the specific things he's done in your life, no matter how small, will help you remember how great he is!

2. Remember Others

While praising God is vital to puncture our pride, recognizing the value others have comes in second. The phrase 'imago Dei,' which is Latin for "the image of God," tells us that everyone is made in the image of God and the Bible tells us that God shows no favoritism. (Romans 2:11) When we believe that we're worth more than others, or look down on them because we think we're better, we are hurting God and people.

As Christians, we're meant to glorify God. And if self comes first, we do a tremendously terrible job of showcasing who God is to non-believers. We don't stand out as serving one another or dying to self that Jesus spoke about in the New Testament.

Instead of listening to those we love, we dominate the conversation.

Instead of asking, "What do you need?" We say, "How does this benefit or inconvenience me?"

Instead of saying, “I messed up, I was wrong, please forgive me,” we finger-point, blame, or sweep it under the rug. Instead of thinking, “How will this help others?” We think, “Will this make me look good?”

Pride is the opposite of love (1 Corinthians 13:4). It looks inward instead of listening to the needs of others, as we are called to serve one another in humility, considering others better than ourselves! (Philippians 2:3-4)

Paul also tells us in Romans 12:1-2: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship.” This is what Jesus did. We should be concerning ourselves with the needs of others, and continually looking outward instead of inward and sacrificing our wants for those that we think are less deserving.

Not only does pride break relationship with others, but it's harmful to ourselves and our walk with God. Our pride causes us to miss God and what he wants for us.

3. Remember That God Desires to Help Us

God showed his ultimate love for us by sending Christ, but his love doesn't stop there.

In Genesis, the beginning of creation, God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. A perfect world, free from the taint of sin. This was God's ultimate plan - perfection, joy, peace. And yet it was all brought down by one bite.

When Christ died on the cross, he didn't just save us from our sin. 1 Corinthians 5:17 says once we are saved, "...the new creation has come: The old is gone, the new is here." We are free from the bondage of sin! While we can stand righteous before God, our sanctification, or becoming more like Christ, takes a little more time, but be patient with yourself. It's definitely not an overnight process!

Isaiah writes that God speaks to Israel: "All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations..." (Isaiah 65:2) Though God made this promise to Israel, he also is there when we need him, reaching out, ready to rescue us. We are never too far out of God's reach.

God's desire and will for us is to become more like Christ, and this is why he's so desperate to help us overcome pride.

When we're not wholly devoted to God, we ignore how he wants to use us. We miss opportunities to serve in his kingdom because we're so absorbed with ourselves. Ultimately, all nations except his will fall. And when they do, where will we be rooted?

If you find yourself scrolling through social media, searching for 'Likes' on your status to feed a need (I just had to put MY phone down!), or thinking you don't need to ask your spouses' thoughts or opinions, take a moment to pray and grab God's hand. He can gladly pull you out of that moment and make himself the focal point.

4. Don't Beat Yourself Up

Facing our sin is difficult. God knows this. He knows how difficult it can be to come face to face with our sins.

However, when we complain about how awful we are, we're not doing any good at all. We're merely bringing more attention to ourselves!

Pastor Tim Keller says this in his book, *The Art of Self-Forgetfulness*: “ Gospel-humility is not needing to think about myself. Not needing to connect things with me. It is an end to thoughts such as, ‘I’m in this room with these people, does that make me look good? Do I want to be here?’ True gospel-humility means I stop connecting every experience, every conversation, with myself. In fact, I stop thinking about myself. The freedom of self-forgetfulness.”

Sometimes we can become so focused on our sin, and we forget whose we are. But, being obsessed with our sin is **STILL** taking our eyes off Jesus.

A verse that I always struggled with was Romans 8:28, where Paul declared there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. I never understood how some people looked at that verse and said they felt loved and free. I always concentrated on my sin, because I believed not taking my eyes off of it was helping remember who I was - a sinner.

And then a pastor gently pointed out that conviction points us to God. Condemnation, saying all these terrible things about ourselves, still looks to ourselves. When I heard the difference between conviction and condemnation, it was a Paul moment -

the scales fell off and I understood staying camped in my self-condemnation was a sin. I was doing no good. So then I began to read Romans 8:28 a little differently.

There's no condemnation in Christ; we have freedom! This verse was both invitational and imperative. We can come to Jesus boldly and in humility and ask for help. Remember the woman in the gospel of John who was stoned as an adulteress? Jesus did not throw one stone or harsh word. Instead, he calmly dispersed her accusers, helped the woman up and told her to sin no more. He is God reaching down his hand to us.

How do you view yourself? Do you concentrate on all the bad things you've done? Because your sin can grieve you, and while it should, we must remember that for those that are in Christ there is no condemnation. But it's your response to the sin that makes a difference.

Conclusion

Scripture says much about pride; none of it's okay. Pride will poison, infect, rot, and bring about the destruction of people and relationships. It's dangerously powerful and if left uncontrolled it will destroy. God warns us continually throughout scripture as he warned Cain in Genesis 4:7: "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it."

Similar to the situation of Cain and Abel, pride is crouching at our door. It desires us. But it does not have the last word. God is always victorious, and he has already won the battle! When we lean into his goodness and realize his sovereignty and his love for us, we respond with praise, which takes our eyes off us and onto him.

Begin by praying today and asking God to help you see areas of your life which tend to be prideful. Asking God for help is already an act of humility, so consider yourself on the right track!

Reach out to others closest to you and reveal your struggles while asking for prayer. This may be hard at first, but James 5:16 tells us to confess to each other. When we have others praying for us, we're coming up armed against an enemy to destroy the things that keep us separated from our loving Creator.

Lastly, remember we have no condemnation when we are in Christ. Repeat this truth to yourself daily - because it reminds us that Christ alone is responsible for our salvation, and it is he whom we desire to be like.

Pride is a liar, but God is the truth. Conquering the sin of pride is possible with God, and if we acknowledge and confess, in his great mercy and compassion, he has no difficulty rescuing us.