

Pride

*A man's pride will bring him low,
but a humble spirit will obtain honor. Prov.29:23*

Introduction

Abraham Lincoln said, "I am nothing; truth is everything."

What would you be like if you believed that?

Would you be aggressive or humble, proud and self-aggrandizing, or gentle and generous?

If you believed you were nothing-compared to the truth- would you be prickly and unapproachable, egotistical, nervous around others, posturing to be esteemed, vying and dying for their approval, or selflessly concerned for what is right, just, true, most edifying to everyone? Wouldn't you cherish being proved wrong if it meant knowing or promoting the truth?

Why are these questions as important as they are irritating?

These questions expose us to what we otherwise hide from ourselves, namely, how self-centered we are.

When what matters most is the truth- or God's glory- then you don't matter so much. When what matters most is you, then you have a problem. God calls it pride. It's a problem because God says he hates it and it will ruin you.

*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride, arrogance and the evil way I hate. (8:13)
A man's pride will bring him low (29:23)*

Your pride is eating up your joy, peace, faith, and relationships.

When pride comes, then comes dishonor, but with the humble is wisdom. (11:2)

People either know that have pride or they don't see it.

Those who are self-consciously arrogant and proud of it are in real trouble- with God. Those who see their pride, struggle with it and want to deal with it, are the healthiest people on earth.

But many people don't see their pride.

Why wouldn't someone see how proud they truly are? Their pride. They're too proud to admit there's a dark side to their heart. Here are a few tests to see if pride is working in your heart:

Others:

How do you respond when someone tells you you're wrong?

What do you think of a person who disrespects you?

Do you think you are better, nicer, smarter than others?

What are you like when someone tells you what to do?

When someone criticizes you, do you wince, 'I'm not as bad as they say'.

Do you say or do things in order to be recognized, esteemed, valued?
How quickly do you defend yourself when accused, or lash back when criticized?
Do you make excuses when you miss an easy putt (the greens are terrible!)
Do you need to show yourself competent, knowledgeable, successful?
(Sharing my football statistics at my parents dinner party)

Self: What are you like when you don't get your own way?
What do you repent of?
What are you actively seeking to change in your character, or are you pretty satisfied with the way you are?
Do you know the way your heart wears its pride?
(Mike discussing with evangelist at JMU: "I haven't sinned since the day I was saved.")

God: Do you resist doing what you know God wants you to do?
When you're successful how quick are you to thank God?
Do you praise God for gifts he has given others which are greater than yours?
Who do you really believe owns your possessions-you or God?
Do you think you are a humble person?
(You're mad at God because you think He owes you better than you have.)

Proverbs is telling us that we are all born with a serious birth defect: pride. It's a major stumbling stone on the path of life, actually, more like a landmine ready to blow up something. If there are a lot of blow-ups around you, chances are good it's due to your pride.

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling. 16:18

Pride by its nature affects all of us, is tenacious and deceptive, is last to die in us, is most contradictory to reality, is likely the source from which all sins spring, and is sin we're not so quickly ashamed of.

1. **What** is pride?

Pride is not something you do, it's something you are. It is a disposition, a way of thinking or living in the world. It is a heart motivation that seeks to assert and promote and protect self. It is a posture before God.

Therefore, the essential question to expose pride is: are you responding to God in accordance with who or what God is? Is your disposition congruent with God's nature?

Let me illustrate. If you put an ice cube in a pot of boiling water, what *usually* happens? Does it *usually* melt? No, it *always* melts, it has to, the fixed reaction of ice to hot is to melt. Pride is an ice cold heart immersed in the hot love of God, but doesn't melt. Pride is an unnatural reaction to God, the opposite of what should happen to the heart in the

presence of God. Since his loving-kindness fills the earth, and he is a consuming fire, we should melt in His presence.

“The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek Him. All his thoughts are, ‘There is no God.’” Psalm 10:4

No wonder Proverbs 16:5 says, *The proud in heart are an abomination to the Lord.*

Your pride doesn't simply ignore God, it puts you in His place: Ez.28:2:

Son of man, say to the leader of Tyre, “Thus says the Lord God, because your heart is lifted up and you have said, I am God, I sit in the seat of gods, in the heart of the seas,” yet you are a man and not God, you make your heart like the heart of God.

What going on in the heart? A progression from arrogance to deception to invincibility:

Deception: Obadiah 3

The arrogance of your heart has deceived you, you live in the clefts of the rocks, in the loftiness of your dwelling place, who say in your heart, “Who will bring me down to earth?”

Arrogance: Jeremiah 49:16

As for the error of you, the arrogance of your heart has deceived you, O you who live in the clefts of the rock, who occupy the height of the hill. Though you make your nest as high as an eagle's, I will bring you down from there,” declares the Lord. (because He will share his glory with no other)

Invincibility: 2 Chron.26:16

But when Uzziah became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the Lord his God, for he entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. (an act reserved only for priests)

See the progression:

1. By the Lord's help he became strong (it's always that way, we owe it all to God).
2. Because he became strong, he thinks he is something (his heart was proud), and acts above the law, lives by his own rules.

See the dynamic: right facts, wrong conclusion.

He said, I am powerful--- a fact—therefore, I am something (wrong conclusion).

He should have said, I am powerful --a fact—therefore, I am blessed and responsible (right conclusion), responsible to give God the glory and seek him all the more in humble, grateful dependence. You're like a turtle on a fencepost- someone else put you there.

Howard E Butt, longtime chairman of the H-E-B grocery chain from Texas, which did a measly \$11 billion in business in 2003, said in an article entitled, The Art of Being a Big shot,

It is my pride that makes me independent of God. It's appealing to me to feel that I am master of my fate, that I run my own life, call my own shots, go it alone. But that feeling is my basic dishonesty. I can't go it alone. I have to have help from other people, and I can't ultimately rely on myself. I'm dependent on God for my

next breath. It is dishonest of me to pretend that I'm anything but a man-small, weak, and limited. So, living independent of God is self-delusion. It is not just a matter of pride being an unfortunate little trait and humility being an attractive little virtue; it's my inner psychological integrity that's at stake. When I am conceited, I am lying to myself about what I am. When I am pretending to be God and not man My pride is the idolatrous worship of myself. And that is the national religion of hell.

2. **Why** do we have it?

Pride is in our nature because our nature changed at the fall. The heart of Satan's deception to Adam and Eve was, you are a competent judge of truth independent of God. Decide for yourself. Only you can determine what will make you happy. You have the right to autonomously weigh God's word versus mine versus your opinions.

On the contrary, God says, trust the expert. We do that in all walks of life-with doctors, car mechanics, investors, you name it. So why not with the nature of created life? God created it and he's the expert. Satan would say, don't be so sure. Do you see that as the height of arrogance?

Do you see why pride is a huge lie? We don't ultimately know anything truly apart from God. Nothing in the universe has its meaning apart from, or independent of, God.

If you want to live by self-rule for self-pleasure for self-praise, you are well motivated by pride.

Can you allow your glory to be defined by someone infinitely more glorious than you? The good news is, once you've met Him, you'll want to live for His glory.

3. **How** do we overcome it?

Here are three steps to help you start moving in the right direction:

A. Admit that the root of surface sins is pride. How is self-concern and self-promotion motivating you?

Lying: I'll look bad if the truth be known

Greed: I deserve this

Lust: I'm worthy of pleasure

Gossip: I'm important because I know secrets

Anger: How dare you do that to me!

Judgmental: I'm always right.

Laziness: I have a right to use time as I see fit

Lawlessness: I'm an exception to the rule

Cheating: I'm a special case

Shyness: I'm unwilling to be known

Unapologetic: I don't fail or make mistakes
Pretentiousness: My reputation is paramount
Boasting: I need to be recognized
Unapproachable: I'm too important for you

B. Look beneath the civil surface of niceness we all put on and discover attitudes toward others which pride produces:

Focus on their failures, critical, fault-finding;
Look down on them, with little compassion;
Quick to excuse yourself and shift blame to others;
Protect your image, reputation; defensive when criticized;
Hard to say I was wrong; driven to be recognized;
Controlling- my way or the highway;
Unteachable- you know it all already;

All of this ultimately falls under the category of Prov. 25:27

It is not good to eat much honey, nor is it glory to search out one's own glory.

Honey, like finding out how wonderful you are, is sweet to the taste but only in small doses. To dwell on one's own glory is as sickening as too much honey.

What is the only way out of slavery to one's own glory?

C. Seeking out the glory of the most humble person in the world.

You need to fall in love with someone who is both so great they will humble you AND so humble they will melt away your self-glory.

Mere humans will only provoke your pride because they too are prideful. Where do we meet a person who is humble without any sinful pride? Where do you meet a person who, though flawless, doesn't provoke you to envy?

In Matt. 11:28 Jesus tells us that He is that humble man:

Come unto Me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am humble and gentle in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Self-consumption is wearying. Pride makes you restless, needing to prove yourself, but when have you proven yourself for certain? Isn't there always more to do? Pride wears us out, trying to do the impossible- always defending ourselves from criticism. Who are we kidding? What a burden to bear, hiding from others the truth we know about ourselves.

When you trust Jesus for your salvation, He humbly pays the death penalty at the cross that your pride deserves. Jesus in his gospel says, you are evil, you crucified Me, but I'll

forgive you and clothe you in my righteousness so that my Father will love you the way he loves me. The gospel answers pride in that, while pride wants me to look good, the gospel actually makes me good- in fact, far better than I could ever make myself! Now I have nothing to prove to God, and therefore, to no one else! That's why Paul says we boast not in ourselves but in Christ; everything that makes us good is from Him! Everything that is Christ's is mine; we are heirs of all things with Christ.

The gospel frees you to say "I am nothing and God is everything," but, paradoxically, once you say that you become something: the very sons and daughters of God, the apple of his eye, his precious treasure, a vessel to hold his life, a trophy of his grace. He gently fights against your pride for your welfare and rest.

The evidence of that?

Your pride begins to melt, you realize you can in fact swallow it and not choke to death!
He begins to break you of your self-reliance
You'll want to be forgiven
You'll want cleansing like never before
You'll see that Jesus gives a dignity you could never earn- the status of a son of God

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You are the love of all my life
You are the living spring
You are the joy that finds my heart
Giver of all good things

What am I without you; what am I without you?

You are the day that rules the night
You are the hope in me
All that I have descends from you
All I could ever be

What am I but a piece of earth
Breathing holy breath
What am I but a wayward child
Given life for certain death

You are the everlasting king
You are the risen lord
That you would come and fill my soul
This is beyond a dream

What am I without you; what am I without you? Twila Paris