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revive

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CHOOSING BROKENNESS

Most people resist being broken. But what if biblical humility involves being broken before God over our sins? And what if it really is our choice?

SPIRITUAL PRIDE

The most deceptive form of pride is when we get puffed up for all the “right” reasons. It might begin simply enough—like feeling particularly good about what you’ve accomplished for Christ.

DON’T LET PRIDE STEAL YOUR JOY!

Pride is our most deadly enemy, and it is alive and active within us. But Jesus came to deliver us from the power of pride and restore all the joy it steals. “Death to the tyrant pride!”

CULTIVATING HUMILITY

When I’m ready to start humbling myself, how do I start? How do I foster a spirit of humility in my attitudes and actions?

STEP ONE: HUMILITY

► Life Action calls families and churches to respond to God in six specific ways. The first among them? Humility. Humbling ourselves before God is an absolute prerequisite to experiencing His grace and power in our lives.

It was a sad and sordid discovery in an otherwise serene neighborhood park. A mother was found pushing her already dead three-year-old child in a swing. She had been doing so for “an unusual amount of time.” Once discovered, loving people quickly stepped in to assist her. But it was too late. It quickly became obvious the mother was not in a healthy condition herself.

As I tried to digest this tragic occurrence in the physical realm, I couldn’t help but think of how often I am not fully aware of my own needs in the spiritual realm. Yet I keep right on pushing ahead as if nothing is seriously wrong.

When I don’t take time to identify my spiritual needs, I become blind to reality. So the daily routine of going through the motions can easily continue, even at length, while things are sorely amiss. Typically, the results are deadly, to my own vitality and to people around me.

When was the last time you conducted an examination of your spiritual life? Honestly, most of us hate getting a physical examination. It takes time. It’s intrusive. And it could reveal that something is not right.

There is only one reason we do it: *We know we should.* Because we are stewards of God’s creation, we care about fulfilling God’s purposes, and we care about how our physical health impacts others, especially our loved ones.

So we gather up courage, invest the necessary time, and spend good money to be thoroughly searched. And I mean *thoroughly*. My doctor literally asks me fifty questions before the physical portion of the exam even begins!

But he doesn’t stop with diagnosis. He sets up another appointment to talk about solutions. He reminds me that it’s not enough to identify areas of need. We must work to make corrections. That tells me he cares.

Fitness organizations are predicated on the idea that members first identify their need and then submit themselves to coaches and

regimens that push them toward measurable change. In a sense, Life Action is based on the same dynamic.

Our in-church conferences are designed to help people take a “complete spiritual” of their souls. This often involves a series of about fifty questions designed to identify spiritual needs. This follows the biblical pattern of Psalm 139: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you . . .” (vv. 23-24 NLT).

After this examination, our teachers walk through practical principles of life transformation—biblical solutions related to the diagnosis. A bitter heart? Here’s how to forgive. A stingy heart? Here’s how to grow in generosity. A me-first marriage? Here’s how to love your spouse as Jesus loves you. A prayerless faith? Here’s how . . .

When was the last time you evaluated your spiritual life, or allowed the Holy Spirit to take the temperature of your soul? Where are you with God right now? What will it take to move in His direction?

This issue of *Revive* contains a thorough (and potentially convicting) treatment of one area of spiritual health: *humility*. Humility is always the FIRST STEP toward any substantive spiritual change—the first step on the road to revival.

Once we begin thinking and acting in humility before God, we’ll be ready to look into other key areas of spiritual vitality. Once we are willing to admit our needs, we can more honestly understand our hearts and even hear the solutions God’s Word offers. Humility gives us a right view of God and of ourselves. It bends stiff knees and softens hard hearts.

So, let me ask you: Are you ready for a spiritual examination? A checklist to determine if you are living in pride or in humility? A heart checkup? Will you let your heavenly Doctor take a look?



SPIRIT OF REVIVAL

Byron Paulus
Executive Director

When was the last time you evaluated your spiritual life?

@ByronPaulus

Byron Paulus

WHERE WILL YOU LEAD YOUR CHURCH IN THE NEXT 18 MONTHS?



Spiritual renewal begins when we seek God with humility, repentance, and reverence. That leads us to fresh joy in obedience to Christ, for God's glory. Our innovative, team-led events are designed to encourage every member of your church family toward transformation and mission.

Call 269-697-2122 to schedule your Life Action event.
Visit LifeAction.org/events to learn more.

Life Action events typically schedule one year in advance, in churches with a weekly attendance of 500 or more.

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LAUNCH SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

GOING LOW

► Jesus taught us to see the world differently. Upside down, in fact. Humility leads to honor, the last end up going first, and the poor in spirit are the ones who inherit heaven. Sometimes life's circumstances remind us of this new kingdom reality.

My ninety-year-old grandfather fixed me in his gaze: "Son, life has a way of humbling a man." As a cocky teen, I had no idea what he meant.

Many years later, with teenagers of my own, I'm starting to understand.

Do you remember when you were pretty sure you had life figured out? Or at least that you could handle whatever would come as well as the next guy?

But as the years go by, our self-confident idealism starts to fade. We fail the people we love. And they return the favor. Dreams don't materialize. And we suffer.

A family member dies. An illness comes (and stays). A respected mentor crashes out of the race, ethically or spiritually. A beloved child rebels or fails to thrive.

All the while, time keeps ticking. And slowly, the unavoidable truth starts to press in, with quiet but unrelenting force . . . we are indeed like grass that withers and fades.

I am not wise enough.
I am not strong enough.
I am not faithful enough.
I am not enough on my own.

But this slow dying can prepare us for a dawning. Because in the "I am not" moments of life, we are strangely readied to encounter another who is I AM.

This is a profound mystery: God's ability flows down the channel of my inability.

The key word here is *down*. Pride blocks God's grace because pride lifts us out of the flow of where God is working. In fact, the root idea of pride is that it makes us tall in our own eyes. And, as Scripture warns and illustrates repeatedly, when someone gets too tall, they fall.

Conversely, humility takes us down. It is the attitude of heart and mind whereby we bend

our knee to go low before the living God. That's why humility is the starting point (and the continuing pathway) for life with God.

I have a friend who is the most humble guy I know. He's been walking with God for many years. Along the way, his wife has endured three decades of excruciating, chronic pain. And his beloved son was killed in an auto accident as a young man.

But through it all, he settled on a simple rule of life from Psalm 18 that he says summarizes all he's learned along the way:

I will **love** You, O LORD, my strength.
The LORD is my rock and my fortress
and my deliverer;
my God, my strength, in whom I will **trust**;
my shield and the horn of my salvation,
my stronghold.
I will **call** upon the LORD, who is worthy
to be praised;
so shall I be saved from my enemies
(vv. 1-3 NKJV).

These last few months happen to have been the most difficult (so far) of my own life. Only a few of my closest friends know the depths of the pressures and pains that have come from multiple directions.

I'm still too close to what's transpired to have much perspective on all God is doing in me and in those I love. But I do know this: The unrelenting stress has been humbling.

I'm a little less strident. A little more empathetic. A little more prayerful. And a lot more desperate for God.

My friend sent me an email a few weeks ago letting me know he's praying for me, with these words in the subject line: DON'T FORGET! And then some simple encouragements to love and trust God, to keep calling on Him for help. Because God resists the proud, and He exalts the humble.

It's good to go low.



CONVERSATIONS

Del Fehsenfeld III
Senior Editor

*Humility is the
starting point for
life with God.*

Find Freedom Through Humility

Choosing BROKENNESS

NANCY LEIGH DEMOSS

BEFORE ITS IMPACT CAN be felt in a home, a church, or a nation, revival must first be experienced on a personal level in the hearts of men and women who have encountered God in a fresh way. And the single greatest hindrance to our experiencing personal revival is our unwillingness to humble ourselves and confess our desperate need for His mercy.

PROGRAMMED FOR HAPPINESS

Our generation has been programmed to pursue happiness, wholeness, affirmation, and cures for our hurt feelings and damaged psyches. But God is not as interested in these ends as we are. He is more committed to making us holy than making us happy. And there is only one pathway to holiness—one road to genuine revival—and that is the pathway of humility, or brokenness.

Scripture makes it clear that this is the number one prerequisite to meeting God in revival. “Thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly’” (Isa. 57:15).

We often think of revival as a time of great joy, blessing, fullness, and celebration. And so it will be in its fullness. But the problem is that we want a painless Pentecost . . . a “laughing” revival. We forget that God’s ways are not our ways, that the way up is down.

You and I will never meet God in revival until we first meet Him in brokenness.

That does not mean, as some think, having a gloomy countenance or being morbidly introspective. Nor can it be equated with deeply emotional experiences. It is possible to shed buckets of tears without ever experiencing a moment of brokenness. Further, brokenness is not the same as being deeply hurt by tragic circumstances. A person may experience many deep hurts and tragedies without being broken.

Brokenness is not a feeling; rather, it is a choice, an act of the will. It is not primarily a one-time experience or crisis (though there may be crisis points in the process of brokenness); rather, it is an ongoing, continual lifestyle.

Brokenness is a lifestyle of agreeing with God about the true condition of our heart and life, as He sees it. It is a lifestyle of unconditional, absolute surrender of our will to the will of God—a heart attitude that says, “Yes, Lord!” to whatever God says. Brokenness means the shattering of our self-will, so that the life and Spirit of the Lord Jesus may be released through

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us. It is our response of humility and obedience to the conviction of the Word and the Spirit of God.

Scripture provides us with numerous examples of broken people. Interestingly, these examples are often set in contrast to people who were not broken. In every case, both individuals had sinned. The difference was not so much in the nature of their sin, but in their response when confronted with it.

For example, two kings sat on a throne. One king, in a fit of passion, committed adultery with his neighbor’s wife, and then plotted to have his neighbor killed. Yet, when the story of his life was told, this man was called “a man after God’s own heart.” By contrast, his predecessor’s sin was relatively insignificant—he was only guilty of incomplete obedience. But it cost him his kingdom, his family, and his life. What was the difference?

When King Saul was confronted with his sin, he defended and excused himself, blamed others, and tried to cover up both the sin and its consequences. In short, his response revealed a proud, unbroken heart.

The heart that has been emptied of itself and broken of its willfulness is the heart that will experience the filling and the reviving.

On the other hand, when King David was faced with his sin, he was willing to acknowledge his failure, to accept personal responsibility for his wrongdoing, and to repent of his sin. His response was that of a humble, broken man. And his was the heart God honored.

BROKENNESS BRINGS BLESSINGS

Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matt. 5:3)—i.e., the “broken ones,” those who recognize that they are spiritually bankrupt and poverty stricken. God’s Word teaches that brokenness brings a number of blessings.

First, God draws near to the broken ones. He lifts up those who are humble, but stiff-arms those who are proud (James 4:6).

Second, new life is released through our brokenness. On the eve of His crucifixion, as He broke the bread and distributed it to His disciples, Jesus declared, “This is my body, which is broken for you” (1 Cor. 11:24 KJV). His death on the cross released eternal life for us. When we are willing to be broken, His abundant life can flow through us to others.

Third, brokenness brings an increased capacity for love and worship. The “sinner woman,” who anointed Jesus’ feet with her tears and precious ointment, was a broken woman (Luke 7:37–38). As a result, she was free to lavish her love and worship on the Lord Jesus without restraint, without being bound by the opinions of those who watched. Some of us are not really free to love and worship the Lord Jesus with all our hearts. Perhaps that is because we are not broken. We are still more concerned about what others think than about the object of our devotion.

Fourth, brokenness brings increased fruitfulness, because God uses things that are broken. When Jacob’s natural strength was broken down at Peniel, for example, God was able to clothe him with spiritual power. When the young boy’s five loaves were broken, they were supernaturally multiplied and became sufficient to feed a multitude. And when Jesus’ body was broken on Calvary, eternal life was released for the salvation of the world.

Finally, the fruit of brokenness is seen in revival—the release of God’s Spirit through our personal and corporate brokenness. During the Welsh Revival of 1904–05, the song that was heard frequently from the lips of broken, contrite hearts was, “Bend me lower, lower, down at Jesus’ feet.”

WHERE DO WE START?

We must come to see God as He really is. The closer we get to God, the more we will see our own need in the light of His holiness.

In the fifth chapter of Isaiah, the great prophet pronounced well-deserved woes on the materialistic, sensual, proud, immoral people of his day. Over and over he cried out, “Woe to those. . . .” But then Isaiah came face to face with the holiness of God, and his next words were, “Woe is me!” (Isa. 6:5). The broken man or woman is more conscious of the corruption in his own heart than in the heart of his neighbor.

Having seen God for who He is, we must cry out to Him for mercy. Learning to acknowledge and verbalize our spiritual need to God is essential to a lifestyle of brokenness. The broken person does not blame others. His heart attitude is, “It’s not my brother or my sister, but it’s me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer.”

The broken person is able to verbalize his needs to others, as well. There is no brokenness where there is no openness. Almost without exception, the greatest victories I have experienced over sin and temptation have been won when I was willing to humble myself and confess my need to a mature believer who could pray for me and help hold me accountable to obey God.

Ultimately, brokenness is a matter of surrendering control of our life to God. The heart that has been emptied of itself and broken of its willfulness is the heart that will experience the filling and the reviving of our glorious, holy God, who humbled Himself that He might lift us up. 🌱

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THEN ONE NIGHT

The small band of church leaders had been praying earnestly for revival in their community—a village on the Isle of Lewis, the largest isle of the Outer Hebrides, just off the coast of Scotland. They were particularly burdened for the young people of the island who had no interest in spiritual matters and scorned the things of God.

For eighteen months they met—three nights a week, praying through the night, right on into the early hours of the morning, beseeching

God to come and visit in revival. But there was no evidence of any change.

Then one night, a young deacon rose to his feet, opened his Bible, and read from Psalm 24: “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart. . . . He shall receive the blessing from the LORD” (vv. 3–5 KJV).

Facing the men around him, this young man said, “Brethren, it seems to me to be just so much ‘humbug’

to be waiting and praying as we are, if we ourselves are not rightly related to God.”

There in the straw, the men knelt and humbly confessed their sins to the Lord. Within a short period of time, God began to pour out His Spirit in an extraordinary awakening that shook the entire island.



Jonathan Edwards

SPIRITUAL PRIDE

The first and worst cause of error that prevails in our day is spiritual pride. This is the main door by which the devil comes into the hearts of those who are zealous for the advancement of Christ. It is the chief inlet of smoke from the bottomless pit to darken the mind and mislead the judgment, and the main handle by which Satan takes hold of Christians to hinder a work of God. Until this disease is cured, medicines are applied in vain to heal all other diseases.

Pride is much more difficult to discern than any other corruption because, by nature, pride is a person having too high a thought of himself. Is it any surprise, then, that a person who has too high a thought of himself is unaware of it? He thinks the opinion he has of himself has just grounds and therefore is not too high. As a result, there is no other matter in which the heart is more deceitful and unsearchable. The very nature of it is to work self-confidence and drive away any suspicion of evil respecting itself.

Pride takes many forms and shapes, and encompasses the heart like the layers of an onion—when you pull off one layer, there is another underneath. Therefore, we need to have the greatest watch imaginable over our hearts with respect to this matter, and to cry most earnestly to the great searcher of hearts for His help. He who trusts his own heart is a fool.

Since spiritual pride in its own nature is secretive, it cannot be well discerned by immediate intuition of the thing itself. It is best identified by its fruits and effects, some of which I will mention together with the contrary fruits of Christian humility.

The spiritually proud person is full of light already and feels that he does not need instruction, so he is ready to despise the offer of it. On the other hand, the humble person is like a little child who easily receives instruction. He is cautious in his estimate of himself, sensitive as to how liable he is to go astray. If it is suggested to him that he does go astray, he is most ready to inquire into the matter.

Proud people tend to speak of others' sins—the miserable delusion of hypocrites, the deadness of some saints with bitterness, or the opposition to holiness of many believers. Pure Christian humility, however, is silent about the sins of others, or speaks of them with grief and pity. The spiritually proud person finds fault with other saints for their lack of progress in grace, while the humble Christian sees so much evil in his own heart, and is so concerned about it, that he is not apt to be very busy with other hearts. He complains most of himself and his own spiritual coldness, and readily hopes that most everyone has more love and thankfulness to God than he.

Spiritually proud people often speak of almost everything they see in others in the harshest, most severe language. They frequently say of another's opinion, conduct, or coldness that it is from the devil or from hell. Commonly, their criticism is directed against not only wicked men but also toward true children of God and those who are their superiors. The humble, however, even when they have extraordinary discoveries of God's glory, are overwhelmed with their own vileness and sinfulness. Their exhortations to fellow Christians are given in a loving and humble manner, and they treat others with as much humility and gentleness as Christ, who is infinitely above them, treats them.

Spiritual pride often disposes persons to act differently in external appearance, to assume a different way of speaking, countenance, or behavior. However, the humble Christian, though he will be firm in his duty—going the way of heaven alone even if all the world forsake him—yet he does not delight in being different for difference's sake. He does not try to set himself up to be viewed and observed as one distinguished, but on the contrary, is disposed to become all things to all men, to yield to others, to conform to them, and to please them in all but sin.

Proud people take great notice of opposition and injuries, and are prone to speak often about them with an air of bitterness or contempt. Christian humility, on the other hand, disposes a person to be more like his blessed Lord, who when reviled did not open His mouth but committed Himself in silence to Him who judges righteously. For the humble Christian, the more clamorous and furious the world is against him, the more silent and still he will be, unless it is in his prayer closet, and there he will not be still.

The first and worst cause of error that prevails in our day is spiritual pride. This is the main door by which the devil comes into the hearts of those who are zealous for the advancement of Christ.

Another pattern of spiritually proud people is to behave in ways that make them the focus of others. It is natural for a person under the influence of pride to take all the respect that is paid to him. If others show a disposition to submit to him and yield in deference to him, he is open to it and freely receives it. In fact, they come to expect such treatment and to form an ill opinion of those who do not give them what they feel they deserve.

One under the influence of spiritual pride is more apt to instruct others than to ask questions. Such a person naturally puts on the airs of a master. The eminently humble Christian thinks he needs help from everyone, whereas the spiritually proud person thinks everyone needs his help. Christian humility, under a sense of others' misery, entreats and beseeches, but spiritual pride commands and warns with authority.

As spiritual pride disposes people to assume much to themselves, so it disposes to treat others with neglect. On the contrary, pure Christian humility disposes persons to honor all men. To enter into disputes about Christianity is sometimes unseasonable, yet we ought to be very careful that we do not refuse to discourse with carnal men because we count them unworthy to be regarded. Instead, we should condescend to carnal men as Christ has condescended to us. ☩

Adapted from "Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England" from The Works of Jonathan Edwards. Published by Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

How do you fare under the scrutiny of Edwards' comparisons between spiritual pride and Christian humility?

Which has defined your life to date? Your family? Your ministry?

To further evaluate the condition of your soul in this regard, take the tests on pages 28–30.



Biography of Jonathan Edwards

“Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering,” thundered the young preacher, to the dismay of his New England congregation. Actually, Jonathan Edwards didn’t really “thunder” verbally. He was known for calmly reading his sermons, many of which were long, detailed theological treatises.

But this time the thunder was from heaven. Edwards' famous 1741 sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," confronted the lax Christianity of his day that focused on church attendance more than real repentance. Even many of the pastors were known to be unconverted, having joined the clergy for traditional or even political reasons. Edwards felt the call of God to change that narrative, and his message helped accelerate the First Great Awakening in North America.

A movement of transformation ensued, first in New England, where Edwards pastored, and then out to other colonies and even across the world. Revival fire grew as churchgoers turned from their hypocrisy and fell before God in humble repentance. Preachers themselves were converted and began calling the church to commit their entire lives to God.

Even to this day, the writings of Jonathan Edwards are highly regarded for their depth and relevance, and he is cited by historians as being one of the most influential men in early American history.





DON'T LET PRIDE STEAL YOUR JOY!

J O N B L O O M

*Jesus came to deliver us
from the power of pride and
restore all the joy it steals.
“Death to the tyrant pride!”
is the great gospel battle
cry of freedom.*

Pride is perhaps the greatest evil that exists. It wreaks destruction at every level of human experience. It is present in small irritations and in the collapse of great civilizations. Pride is at the root of every sin and pollutes every otherwise righteous affection, motivation, and action.

While humility sees glory and wants to praise it, pride sees glory and wants to possess it. Pride turns ambition selfish, perverts sexual desire into unspeakable lusts, interprets net worth as self-worth, infects the wound of grief and loss with the bacteria of bitterness, and twists competition into conquest.

To be proud is what it means to be fallen, whether angel or human. Pride is our most deadly enemy—it is what makes Satan deadly to us. And it is alive and active within us.

But Jesus came to deliver us from the power of pride and restore all the joy it steals. “Death to the tyrant pride!” is the great gospel battle cry of freedom.

PRIDE KILLS OUR HAPPINESS

To understand what pride is, we must understand what humility is. Humility is essentially the recognition of what is real—simply assessing things as they really are. To be fully humble is to fully trust God (Proverbs 3:5), who is the Truth (John 14:6; 17:17), to govern according to his just ways and perfect work (Deuteronomy 32:4); to be content with what he gives us (Hebrews 13:5), knowing that “a person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven” (John 3:27).

Pride, then, is simply to think higher of ourselves, and therefore lower of others, than we ought to think (Romans 12:3). Oh so simple to define—and yet powerful to produce such hellish consequences. To be proud is to see the world through the lens of a lie.

In thinking ourselves far greater than we really are, we see truly great things far smaller than they really are. The lie of pride becomes a damned lie when we see God as smaller and less important than he is. And in trying to make truly great things subservient to our false supremacy, pride shrinks our capacity to experience joy and wonder. In seeking to be gods and goddesses, we learn to only value what magnifies our glory or satisfies our appetites. We yawn at the Grand Canyon and fawn at the mirror.

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The damned lie of pride is that it promises us happiness through God-usurping self-exaltation, which turns out to be the very thing that kills our happiness. The more highly we think of ourselves, the smaller our capacity for wonder and worship over what is most worthy.

ONLY CHILDREN ENTER THE KINGDOM

This is why Jesus said that only children would enter the kingdom of heaven.

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:1-4).

Why do only childlike people enter the kingdom of heaven? Because only childlike people have the capacity to enjoy it.

Think about it like this: Children delight in going to a playground; adults chase delight in trying to possess their own “playground.” Children love to hear a great story; adults want to be impressively well read. Children dance for joy at the thought of a doughnut; doughnut dancing is beneath the dignity of self-conscious adults. Children are easily absorbed in the greatness of something wonderful; adults are easily absorbed in wanting to be great.

Satan wants us to grow up and be like God. God, on the other hand, wants us to grow up and be like children. Listen to God. He knows that it requires humility to fully enjoy things for what they are. That’s why heaven is for children. Don’t listen to Satan. All he shows us is that proud “grownups” cannot be happy in heaven.

JUST TAKE THE NEXT HUMBLE STEP

Jesus came into the world to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). And the devil’s most destructive work was to turn humble, wonder-filled, happy creatures into proud, rebellious, miserable sin-slaves who think they can become gods and goddesses. On the cross Jesus purchased the reverse of this curse, to set us free from satanic pride and to restore our God-like joy and wonder.

This is why everything about the gospel is designed to expose our pride and force us to put it to death. God doesn’t humble us because, like some conceited tyrant, he takes pleasure in our groveling. He humbles us because he wants us to be happy and free—he wants us to reflect his image! God is perfectly humble; he sees all things—himself and everything else—exactly as they are. And he is the happiest being alive.

The only road for us proud sinners to travel to reach the promised land of joy and be the free children of God passes through the valley of humiliation. And it’s hard, and the trek requires real courage. Humbling ourselves often feels like death, but it really is not. It’s holy chemotherapy that kills the cancer of

YES, THROUGH HUMILITY
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TO TRAVEL THIS HUMBLE
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pride. “Whoever would save his life will lose it” (Luke 9:24) means losing the “pride of life” (1 John 2:16) in order to gain what is “truly life” (1 Timothy 6:19).

Yes, through humility Jesus is inviting us into a heaven of joy and wonder. And it’s a heaven that begins now. To travel this humble road to joy only requires taking the next step, the one right in front of us today. It’s that step that our pride doesn’t want us to take.

Go ahead and take it. You won’t regret it. The joy of humility will grow, and the misery of pride will shrink as you do. The holy habit of humility is formed one honest step at a time. 🌿



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humble opinions

“Do not desire to be the principal man in the church. Be lowly. Be humble. The best man in the church is the man who is willing to be a doormat for all to wipe their boots on, the brother who does not mind what happens to him at all, so long as God is glorified.” (Spurgeon)

“Nothing will make us so tender to the faults of others, as, by self-examination, thoroughly to know our own.” (Fénelon)

“The beginning of greatness is to be little; the increase of greatness is to be less; the perfection of greatness is to be nothing.” (Moody)

“If you plan to build a tall house of virtues, you must first lay deep foundations of humility.” (Augustine)

“It is a contradiction to be a true Christian and not humble.” (Baxter)

“Keep us little and unknown, prized and loved by God alone.” (C. Wesley)

“It is good to renew ourselves, from time to time, by closely examining the state of our souls, as if we had never done it before; for nothing tends more to the full assurance of faith, than to keep ourselves by this means in humility, and the exercise of all good works.” (J. Wesley)

“Do you wish people to think well of you? Don’t speak well of yourself.” (Pascal)





CULTIVATING HUMILITY

BRIAN HEDGES

1. Know the greatness of your sin and your God.

John Owen said, “Two things need to humble us. First, let us consider God in His greatness, glory, holiness, power, majesty, and authority. Then, let us consider ourselves in our mean, abject, and sinful condition.” True humility results from seeing the truth—about God and about ourselves.

2. Learn to give up self-defense.

To be humble you must learn to die to what Augustine called “the lust of vindicating ourselves.” There is a balance here. There is a time when you need to defend your integrity—when the loss of it will ruin your witness or mar the testimony of Christ. But most of the time, we spend way too much time trying to justify our actions.

3. Be harsh on yourself rather than others.

Fénelon said, “Can we with justice feel contempt for others and dwell on their faults, when we are full of them ourselves? Our strong feelings about the faults of others is itself a great fault.” Be suspicious of yourself if you get overly exercised about someone else’s sin! Chances are you have a log in your eye, while you may be fretting about the splinter in someone else’s. Here is a good test: Is this matter a big enough deal that you will lovingly discuss it with the person you are concerned about? If it isn’t, then it certainly isn’t a big enough deal to discuss it with others!

4. Never consider yourself humble.

Don’t become like Uriah Heep from the old classic novel, who was always asserting his own humility. Don’t be like the church member who was awarded a medal for humility, but then had it taken it away because he wore it! A humble person will never presume to tell others that he is humble, because he doesn’t know it.

5. Practice humility in the little things.

Andrew Murray wrote: “The insignificances of daily life are the tests of eternity because they prove what spirit really possesses us. It is in our most unguarded

moments that we really show and see what we are. To know . . . how the humble man behaves, you must follow him in the common course of daily life.” What does this mean practically? Give in to your mate next time the two of you disagree. Don’t get angry next time someone cuts you off in traffic. Be eager to take the blame for mistakes. Quickly seek reconciliation with others.

6. Forget your SELF.

This is really what you should be aiming for in the fight for humility: to be really unconscious of your *self* at all. This is especially relevant when it comes to your motives: Do you do the things you do for the Lord or for the applause of men? C. S. Lewis said that the relationship between self-regard and the need for approval of others is like an itch that needs to be scratched. “As long as we have the itch of self-regard, we shall want the pleasure of self-approval; but the happiest moments are those when we forget our precious selves and have neither, but have everything else instead.” This is subtle. It is easy and tempting to want the approval and compliments of others after you cook a nice meal, or pray a moving prayer, or give a sacrificial gift. But that is an unhealthy itch that wants to be scratched; it would be better not to have the itch at all.

7. Delight in the Lord, not accomplishments.

Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

Note the three things men tend to glory in. Some men boast in wisdom, whether in the form of education, natural intelligence, practical know-how, or wit and cleverness. Others tend to boast in might—a sharp physique, physical prowess and strength, fitness,

muscle tone, beauty. Still others are proud of riches—wealth, prosperity, success, affluence.

But God says we should glory in understanding and knowing God, not in our own human distinctions and accomplishments. One of the most important keys to humility is a sight of the satisfying God who is infinitely greater than we are.

8. Meditate on the gospel.

When Paul wanted to cultivate humility in the members of a local church, he took them straight to the gospel. In fact, Philippians 2:5-11 is one of the most profound meditations on the gospel in all of Scripture, as Paul describes the humility of Jesus in His incarnation, obedience, and death. And when Jesus taught His disciples servanthood, He pointed them to His own vocation as Servant, to be both their highest example and deepest motive for serving others. “Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:43-45). Our humility is the fruit of, and a response to, the humility of Christ Himself.

The only way we’ll be freed from the pride of boasting in ourselves is if we find a more worthy object in which to boast. That’s why the wisdom of Scripture never simply says, “Do not boast, but be humble”; instead it directs us to “boast in the Lord” (Psalm 34:2; Jeremiah 9:23-24; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31) and to “boast in the cross.” As Paul wrote in Galatians 6:14, “Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” 🍇

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In the words of Elisabeth Clephane’s classic hymn,

*I take, O cross, thy shadow
For my abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine
Than the sunshine of His face;
Content to let the world go by,
To know no gain or loss,
My sinful self my only shame,
My glory all the cross.*

Humility is born from a heart that finds its glory in the cross.



I WAS
CAUGHT UP
IN MY LITTLE
WORLD—
POPULATION,
ME!

“I was caught up in my little world—population, me! After I was challenged toward humility, God revealed many areas in my life that need work. It’s amazing how when I start to focus my attention on God, my own worries and

fears begin to fade away. I have a long way to go yet, but I feel like I have gotten back my first love, and I never want to let go of it. I am recommitting myself to Christ, and my one goal is to glorify Him!”



“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found. . . .



Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field” (Matthew 13:44).



DR. RICHARD FISHER

I grew up in a home full of positive affirmation. I can still hear my mother saying, “We are so proud of you, Son!” (Just recently she said those very words to my brother Mike and me as we celebrated her 90th birthday.)

Is **that** kind of pride wrong?

Human culture, of course, encourages pride of all sorts—pride in your work, pride in your nation, pride in your school, pride in your lifestyle choices. Some of this kind of

pride seems appropriate, even righteous. Other expressions of it are obviously rebellious. Where is the line?

In the Bible we see some “positive pride” being expressed, although that specific word

isn’t used. In many of his epistles, Paul commends churches and individuals, seeming to gloat on the positive choices they made or their ability to stand firm under persecution. God Himself even said He was pleased with (proud of) Jesus

IS IT OKAY TO FEEL PROUD?

Humility is the path to the honor and greatness humanity was created to embody. It is the only way to be restored to our rightful place in the created order, and to recover our sense of “good pride” in what God designed us to be.

Christ on two occasions—at Jesus’ baptism and at His transfiguration (Matthew 3:17; 17:5).

Where did pride come from?

Webster describes pride as “a noble self-esteem springing from a consciousness of worth.” There is a reason we have this consciousness—God made us in His own image (Genesis 1:26-27)! Psalm 8 declares that God placed His glory in man. And we know that as redeemed saints, we are children of God, heirs to His glory forever.

Our worth is found in God, which is why Paul spoke on multiple occasions of his “boasting” in Christ. Galatians 6:1-4 speaks of a proper pride—that which comes from a serving heart, a Spirit-filled life, a humble walk, and a commitment to carrying one’s own load. The correct “worth” we feel about ourselves is rooted in a proper view of God, and a proper view of our place in creation. From this righteous source, we derive our sense of identity and our belief that human life is particularly valuable.

The problem is that Satan has twisted our sense of worth. When we fall for his deceptions, we end up with self-pride, neglecting to consider the source of our “glory.” We get the idea in our heads that we are great, or worthy, or sufficient, or admirable . . . *apart* from God. When pride becomes self-focused, self-promoting, self-indulging, it becomes the root of our sinful rebellion.

As it did with Lucifer, selfish pride leads us to try to take God’s rightful position, so that we end up determining our own truth and glorifying our own decisions. Everything becomes about “me.” My ambition. My perspective. My rights. My opinions. My feelings.

Here’s an irony: We’ve all been around prideful people . . . and are we proud of them? Certainly not! They are spoiled, arrogant, and self-exalting. We typically run from such people. Like a rotten apple, they tend to spoil that which touches them.

Where did selfish pride begin?

Genesis 3 tells the story of how we human beings fell into destructive pride. Adam and Eve were being trained to function as caretakers of creation, the privileged sons and daughters of God’s eternal kingdom. Rather than embrace their exalted position, submitted under God (Psalm 8:1-8), they embraced selfishness and turned away from God. Quite literally, pride came before the fall (Proverbs 16:18)!

- Adam and Eve listened to and believed the deceptive lies of the Serpent.

- They did not wait on the Lord or ask for wisdom; they began to devise their own truth and their own wisdom.

- They sought more freedom and authority than God had given them.

- They chose to derive worth from within, rather than from God.

- They rejected God’s leadership and set themselves up as gods, thus twisting and distorting their self-worth (Proverbs 28:26; 11:28).

- Pride, the embodiment of selfish desire, is the foundation for sin. Sin was conceived, and mankind began to walk the pathway of death and destruction (James 1:14-16).

- Sadly, Adam and Eve’s lurch toward selfish pride destroyed their sense of righteous worth, resulted in their expulsion from the Garden, and sowed into humanity the seeds of sin, which still flourish across the earth today.

Humility restores the fullness of life!

In response to Adam and Eve’s arrogant rebellion, God doled out the necessary judgment. There were consequences, which would unfold over time.

However, God opened a merciful door when He gave Adam and Eve the hope of salvation and restoration. Since that

moment, God continues resisting those who proudly defy Him, but He freely gives “grace to the humble” (Isaiah 57:15; Micah 6:8; 1 Peter 3:8; 5:5-7, 12b; James 4:7-10).

Humility is the path to the honor and greatness humanity was created to embody. It is the only way to be restored to our rightful place in the created order, and to recover our sense of “good pride” in what God designed us to be. It is the way secured for us by Jesus’ humble sacrifice, giving His life to pay the penalty for and break the power of our sinful pride (Philippians 2:1-11).

“I’m proud of you.”

My two-year-old grandson jumped into my lap and hugged me. “I am so proud of you,” I exclaimed, as I returned the hug. The words seemed automatic, flowing naturally from a grandpa’s heart. He smiled, “I luv ’ou, Papa.”

We love to be proud of children. When we see them excelling, or achieving, or demonstrating good character, or sharing with others, we feel “pride,” because we see in those actions the right kind of humanity. In those moments, they are demonstrating their worth as God’s image-bearers.

But we don’t want them to shipwreck their lives on the hidden reefs of selfish pride, which is where all of us naturally drift. I don’t want my grandson to believe that he is great apart from God, or to elevate his own wisdom above the Lord’s. I have walked the ways of evil pride myself, and I regret where it has taken me. Thus, I want my grandchildren to know God, to know real life and real honor, and to find the fullness of life God intended.

And ultimately, I want God to be proud of them. If and when that happens, I’ll be smiling too.



Dr. Richard Fisher has served as a professor and regional director with Moody Bible Institute.



YOU CAN START WITH ME, LORD

Life Action's local church conferences challenge people from all walks of life to a fresh level of honesty and humility before God. Once a person is willing to admit his or her need for God's help, His transforming and sustaining grace can change everything! From there, our teams and speakers have the joy of encouraging people to take steps of new obedience in the areas of serving, worship, witness, generosity, prayer, family living, and personal devotion. Here is a sampling of feedback we've received.



I've realized I needed to get back to where I used to be with my Lord. I let too many worldly things and concerns slip into my life. My prayer life is now back to seeking God's will instead of telling Him what I want. He is in control, and I love Him and want to serve Him always.

I was convicted of being proud and disobedient to our almighty Lord! It broke me when I realized I was not giving the Lord 100% control over my life. So, I have decided to be obedient and be baptized after five years of following Christ. I have also taken time in the last few mornings for prayer, and I know my relationship with God is getting stronger.

I was too proud to acknowledge the fact that I needed God. During these days, I've realized that I can't do life on my own. I have relinquished control and given it all to the Lord!

During these meetings I've learned that I was not the Christian I thought I was—in fact, I've been very cold. But today I have a hunger for God's Word and a desire to live the way God wants me to live. Tonight, I committed to praying with my wife and reading the Bible every day!

A light has shone into the dark places of my life, and God convicted me of my sins. The most painful realization was how much my anger consumed my life, and how I used that anger to push away God. I am so thankful for His mercy and grace.

I was someone who wanted my way in my life, hoping that it was God's will. I would ask for God to have His way in me, but then I would just focus in on my own desires. This conference has helped me understand that for God to truly use me for His glory, I must place Him above all that I seek, above all that I want on earth. When I give it all to Him, my life will be driven more and more in the direction of Christ.

The Lord found me caught up in the "busyness" of life. I was so caught up in checking boxes to accomplish my own selfish agenda that I was not thinking of how I needed to be living for the Lord. God has shown me areas in my life where I need work: personal quiet time, more encouraging as a wife, more loving as a mom that lets her Jesus-light shine!

THE ENTRANCE TO LIFE

► Like a seed falling to the ground, death can precede new life. So, too, in our life with God, we must die to our own pride, our own agenda, our own self-will, before we can really step into the kind of life Jesus died to provide.

By most standards, Brian and Melanie had a good marriage. They were committed to God and to each other, and were leading their eight children to follow Christ. However, their intimacy had gradually eroded. When they had an opportunity to attend a retreat called "Renewing Your Heart—Reviving Your Marriage," Melanie hoped this might be just what they needed.

On the second day, the speaker gave a message on bitterness and the need for personal brokenness and humility. As they walked back to their room together, Melanie was mentally preparing a lecture for Brian on his need for brokenness.

What followed can only be described as a supernatural work of the Spirit in Melanie's heart. She writes, "God began to peel back the layers of my heart, and what was revealed was not pretty: bitterness, hardness of heart, hate, rebellion, and most of all a dependence on my own righteousness, and an underlying pride that corrupted all."

As God showed Melanie the true condition of her heart, she began to weep. Sobs of grief and despair racked her body. Her shocked husband held her close as she poured out her confession. Like an infection being drained from a lanced cyst, the pride and self-righteousness were purged from her spirit.

From that place of humility and brokenness, Melanie cried out to God to take away her heart of stone and give her a heart of flesh. She describes what happened next: "In His mercy, like a refreshing, cleansing wind, the Spirit of God swept through my heart. My tears of anguish were transformed to tears of joy, forgiveness, and freedom. God had chosen to reveal His glory—and I will never be the same. Never."

Why would anyone choose to be broken? Well, why would a man check into a hospital and allow the surgeon to start cutting? Because

he loves pain? Of course not. It is because he knows that surgery is the only way to experience healing and to be physically restored.

New Life Is Released

Jesus understood something His disciples would not grasp until after His death, resurrection, and ascension back into heaven—something the Bible calls a "mystery." This mystery is that death brings life, and there can be no real life apart from our willingness to die. He used an illustration from the world of farming: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24).

I can take a grain of wheat and clean it up, put it on a beautiful piece of china on my dining room table, shine lights on it, play music for it, pray for it . . . and what will happen to it? Absolutely nothing! What has to happen for that grain to bear fruit? It must go down into the ground and die. If that grain of wheat had feelings, I can imagine it might say, "Hey, it's cold and lonely and dark down here!" But in that lonely place, the grain will shed its hard outer husk. Then, after it has died, it will put down roots, and the first shoots of the new life within it will finally spring forth.

The only way to gain your life is to give it up. The only way to win it is to lose it. We think we are giving up so much by dying. But in reality, it is those who refuse to die who are giving up everything. When we choose the pathway of brokenness and humility, we are choosing to receive His new, supernatural, abundant life flowing in and through us.



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FROM THE HEART

Nancy Leigh DeMoss
Revive Our Hearts Radio Host

The only way to gain your life is to give it up.

 @NancyDeMoss

Nancy



A. W. TOZER

THE APOSTLE PETER, advising Christian believers to be clothed with humility in all of their relationships with one another, actually implies that genuine Christian humility should be their identifying uniform from day to day.

In the custom of that distant culture, men dressed according to their status and place in society. In our own day, we also are accustomed to identifying many public servants by the kind of uniform they wear. If we suddenly need help or assistance, even in a strange city, we look around quickly to find a helpful man in the policeman's uniform. We have no fear of the mailman who daily steps on our

property. His gray uniform tells us that he is a servant of our government and that he has a responsibility for helpful public service.

So, the Holy Spirit through the apostle cites the necessity for members of the body of Christ to be subject to one another in the bonds of love, mercy, and grace. This honest posture of submission and humility

BEING CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you (1 Peter 5:5-6).

becomes our uniform, and adornment really, indicating that we are the redeemed and obedient disciples of Jesus Christ and that we belong to Him!

Peter's request is not strange when we remember that it was Jesus Christ our Lord who dressed Himself in humility and then took that difficult course down, down, down—to death on a cross! It is a scriptural and divine example that we have in the person of Jesus,

who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name (Philippians 2:6-9).

I think it is most important for believers to acknowledge the fact that because Christ Jesus came to the world clothed in humility, He will always be found among those who are clothed with humility. He will be found among the humble people. This is a lesson that not all of us have learned.

Perhaps human beings are generally of the opinion that they will find Jesus Christ wherever they are; but I think there is such a thing as finding Christ wherever He is—and that will be in the place of humility, always!

When God resists a man for his pride, it is not likely that He will send immediate and dramatic judgment. God probably will not signal His resistance to the stubborn man by a judgment that will come in the public place. Rarely does God send His judgment dramatically. I have wondered if we might learn our lessons of humility and obedience more quickly if God were to resist a man as one soldier to another, with the clash of sword?

But it does not work that way. When God resists a man for the sins of his spirit and attitude, a slow, inward, spiritual degeneration will take place as a signal of the judgment that has come. A slow hardening that comes from unwillingness to yield will result in cynicism. Christian joy will disappear, and there will be no more fruit of the Spirit. That man will sour as a jar of fruit sours—and it is not an exaggeration to say that the man who has earned the resistance of God will continue to sour bitterly in his own juice.

It is significant that Scripture assures us that the same God who must resist the proud always stands ready to give grace to the humble. The Bible advises men and women to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God.

It is my opinion that if our humility had to show itself only under the hand of God, it would be a relatively easy gesture. If the Lord should say to me, "I am coming and will stand at the front of the church, and I will expect you to come and kneel before Me and humble yourself," it would be an easy thing for me to do because I know that no one will ever lose face in kneeling humbly

God knows our hearts, and He doesn't allow us to fulfill His demands for humility with a mere gesture.

before God Himself. Any man could feel just as proud as ever even though kneeling before the eternal Majesty on high.

But God knows our hearts, and He doesn't allow us to fulfill His demands for humility with a mere gesture. He may use people you think are not worthy to shine your shoes, and in a given situation He will expect you to humble yourself meekly and take from them whatever it is they are pouring on you. In that spirit of meekness, you would be humbling yourself under the mighty hand of God!

Think of the example of our Savior, cruelly beaten and cut with the lash. That whip was not wielded by an archangel but by the hands of a pagan Roman soldier. The abuse that was heaped on Jesus did not come from any multitude of the heavenly host—but from wicked, blasphemous, and dirty-tongued men who were not worthy to clean the dust from the soles of His sandals. Jesus willingly humbled Himself under the hand of men, and so He humbled Himself under the hand of God.

And remember, in this call to His people to put on the uniform of true humility, God adds the promise that He will exalt us "at the proper time." It will be the time that God knows is best suited to perfect us. It will be a time that brings honor to God and the most good to men.



A. W. Tozer (1897–1963) was one of the most well respected evangelical authors in the twentieth century, known for his powerful rhetoric against hypocrisy and spiritual compromise. His articles and sermons have impacted generations of believers throughout the world. The above selection was adapted from chapter 8 of Tozer's famous call to church-wide reformation and revival, I Call It Heresy. Found online at www.cciog.com/e-books.



LIVING A BROKEN LIFE

This three-part exercise is designed to help reveal any pride lurking in your heart, so you can repent of it and move forward in the joy of humility.

PART 1: ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24 KJV).

Ask God to bring to mind any instances of pride, arrogance, or rebellion that need to be confessed. Then, on the basis of 1 John 1:9, seek the forgiveness and cleansing of God. If your pride has caused harm to people around you, plan to seek their forgiveness as well.

Part 2: Evaluate Your Level of Brokenness Before God

A proud heart, like a wild stallion, runs unbridled based on its own desires. A broken heart, on the other hand, has yielded its will to Jesus as Lord. Check each box that best describes your life up until now. If any indicators of pride are revealed, pray through each of them and ask for God’s grace to walk in humility. As David prayed in Psalm 51, “A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

- ☐ **PROUD:** focus on the failures of others

☐ **BROKEN:** are overwhelmed with a sense of their own spiritual need

☐ **PROUD:** have a critical, fault-finding spirit; look at everyone else’s faults with a microscope but their own with a telescope

☐ **BROKEN:** are compassionate; forgive because they know how much they have been forgiven

☐ **PROUD:** are self-righteous and look down on others

☐ **BROKEN:** esteem others better than themselves
- ☐ **PROUD:** have an independent, self-sufficient spirit

☐ **BROKEN:** have a dependent spirit; recognize their need for others

☐ **PROUD:** have to prove that they are right

☐ **BROKEN:** are willing to yield the right to be right

☐ **PROUD:** claim rights; have a demanding spirit

☐ **BROKEN:** yield their rights; have a meek spirit

☐ **PROUD:** are self-protective of their time, their rights, and their reputation

☐ **BROKEN:** are self-denying

- ☐ **PROUD:** desire to be served

☐ **BROKEN:** are motivated to serve others

☐ **PROUD:** desire to be a success

☐ **BROKEN:** are motivated to be faithful and to make others a success

☐ **PROUD:** desire self-advancement

☐ **BROKEN:** desire to promote others

☐ **PROUD:** have a drive to be recognized

☐ **BROKEN:** have a sense of their own unworthiness; are thrilled that God would use them at all

☐ **PROUD:** are wounded when others are promoted and they are overlooked

☐ **BROKEN:** are eager for others to get the credit; rejoice when others are lifted up

☐ **PROUD:** have a subconscious feeling, “This ministry/ church is privileged to have me and my gifts”; think of what they can do for God

☐ **BROKEN:** have the heart attitude, “I don’t deserve to have a part in any ministry”; know they have nothing to offer God except the life of Jesus flowing through their broken lives

☐ **PROUD:** feel confident in how much they know

☐ **BROKEN:** are humbled by how very much they have to learn

☐ **PROUD:** are self-conscious

☐ **BROKEN:** are not concerned with self at all

☐ **PROUD:** keep others at arm’s length

☐ **BROKEN:** are willing to risk getting close to others and to accept the risks of loving intimately

☐ **PROUD:** are quick to blame others

☐ **BROKEN:** accept personal responsibility and can see where they are wrong in a situation

☐ **PROUD:** are unapproachable or defensive when criticized

☐ **BROKEN:** receive criticism with a humble, open spirit
- ☐ **PROUD:** are concerned with being respectable, with what others think; work to protect their own image and reputation

☐ **BROKEN:** are real; what matters to them is not what others think but what God knows; are willing to die to their reputation

☐ **PROUD:** find it difficult to share their spiritual needs with others

☐ **BROKEN:** are willing to be open and transparent with others as God directs

☐ **PROUD:** want to be sure no one finds out when they have sinned; their instinct is to cover up

☐ **BROKEN:** don’t care who knows or who finds out; are willing to be exposed because they have nothing to lose

☐ **PROUD:** have a hard time saying, “I was wrong; will you please forgive me?”

☐ **BROKEN:** are quick to admit failure and to seek forgiveness when necessary

☐ **PROUD:** deal in generalities when confessing sin

☐ **BROKEN:** are able to acknowledge specifics when confessing their sin

☐ **PROUD:** are concerned about the consequences of their sin

☐ **BROKEN:** are grieved over the cause, the root of their sin

☐ **PROUD:** are remorseful over their sin, sorry that they got found out or caught

☐ **BROKEN:** are genuinely repentant over their sin, evidenced in the fact that they forsake it

☐ **PROUD:** wait for the other to come and ask forgiveness when there is a misunderstanding or conflict in a relationship

☐ **BROKEN:** take the initiative to be reconciled when there is misunderstanding or conflict in relationships; race to get to the cross first, no matter how wrong the other may have been

- ☐ **PROUD:** compare themselves with others and feel worthy of honor

☐ **BROKEN:** compare themselves to the holiness of God and feel a desperate need for His mercy

☐ **PROUD:** are blind to their true heart condition

☐ **BROKEN:** walk in the light

☐ **PROUD:** don't think they need to repent

☐ **BROKEN:** realize they have need of a continual heart attitude of repentance

☐ **PROUD:** don't think they need revival, but are sure everyone else does

☐ **BROKEN:** sense their need for a fresh encounter with God and for a fresh filling of His Holy Spirit

PART 3: CHOOSE TO HUMBLE YOURSELF

It is important not only to admit your need before God (and thus receive His grace!), but also to repent. Repentance of pride involves turning around and stepping into a lifestyle of humility. With your Bible in hand, begin your journey of repentance and surrender to God. Next to each verse listed, write down a summary of what the Scripture means in your own life.

To repent from pride, I must turn from . . .

- THE ANGER I FEEL. James 1:19-20
- THE HYPOCRISY I ALLOW. James 1:22-25
- THE GRUDGES I HOLD. Hebrews 12:15-17
- THE PRAISE I'VE BEEN SEEKING. Matthew 6:1-8

To walk in humility, I must start . . .

- SAYING THANK YOU. Colossians 3:15-17
- SUBMITTING TO GOD. Romans 12:1-2
- LETTING OTHERS BE FIRST. Philippians 2:3-5
- SERVING THE BODY OF CHRIST. Romans 12:3-13

In the end, a humble life not only brings peace in relationships, refreshed joy, and contentment, it also results in honor and blessing from God.

- 1 Peter 5:6
- Proverbs 22:4
- Matthew 5:3

REDIRECTING GLORY

► A dangerous indicator of pride growing in our hearts is when we start angling for attention in our ministry work. That leads to the “fear of man,” which brings a tragic snare, a self-deception that could shipwreck our walk with God.

Jesus taught that multitudes will be cast out of heaven on Judgment Day who honestly believed themselves to be heaven-bound. They'll leave the throne room sadly, befuddled by their self-deception, terrified by their fate. *I wonder:* If it's possible to deceive ourselves regarding salvation, is it also possible to deceive ourselves regarding insidious pride?

Even among fellow ministers of the gospel, I can feel it sometimes. I can feel it in my own heart. We might call it “platform building,” “sharing praise reports,” “establishing credibility,” or “measuring outcomes.” These are worthy pursuits. But oh, brothers and sisters, pride would love to claim those attendance numbers, that revenue spreadsheet, that Christian celebrity endorsement, that social media following, those feedback testimonials.

Pride loves to take what rightfully should bring God glory and redirect it to a lesser being—whether to Lucifer, to Dan Jarvis, or to you. (Yes, I just put our names on a list with Satan!) We must deny pride the opportunity to leverage what God is doing through us for its sinister agenda—we must resist the devil (James 4:6-7).

Counterfeit humility cannot remain for long—pride isn't good at hiding in a crowd. It surfaces in “innocent” ways. A casual name drop of an “important person” we know. A slightly forced mention of how many people attended our church last Easter. A clarification of our professional title. A question about budgets or bravery, seminary degrees or life accomplishments, or who mentored whom—asked not to discover but to prompt reciprocation.

The Bible calls this the “fear of man”—when we start angling for appreciation or jockeying for a higher position in the pecking order of our associations. Beware! It's a trap (Prov. 29:25). Fearing what other people think of you is a vice that never satisfies, never resolves, never ends. Jesus said of Pharisees with similar motivation, “They have [already] received their reward in full” (Matt. 6:2 NIV).

I recall meeting a man who confidently announced to me that he was pastoring the “fourth largest church in the county.” Not *country*, mind you . . . *county*. Now, I have my own battles with pride, so I don't want to judge the poor guy too harshly, but I think he was trying a little too hard to impress me!

Silly? Just like my feeble attempts to impress. Like when I yearn to mention something great about what I've done, a sacrifice I've made, the number of years I've served, or some statistic that validates me, just to swing the conversation toward the “glory of Dan.” Pretty pathetic, eh?

So what should we do? Our hearts naturally bend toward pride, and even we who preach sermons about humility are not exempt from danger. Here are a few of my own resolutions:

- When I meet people, I ask as many questions as I can. I'm willing to share too, but my real aim in conversation is to benefit the other person, not add extra helium to my ego. I want to encourage them, not myself!
- I don't volunteer reports about myself unless they are actually necessary. I often choose to not mention “who I am” or “who I know” or “what I've accomplished.” (Those items are far less relevant than my pride wants to admit.) My goal is not to end up sharing “Dan” with everyone I meet. I'd much rather share Jesus!
- I consciously wonder how I can add value to the person I'm speaking with. That keeps my focus in conversation off of me. It keeps my mind preoccupied with how I can serve, share with, or uplift them.
- I try my best to redirect praise toward God. When I receive compliments, I first say *thank you* to the person offering encouragement, but I then point to the grace of God that was involved. I'm His servant, after all, not a servant of my reputation, self-esteem, or brand identity. Any glory I happen to receive should rightfully be redirected toward Jesus.



NEXT STEP

Dan Jarvis
Managing Editor

Fearing what other people think of you is a vice that never satisfies, resolves, or ends.

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