



WEEK 1

PRIDE // HUMILITY

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JAMES 4:6-7

*But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “**God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.**” Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

C.S. LEWIS, 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.

There was pride in heaven. What hope is there for us on earth?

If the capital vices and the fruit they bear were a tree, pride would be the roots and trunk of the tree – from which every other sin stems from. Pride is the root or underlying cause of all sin. Proverbs 16:18 tells us that pride goes before destruction. First comes pride, then comes everything else that leads a person to destruction. Therefore, it makes sense to start our study with this root-vice – that existed in Adam and Eve when they pridefully chose their way over God’s, and has existed in every human heart since – including yours.

Historically, *vainglory* has often been listed as one of the seven vices and *pride* has been seen as an overarching root of all of them. While pride and vainglory are distinct from each other, they are two sides of the same coin. Pride is a distorted, excessive sense of self-importance and feeling of superiority; vainglory is the excessive and disordered desire for recognition and approval from others.

What makes pride particularly heinous is that it sets itself in opposition to God. God's Word tells us that He is our source; pride tells us that we are the source of our own lives – and the more we believe that, the more we remove ourselves from reality. Pride is the delusion that I know better than God and placing myself above God. This is why our text tells us that God opposes the proud; but there is hope because He gives grace to the humble (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

Therefore, Christians are called to the kingdom virtue of humility. Humility keeps us from pridefully imagining ourselves to be better lords of our own lives on the one hand and humility's counterfeits: self-deprecation and self-hatred on the other. We can only think too much of ourselves if we diminish God and elevate ourselves. When we think too poorly of ourselves we are forgetting how beloved by God we are, as evidenced most clearly through His Son Jesus.

Our hope rests in the fact that our justification doesn't come from self but the cross of Christ. And it is at the cross that we see God and ourselves rightly, where there is no room for pride and humility is the only fitting response.

C.S. LEWIS, MERE CHRISTIANITY

Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.

TIMOTHY KELLER, CENTER CHURCH

Our natural condition under sin is to be "glory empty" – starved for significance, honor, and a sense of worth. Sin makes us feel superior and overconfident (because we are trying to prove to ourselves and others that we are significant) and inferior and underconfident (because at a deep level we feel guilty and insecure). Some people's glory emptiness primarily takes the form of bravado and evident pride; for others, it takes the form of self-deprecation and self-loathing. Most of us are wracked by both impulses.... When the gospel changes us...it humbles us before anyone, telling us we are sinners saved only by grace. But it also emboldens us before anyone, telling us we are loved and honored by the only eyes in the universe that really count.... The gospel makes us neither self-confident nor self-disdaining but gives us boldness and humility that can increase together.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Pride, vanity, and narcissism have been sinful issues of the heart throughout the ages. Does our day and age lend itself more than ever to this character-shaping vice?
- Discuss how understanding ourselves in light of God and the gospel roots out pride on the one hand and self-loathing on the other and leads to humility?
- How can you “put off” pride and “put on” humility this week?

WEEKLY FAST

Fast from Glory & Status Seeking in your heart & through your actions.

- Refrain from social media posts, statements, and actions that bring attention to yourself.
- Reflect on areas where pride manifests in your life—arrogance, self-righteousness, an unwillingness to admit faults, or seeking validation from others.

Practice the Kingdom Virtue of Sacrificial Service

- There is no task beneath a follower of Jesus, *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 10:45). Therefore, perform some tasks this week that you are tempted to consider beneath you, recognizing that God gives grace to the humble. Perform the task without expecting anything in return.
- Rehearse the gospel to yourself this week. Romans 12:3 instructs you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment. Rehearsing the gospel helps us see ourselves rightly.
- Spend more time listening than speaking.
- If you have hurt others due to pride, exhibit humility by going to them, apologizing, and seeking their forgiveness.

ADDITIONAL READING

Proverbs 16:1-19; Jeremiah 9:23-24; Matthew 6:1-6, 23:1-12; Romans 12:3-16; 1 Peter 5:6-7; 1 John 2:15-17

Timothy Keller, *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*