

Lessons in Pride and Humility



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Now as we have considered at some length the **mortification of sin**, no discussion would be complete if we did not mention the relation of **pride** and **humility** to **mortification**. Indeed the relation of pride and humility to **Sanctification** and **Bearing the Image** is of paramount importance. This is because **pride is the motivation and/or disposition of every sin** and **humility is the well spring of all virtue**. These heart attitudes are the very basis for how we live our lives and view our world. And the eyes of the Lord are peering into our hearts and lives to see if we have an arrogant heart of pride or a humble heart of gratitude. Consider 1 Peter 5:5-6...

1 Peter 5:5-6 - 5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, **clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.** 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, NASB

You see the matter of **pride** and **humility** is something that **God is paying attention to**. And here Peter describes that **God is actively responding** to both the **proud** and the **humble**. You see ***“God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”*** The prideful person may not be at war with God, but God is opposed to them! God actively seeks to make their life difficult.

Proverbs 16:5 - **Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord;** Assuredly, he will not be unpunished. NASB

When we exalt ourselves against God and proudly disregard His authority, we make Him our enemy and He is the most fierce of all enemies. Let us not be found warring with God or we will find ourselves frustrated, downcast or even ultimately destroyed! In contrast here the Scripture says, He ***“gives grace to the humble.”***

God actively seeks to bless those who are humble. In fact, He exalts them and lifts them up. He sees to it that things go well, and graciously overlooks their many failures and instead turns things for their good.

Isaiah 57:15 - 15 For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order **to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite.** NASB

Learn here about the central issues of the spiritual warfare for Sanctification in the Christian life. More than this, these matters are directly related to God's disposition toward us. These **heart attitudes of pride and humility** are indeed the very foundation for a life of holiness and the nitty gritty of how this war is waged.

Luke 18:10 - 14 "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; **for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted.**" NASB

Defining Biblical Pride and Humility

Now let us briefly define **pride** and **humility** in **the Bible**. I will start with the definition from the little booklet, "**From Pride to Humility**" by Stuart Scott.

Pride – The mindset of self, a focus on self and the service of self, a pursuit of self-recognition and self-exaltation, and a desire to control and use all things for self.

Humility – The mindset of Christ, a focus on God and others, a pursuit of the recognition and the exaltation of God, and a desire to glorify and please God in all things and by all things He has given.

These definitions indeed get to the heart of pride and humility but I think we should add a few things to highlight the nature of these two heart attitudes. Indeed **pride and humility are polar opposites**. They are the antithesis of each other. They also have to do with **spiritual awareness**. Pride is a spiritual blindness to true reality and humility is an ability to see true spiritual reality. An excellent example of this is the fact that the proud person thinks he/she is a humble person and the humble person thinks there are few people as proud as themselves. The proud person is oblivious to the fact that they are proud and the humble person thinks themselves proud for sure.

This is because the **nature of pride** itself is a **spiritual blindness**, an **inability to discern** the true reality of **spiritual things**, including and most importantly its **relation to God and others**.

James 3:14-16 - 14 But if you have **bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth**. 15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. 16 For where **jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing**. NASB

Selfish ambition is a prideful disposition which *“lies against the truth.”* It cannot see true reality. And where *“selfish ambition”* exists, *“there you have disorder and every evil thing.”* This is because this pride of selfish ambition views everything according to its own inflated view of self and appraises little according to what is right and true. The proud person is not aware of themselves and how proud they really are, looking down on others and appraising them according to an **inflated view of self**. They have a twisted view of others because they view everything in relation to themselves, and appraise others in view of themselves and often completely misunderstand others because of this condition. They

many times are guilty of the very thing they accuse or think of others because **pride** is also the very **nature** of **hypocrisy**. The **proud person thinks more highly of themselves** than is true or than they should. The thing to which they are blind the most is their own pride and arrogance. Being so charmed by their own inflated self-respect, they make a wrong appraisal of themselves, God and others. Bill Farley comments, *“We cannot see pride, even though it is our most grievous, disabling sin, because its very nature is blindness, and the first thing to which it is blind is its own existence... the proud person has a high view of self, but a low view of God and his brother... the proud man is completely unaware of his pride, of all men he is convinced he is humble.”* from Gospel Powered Humility page 25. Pride is **self-righteous**, thinking itself more righteous than others. Pride is **self-exalting** seeking to be noticed, appreciated and recognized. Pride is **self-willed** going its own way without the input of God or others thinking to highly of its own wisdom. Pride **self-reliant** thinking it can handle any situation and can do everything on its own, not recognizing its total dependence of God for strength and resources. Pride can also be **self-pitying** having an inflated view of oneself that is always introspective and therefore consumed with self and wanting to be accepted, recognized and the center of attention. Biblical examples of pride can be seen in the characters of Jacob, Pharoah, Korah, Saul, Uzziah, Nebuchadnezzar, Beltshazzar, and others. Other biblical terms for this blinding inflated view of self we call pride are; vainglory, conceit, boasting, arrogance, loftiness, presumption, haughty, puffed up, scoffing or self-seeking. One last important point is that **every person is proud**, in some degree. None of us are without pride, including all born-again Christians. We all, to some degree are infected with this vicious blindness and

affected by our own pride. We will also never in this life be completely delivered from this spiritual disease for it is the nature of the sinful nature we will all struggle with until we are glorified at the resurrection. Let us see in this that **pride** is indeed the most “**grievous and disabling sin,**” and the life of the proud person is sure to be a constantly painful and difficult struggle ending in disaster. This of course if because “*God is opposed to the proud,*” (Jam 4:6).

Proverbs 26:12 - 12 Do you see a man **wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool** than for him. NASB

Humility in contrast is a delightful and fruitful **heart attitude**. And because it deals with nature of spiritual reality, only born-again Christians with the Spirit of God can learn genuine humility. Genuine humility is NOT our natural disposition, but given by the Spirit of God. The more **genuine humility** we **learn**, the more **powerfully our lives will be changed**. Humility is the **foundation for all the virtues** to thrive in our lives and without it, virtue cannot exist in any meaningful measure. The humble heart is a heart that sees both God and others in the proper light. As we grow in **humility** we grow in the **awareness of spiritual reality**. Bill Farley comments; “*Humility is one of the least understood spiritual fruits. It is not self-hatred or lack of self-confidence. Humility and low self-image are not the same thing. Indeed they are polar opposites. Increasing humility brings rest with self, with God, and with life’s circumstances. It produces real lasting joy and healthy self-image. Humility is the ability to see spiritual reality, to see things as they really are. It is the capacity to see myself in God’s light, in the context of His holiness and my sinfulness. In other words, it is the ability to see self, and this world, through*

God's eyes. God empowers the humble person to increasingly see himself as he really is; "wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked." (Rev 3:17). The person growing in humility see his gifts and faults, his strengths and weaknesses, with increasing clarity. Ironically, this humility lays the sure foundation for real contentment and healthy self-image because the humble Christian also increasingly sees and feels God's great personal love. The truly humble believer has a low view of himself, but an increasingly high view of God and his fellow man." from Gospel Powered Humility pages 24-25.

The idea of **humility** in the Bible is to **make oneself low**, or to bow down. It is to be of a **servants mind**, servile, and also **to be lowly, yielding, submissive**, meek and gentle. It is to be modest and unpretentious, to see others as more important than itself.

Philippians 2:3-4 - 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but **with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself**; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. NASB

It seeks to draw attention **to God and His glory**, and to honor, appreciate and commend others for their virtue. Humility does not have an inflated view of self, but rather recognized one's own spiritual bankruptcy before God's holiness and sees itself then in need of **grace for its sinfulness** and in need of **mercy for its weakness**. Humility has a clear self-image because it sees itself with faith depending on God. Humility rejoices when others are blessed and rather than feeling jealous or envious, is happy to bless and to serve others for their benefit, and even to make personal sacrifices to see these things happen and for **God to get the glory** for it. Humility does not seek its own glory or attention. The genuinely humble person is content to be forgiven of their many

sins, to have the bare necessities of life, and their great **privilege** is to love and serve God and to love and serve others. **Humility is NOT self-righteous**, thinking itself more righteous than others, but rather knows itself sinful, in need of divine grace and privileged to be forgiven. Humility is **NOT self-exalting** seeking to be noticed, appreciated and recognized, but rather seeks to be in the background and not the center of attention. Humility is glad for others to be honored and blessed, and for God to get the glory, to whom it is properly due. It submissively yields to the preference of others, and prefers others choices and desires often when making decisions.

Romans 12:10 - 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; **give preference to one another in honor**; NASB

Humility is **NOT self-willed** going its own way without the input of God or others thinking too highly of its own wisdom, but realizes that others often have a better understanding of matters and probably have insight that we lack. It humbly looks to God and others for help and guidance.

Romans 12:16 - 16 Be of the same mind toward one another; **do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation**. NASB

Humility is **NOT self-reliant** thinking it can handle any situation and can do everything on its own, but **realizes one's own weakness** and dependence on God for strength and resources. It recognizes that without God's blessing and favor, it cannot make any lasting progress.

2 Corinthians 3:4-5 - 4 And such confidence we have through Christ toward God. 5 **Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God**,

NASB

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 - 9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, **for power is perfected**

in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather **boast about my weaknesses**, that the power of Christ

may dwell in me. 10 Therefore **I am well content with weaknesses**, with insults, with distresses, with

persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. NASB

Humility is NOT **self-pitying** having an inflated view of oneself that is always introspective and therefore **consumed with self** and wanting to be accepted, recognized and the center of attention. It does not always see itself as the victim of others injury, but rather takes responsibility for its own regular mistakes, and is willing to admit when it is wrong. It does not criticize others or speak of their troubles with delight, but speaks well of others and desires to build others up with gracious and edifying words, giving others the benefit of the doubt.

Ephesians 4:29 - 29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, **but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.** NASB

Humility is inwardly glad when others bring correction or critique, because it realizes this is an opportunity for real progress and a clearer view of self.

Proverbs 9:8 - 8 Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you, **Reprove a wise man, and he will love you.** NASB

Proverbs 17:10 - A **rebuke goes deeper into one who has understanding** Than a hundred blows into a fool. NASB

Other biblical terms and ideas for this healthy self-image of humility are; contrite or contrition, bowing down, servile, lowly, yielding, submissive, meek, gentle, and modest. One last important point is that **humility is a goal** we are always striving for but never actually attaining. We may grow in humility by degree, but **never fully arrive** in this life. When you finally think your humble, your

pride just ruined it. We all are in a **desperate need to humble ourselves**, and this must be renewed continually, for pride is always lurking in the self, seeking its own attention, importance and lust. This is why the Bible commands us to **“humble ourselves”** before God.

1 Peter 5:5-6 - 5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, **clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.** 6 **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God**, that He may exalt you at the proper time, NASB

As we said earlier, it is the **attitude or mindset of Christ**, who left the glory and honor and majesty of Heaven to come and serve and die for wretched sinners who rebelled against His authority, and had profaned his world and His entire creation.

Philippians 2:5-8 - 5 **Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus**, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 **but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant**, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, **He humbled Himself** by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. NASB

Thus **Jesus is our great example of humility** and His attitude is the heart attitude that we strive to possess at all times, always seeking the glory of God. Humility is *“a focus on God and others, a pursuit of the recognition and the exaltation of God, and a desire to glorify and please God in all things and by all things He has given.”* There is then **in humility, a self-denial** at its core that focuses on God, seeing Him in His proper place and therefore, seeing **everything in its proper place** in relation to God. When you see the world as being ruled by the Sovereign and in rebellion against Him, you begin to understand why it is in such a desperate plight as it is. Grace and mercy take on a whole new meaning when you realize that you deserve God’s wrath forever in hell, but

instead are the recipient of His loving mercy and eternal life that He has freely given to you because of Christ. And in order to follow Christ, one must take that initial step of **humble repentance at the cross, denying your own will** and exalting God's will above your own.

Mark 8:34-35 - 34 And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, **"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross,** and follow Me. 35 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it. NASB

You must **lose your own life** to follow Christ. The first step is a humble one, a contrition that acknowledges its arrogant sinfulness toward God, and bowing low to seek God's mercy you lose your own life, your own selfish will, your own plan for your own life and your own glory. In this yielding and brokenness of losing your life, you actually find your life, and you come to realize that life is not centered in and around you, but it is God's world, His Kingdom, His glory and His plan that is central to all things. In this humility you find great **meaning and purpose in life** realizing that God gave you life to glorify Him by living a life of virtue, loving and serving God. No longer consumed with self, you are free to give yourself away in service and love to others, and to live your life as a fountain of blessing, and reaping from that a **healthy self-image**, filled with joy. As you grow in this **spiritual awareness**, wisdom and understanding about your relations and the world around you become more and more obvious, and you begin to realize how to impart grace to others, having been blessed by God's grace toward you. This fundamental change in spiritual awareness can only come by God's free grace in **regeneration**, it is not a human work, and there is nothing you can do to merit this spiritual vision. **God must open your eyes** before you even realize

your great and desperate need to be saved, and He must give the gift of humble faith in order for you to believe.

John 3:3 - 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" NASB

Ephesians 2:4-6 - 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 **even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), 6 and **raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places**, in Christ Jesus, NASB

Therefore **when we are saved** it is **entirely by grace**. Once you were blinded by the God of this world (2 Cor 4:4), and steeped in your our sinful and selfish lifestyle, you **viewed God with arrogance**, mocking His holiness and sovereignty by you sinful deeds. You **viewed others with contempt**, as a means to your own ends and existing for you and unto you, you saw your life as your own, and not as God's (the One who gave it to you!). But in mercy He opened your eyes to see your desperate sinfulness, and your great need to be saved, and He showed you that you needed a Savior to pay the great penalties for your crimes that you had amassed before Him. By grace you have been saved! In regeneration He granted you a **humble child-like faith** in order for you to receive Christ, broken over your sin, and mourning your great offenses against God and others.

Mark 10:15 - 15 "Truly I say to you, **whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all.**" NASB

Coming as a child, you had **no righteousness of your own** to bring, only a life filled with sinful arrogance, so with God-given faith you looked to Christ and the cross as your only hope to be saved! Behold the **contrition, the yielding and submissive disposition** that receives Christ and His kingdom like a child. Thanks be to God that He started this humble work in your heart, and He will bring it to completion.

Philippians 1:6 - 6 For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.** NASB

The **contrast** between **pride** and **humility** can be seen very clearly in the teaching of Jesus. Consider how he pointed out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in Luke 18:9-14. Consider the **spiritual awareness** of the two subjects in the illustration.

Luke 18:9-14 - 9 And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: 10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. 11 "The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, **'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people:** swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. **12'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'** 13 "But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, **was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'** 14 "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted." NASB

Consider the **disposition before God** of the two subjects in the illustration. The **Pharisee** is **proud** and has an inflated view of himself, and being **self-righteous** he thinks is better than others saying, *"God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer."* He views others with contempt, thinking they are worse sinners than he is, and not seeing his own hypocrisy. He has a **spiritual blindness**, an **inability to discern** the true reality of **spiritual things**, including and most importantly its **relation to God** and **others**. He is **blind, not spiritually aware**. The thing to which he is blind the most is his own pride and arrogance. Being so charmed by his own inflated self-respect, he makes a wrong appraisal of himself, God and others. He is **self-exalting, self-willed, and self-reliant** thinking he has God's approval, worse yet that he himself has earned God's approval, when in fact God is not even hearing

his arrogant prayer; *“The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself.”* God is opposed to this man and does not even acknowledge his bankrupt and blind discourse about the glory of himself, and he was **NOT justified** before God, *“justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled.”* Having exalted himself, he had cut himself off from the mercy of God who only *“gives grace to the humble.”*

But notice the **tax-collector**, he is **mourning** and **broken** over his **sinfulness**. He is **humble** and **yielding** and submissive. He is so **contrite** that he is **fearful to even approach God**, whom he knows he has offended with his sin; *“standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’”* He did not even consider himself worthy to look up toward God, he was **lowly** and **trembling before God**, even *“beating his breast”* and crying out to God for mercy, knowing that he desperately needed God’s help and mercy and remedy for his terrible crimes against the Lord. He **sees so clearly** and has the **ability to discern** the true reality of **spiritual things**, including and most importantly his **relation to God** and **others**. His eyes see reality, he is **spiritually aware**. Being filled with **humble child-like faith**, He realizes his total dependence on God for grace and in his own **weakness** needs mercy from God, the One whom he has offended and the only One who can give mercy. Here Jesus demonstrates the disposition one must have to approach God, for God to hear his prayer, and to receive grace and mercy from God and be justified in his sight.

Humility, trembling and obedience

So we have considered the nature of humility and some of its basic characteristics which are;

- It is an **awareness** of true **spiritual reality**. It sees and/or perceives clearly its proper place before God and others.
- The **mindset of Christ**, a focus on God and others, a pursuit of the recognition and the exaltation of God, and a **desire to glorify and please God** in all things and by all things He has given.
- It recognizes one's own spiritual bankruptcy before God's holiness and sees itself then in need of **grace for its sinfulness** and in need of **mercy for its weakness**.
- It is a **self-denial** at its core that focuses on God, and a willingness to lose one's life for Christ's sake.
- It is to be of a **servants mind**, servile, and also **to be lowly, yielding, submissive**, meek and gentle. It is **contrite** and seeks to amend its failures. It is to be modest and unpretentious, to see others as more important than itself
- It seeks to draw attention **to God and His glory**, and to honor, appreciate and commend others for their virtue.
- One last important point is that **humility is a goal** we are always striving for but never actually attaining. We may grow in humility by degree, but **never fully arrive** in this life.

Having seen to some degree what the nature of humility looks like, lets us consider how it should progress in us, and how we may know that we are making this **downward progress of contrition**. As we grow in **humility we grow** in the **awareness of spiritual reality**. We become like that tax collector of Luke 18:13, he is **mourning** and **broken** over his **sinfulness**. He is **humble** and **yielding** and submissive. He is so **contrite** that he is **fearful to**

even approach God, his eyes see reality, he is **spiritually aware**. Being filled with **humble child-like faith**, he realizes his total dependence on God for grace and in his own **weakness** needs mercy from God, and therefore he is trembling and contrite. Let us make no mistake, this is the **heart attitude** of one that is **pleasing to God**.

Isaiah 57:15 - 15 For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order **to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite**. NASB

Isaiah 66:2 - 2 "For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. "But **to this one I will look**, To **him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word**. NASB

Matthew 5:3 - 3 "**Blessed are the poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. NASB

And this heart attitude leads to a healthy fear, a **reverence** for **God** and **His Word**. As it sees God and His holiness, there is a **trembling**, a fearful reverence, a **contrition** that seeks to amend its failures to glorify Him. Because humility has such clear vision of God, it cannot but see the awesome **beauty** of **God's holiness**, and **His magnificent love** and rejoice at the sight (or perception) of it. Moreover in this sight of God, is the perception of His forgiveness, and His loving-kindness in giving the ultimate sacrifice to reconcile us to Him, even His sinless Son, Jesus the Christ. So with this humility and contrition comes an inner rejoicing, yet with holy fear. This **humility with joy** combines to be a powerful motivator toward our growth because with the reverence for God's holiness comes the perception of His love and the desire to please Him. It not only adores His beauty and virtue, but it also longs to be like Him. This is the deep inner **work** of the **Spirit**, causing us to grow in the perception of God's love to us in the Gospel, and also

causing us to long to be like Him, which results in virtue being perfected within us. As we grow in this union with the Father and the Son, we are powerfully changed into His image.

1 John 4:16-18 - 16 And we have **come to know and have believed the love which God has for us**. God is love, and **the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him**. 17 **By this, love is perfected with us**, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. 18 **There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear**, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. NASB

This **joyful trembling** is the stuff of spiritual growth and the motivation that causes the **downward progress** of **humility**. Bill Farley comments; *“The person growing in humility see his gifts and faults, his strengths and weaknesses, with increasing clarity. Ironically, this humility lays the sure foundation for real contentment and healthy self-image because the humble Christian also increasingly sees and feels God’s great personal love. The truly humble believer has a low view of himself, but an increasingly high view of God and his fellow man.”*

As we understand God, ourselves, and others more clearly, we are empowered to change and become like Him. More than this, it is the motivation for obedience to God’s Word. Humility is the fuel that causes us to want to **amend our failures** and to truly be changed and become like Him. When we see the wretchedness of our own sinfulness, and the beauty of God’s love and forgiveness, we long to be changed and take on His virtue, not only in our thoughts, but even more in our words and actions. We begin to desire to glorify Him and enjoy Him by loving Him and serving Him and others. We begin to act on the **vision that humble faith has clearly given** us of God. As we **grow** in this **joyful trembling**, we grow in **spiritual awareness**, we perceive reality more clearly.

And so the Bible calls us to **tremble** before God's holy **Word** from a heart of **contrition** and **humility**. It tells us that God is not only pleased with our contrition, but blesses the humble and contrite.

Isaiah 66:2 - 2 "For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. "But **to this one I will look**, To **him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.**

NASB

Psalms 25:9 - 9 He **leads the humble in justice, And He teaches the humble** His way. NASB

Psalms 138:6 - 6 For though the Lord is exalted, Yet **He regards the lowly**; But the haughty He knows from afar. NASB

So the Bible calls us not only to a **trembling before God's Word**, but calls us to a **lively obedience** that produces a godly life, a life of true worship, which looks like **Spirit empowered virtue**, and purposeful **service to God and others**. This is **spiritual growth** and maturity. It is becoming like Him, **bearing the image** in greater degree, as we are changed through the Word and by the Spirit.

Philippians 2:12-13 - 12 So then, my beloved, **just as you have always obeyed**, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work** for His good pleasure. NASB

2 Corinthians 3:18 - 8 But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory**, just **as from the Lord, the Spirit**. NASB

James 1:21-22 - 21 Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, **in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word**, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. NASB

1 Peter 5:5-6 - 5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, **clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God**, that He may exalt you at the proper time, NASB

But what does it look like to humble yourself? How do we offer our **God dependent effort** in this cooperation with God? What practical steps does the Bible tell us to take in this Sanctifying work of the Spirit? The New Testament is filled to the brim with practical exhortations toward **sanctification** and **personal holiness**. Several practical sections come to mind; (**Romans 12:1-15:13, Galatians 5:1-6:10, Ephesians 4:1-6:20, Philippians 2:1-18, Colossians 3:1-4:6, 2 Thess 3:1-15**). Almost the entire Epistles of James, 1 & 2 Peter, and Jude are given to this practical instruction. But when considering how to “**humble ourselves**” as Peter calls us to, consider the passage in James where James also tells us to “**humble ourselves.**” Here he gives very specific exhortations to this humbling. Let’s look at this text.

James 4:6-10 - 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” **7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom.** 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. NASB

Now as we consider this passage, don’t forget that we accomplish these things in the **power of the Spirit**, yet we make real effort toward them. Our effort is **God dependent effort** (faith), and we are working together with Him, empowered by Him to become like Him. Notice that James has in mind how to correct our **sinful struggles in relationships with God and others** (v-3:1-4:10) that are filled with ungodly lust (v-4:1-5) and selfish ambition (v-3:14), which lead to quarrels and strife (v-4:1-2), and ultimately striving with God as His enemy (v-4:4-5).

James 4:1-5 - 1 What is the **source of quarrels and conflicts among you**? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 **You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot**

obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because **you ask with wrong motives**, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 You adulteresses, **do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.** 5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? NASB

As we arrive at his conclusion in **James 4:6-10**, notice he tells us how to practically **mortify our old sinful selves**, and to **vivify by putting on the new self**, but particularly calling this activity **“humbling ourselves.”** In this he points out that **humbling ourselves** has to do with both **mortification and vivification.**

James 4:6-10 - 6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." **7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom.** 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. NASB

The context of verses 6-10 is sandwiched on both sides (v-6 & v-10) with the idea of humbling ourselves. Consider how he tells us it is done in between.

- **7 Submit therefore to God** – Here he calls us to the contrition and submissive yielding to the will of God that humility is. If you want to humble yourself, you must submit to God’s will, and yield yourself to Him in obedience. **How do we humble ourselves? By submitting to God.**
- **Resist the devil and he will flee from you** – This means you must put off or mortify the selfish desires of the old self, and stop yielding to Satan’s temptations (in this context it is lust, envy, quarreling, bitter jealousy and selfish ambition), but rather resist him. Here God says if you resist the devil he will flee. **How do we humble ourselves? By resisting the devil.**

- 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you** – See here he encourages us to draw near to God, not to flee from Him like guilty Adam. God loves us and desires to free us from the slavery of sinful choices and He calls us to come near. See here the love that God has for us, and this should overcome our fear of Him (1 John 4:16-18).
Matthew 11:28-30 - 28 "**Come to Me**, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 "**Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart**; and you shall find rest for your souls. 30 "**For My yoke is easy, and My load is light**." NASB
 Notice that God is ready and willing to draw near to those who draw near to Him. **How do we humble ourselves? By drawing near to God.**
- Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded** - Here he calls us to mortify our sinful behavior both on the outside, "*cleanse your hands, you sinners*" and on the inside, "*and purify your hearts.*" Here the Christian is called a "*sinner*" and called to repent. Consider he also points to the inner man, the heart and mind of man. See here the battlefield of the mind, change your "*double mind*" into an steadfast single minded devotion to God. The Psalmist prayed, "*give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name!*" (Psalm 86:11). **How do we humble ourselves? By repenting (or mortifying) our sinful deeds, intentions and thoughts.**
- 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom** – Here James calls us to the clear vision of humility in light of our sinfulness (v-8) and God’s holy jealousy (v-5) for our purity. God has given His Holy Spirit to live within us, therefore we should hate, bewail and loathe our sinful deeds, intentions and

thoughts! If we see our great offenses against God, and we perceive His loving-kindness in the Gospel to forgive us, we ought to have a regular mourning over our sinfulness with that contrition that detests its own corruption and seeks to amend its failures... remember the tax collector who “*was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'*” **How do we humble ourselves? By mourning and weeping over our sinful deeds, intentions and thoughts!**

2 Corinthians 7:10-12 - 10 For the **sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret**, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death. 11 For behold **what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong!** In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. NASB

See in these few verses how James has given several **very practical and clear steps** to take in “**humbling ourselves.**” Notice how this humility relates to so many different aspects of our Christian life. Humility in this context includes, “**submitting to God, resisting the devil, drawing near to God,**” and “**repenting and mourning over our sinfulness.**” This is because humility is that foundation, that heart attitude of the true believer, that disposition of the heart before God that permeates everything we do in life and our relationship to God and others. It is in fact the **wellspring of all the virtues** in a Christian life. The more **intense and fertile the soil of humility in your heart**, the **richer and more bountiful** is the **virtue of God perfected** in our lives. This is because the humble are submitted to God, resisting the devil, drawing near to God and repenting and mourning their sin, and God in turn is “**giving grace to the humble.**” This is what the **God dependent effort of faith** looks like practically. It is a joyful

trembling at the Word of God, which the Spirit is working in us, to cause us to **bear His image** in greater degree over time. We “**are being transformed**” through the Word and by the Spirit!

2 Corinthians 3:18 - 8 But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory**, just **as from the Lord, the Spirit**. NASB

But this happens in greater degree to those who respond to the Word in humility and receive it, being an “**effectual doer**” of the Word, and not just “**hearers**” only.

James 1:21-22 - 21 Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, **in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word**, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. NASB

Declaring war on pride

Now in the same way that **humility is the wellspring of all the virtues**, as we have said, **pride is the root of every sin**. One of the most important matters in the Christian life is the disposition of our hearts before God. What is the posture of our heart as it relates to God in His holiness and us in our sinfulness? Are we like the proud and therefore blind Pharisee, to whom God is opposed? Or are we submissive and contrite, like the tax collector, realizing our own profoundly sinful condition and need of divine grace, with a clear vision of God’s love to us through the Gospel? See here the very heart and foundational matter in **bearing the image** and becoming like Christ in Sanctification, it is the process whereby that grace of humility that was given in regeneration when we were saved, is growing and bearing fruit over time. We are progressing heavenward to Christlikeness overtime as we make the downward progression of humility, coming to that **clear vision** or **spiritual awareness** that **humility is** in greater degree over time. This of

course happens also through the mortification of the pride that is in our hearts. Growing in humility starts with a recognition of our pride and an active killing of this sinful heart attitude, and the replacement of it with the godliness of humble child-like faith. We must come to see that sinful **posture of pride** is arrogantly lifted up against God's authority, bent on rebellion in defiance of His will, and willing to commit treason with contempt of His holy Law. **The great beast of pride must be slain in our hearts** if Christ will rule there!

Pride is part of the nature of every sin

This truth is one in Scripture that is much like the doctrine of the Trinity. There is no specific verse that states that God is Triune as a proposition, but the whole Bible is filled with statements that put forth God's Tri-Unity and repetitively imply His Triune nature. So it is with **pride** being an element in the **very nature of sin**. There is no specific verse that says pride is the nature of sin as a proposition, but the Bible continually exposes the sins of people in the course of history, and continually shows the nature of this activity to be an arrogant defiance of God. This is because the struggle with pride in our hearts is a struggle against **God's reign, His rule, His Lordship**. It is as if our will is saying, "*who rules me and determines my course of action?*" When we sin we commit **treason** against His Heavenly **Majesty**, in **defiance** we lift ourselves up against His **Kingship** and in **contempt** of His **Sovereignty** we commit **mutiny** as it were. This is why every sin is an arrogant defiance of God's authority and Law. **Sin always defies God, therefore it always is proud**, lifted up and haughty, as if to say "*I am my own God, I will not have this God to rule over me.*" **Pride seeks to "un-god God,"** says Ralph Venning. Consider

pride in what is the **nature of sin**, and what **motivates sin**, and what is the **disposition of the heart** that commits sin.

1. It is the **nature of sin to exalt oneself above God's rule** as Creator and in rebellion against Him violate His holy law (Gen 3:1-7, 1 John 3:4). Sin transgresses, crosses over God's boundaries as our Governor, it **arrogantly disregards His authority**. Because of this, there is **always a sense of self-exalting pride in sin**, whether premeditated, intentional or unintentional. When we sin we put ourselves in the place of God.
2. What **motivates** both intentional and unintentional sin is a disregard for the judgment (power and authority) of God and an arrogant dismissal of it, as if in our **unbelief we do not think He will require justice, and defiantly transgress His will**. It is to **proudly say**, "*my desire is greater than God's judgment against my sin.*" Even unintentional sin does not regard God enough, (believe), to be informed of His requirement for morally acceptable behavior, or His power to judge according to righteousness.
3. Although the **conscience may warn against sin** because of our accountability to God, yet **our heart proudly decides** that our will is better than God's because ultimately what we want (**our lust**) is greater and more important than what God wants (**His Law**). See the nature of temptation is always to violate a law, otherwise it would NOT be a **temptation to sin (transgress law)**. The **disposition of the heart** that sins is **proudly lifted up against God**, and voluntarily overthrowing His rule in the heart.

Consider the **heart motivation of the first recorded sin** in creation, the **fall of Satan**. Look at the words that describe to motives and intentions in Satan's heart.

Isaiah 14:13-14 - 13 "But you said **in your heart**, '**I will ascend** to heaven; **I will raise my throne above** the stars of God, And **I will sit on the mount** of assembly In the recesses of the north. 14 '**I will ascend above the heights** of the clouds; **I will make myself like the Most High.**' NASB

Ezekiel 28:12-19 - 12 "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God, **"You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.** 13 **"You were in Eden, the garden of God**; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz, and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that **you were created** They were prepared. 14 **"You were the anointed cherub who covers**, And I placed you there. **You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.** 15 **"You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created, Until unrighteousness was found in you.** 16 "By the abundance of your trade You were internally filled with violence, And **you sinned**; Therefore I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the stones of fire. 17 **"Your heart was lifted up** because of your beauty; You **corrupted your wisdom** by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, That they may see you. 18 "By the multitude of your iniquities, In the unrighteousness of your trade, You profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; It has consumed you, And I have turned you to ashes on the earth In the eyes of all who see you. 19 "All who know you among the peoples Are appalled at you; You have become terrified, And you will be no more.'" NASB

Consider the **heart motivation of Adam and Eve** when they partook of the forbidden fruit. Knowing clearly the will of God and yet **defiantly transgressing** His command, in their pride our first parents **committed treason** against the Sovereign Majesty of God. Their desire in their hearts for what God had forbidden, and their desire to be like God, drove them to **defy God**.

Genesis 3:1-7 - 3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 **but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.'**" 4 And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! 5 "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 **When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.** NASB

Consider the **heart motivation of the unbeliever** in this Gospel age. Knowing clearly that there is a God who requires righteousness of them, **in their pride they will not honor Him as God**, or give thanks to Him for His good gifts that He gives every day. In their **arrogance** they do not acknowledge God any longer, but instead transgress and violate His Law and will. They know God will hold them accountable, but **defy Him** anyway.

Romans 1:18-22 - For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because **that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.** 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, **have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.** 21 For even though **they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks;** but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. NASB

Romans 1:28-32 - 28 And just as they **did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer,** God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; 32 and, **although they know the ordinance of God, that those**

who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them. NASB

Consider the **heart motivation of the true believer** who has been forgiven and stands in Christ. It is apparent that those of us who know and believe the truth hold an even greater culpability for sin. We are fully aware of God's righteous judgment, and yet allow our lust to deceive us into sin, and proudly dismiss His Lordship over the members of our bodies. If it were not for the grace of God in accomplishing our Justification once for all time through the death of Christ, we would again be condemned with the unbelieving and subject to eternal death. Nevertheless, we are in a struggle for sanctification and holiness, but aided by the Holy Spirit so that we have the ability to submit to God's desire and mortify our sins, something the unbeliever does not have.

2 Samuel 11:2-4 - 2 Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof **he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance.** 3 So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" 4 And **David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her;** and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house. NASB

James 1:14-15 - 14 But **each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.** 15 **Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin;** and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. NASB

Now much of this evidence from scripture, and indeed much more, has led many students of the Bible, indeed some of the greatest theologians in history to conclude that there is a sense in which pride is the root, our the motivating source, or part of the very nature of sin itself. Here are a few quotes.

Spurgeon – *“That demon of pride was born with us, and it will not die one hour before us. It is so woven into the very warped and*

woof of our nature, that too we are wrapped in our Wynding sheets we shall never hear the last of it.”

CS Lewis - In his book *Mere Christianity*, Lewis evidences his conviction about the seriousness of pride in this way, he asserts “*that pride is the essential vice, the utmost evil,” and that it is the “one vice of which no man in the world is free, and of which hardly any people ever imagine they are guilty themselves.”*

Chrysostom - Chrysostom said that “*pride is the mother of all evils.”*

Andrew Murray - Murray asserts, “*humility, the place of entire dependence upon God, is from the very nature of things the first duty and the highest virtue of his creatures. And so pride, the loss of humility, is the root of every sin and evil. It was when the now fallen Angels began to look upon themselves, with self-complacency that they were led to disobedience and were cast down from the light of heaven into outer darkness. Likewise, it was when the serpent breathed the poison of his pride, the desire to be as God, into the hearts of our first parents, that they too fell from there high estate into the wretchedness to which all humankind has sunk. In heaven and on earth, pride or self-exaltation is the very gateway to hell. And so it follows that nothing can save us but the restoration of our lost humility, the original and only true relationship of the creature to its God.”*

The modern biblical counselors Stuart Scott and also Wayne Mack both assert that pride is in our very nature. **Stuart Scott** says “*Pride is the epidemic vice. It is everywhere and manifests itself in many ways. As much as we may hate to admit it, we all have pride, each and every one of us. The question is not, do I have it? But, where is it? And how much of it do I have? We all have the*

tendency to think too much about ourselves and too much of ourselves.” **Wayne Mack** says “What is pride? Pride consists in attributing to ourselves and demanding for ourselves the honor, privileges, prerogatives, rights, and power that are due to God alone. Thus, it is at the very root and essence of sin because pride, at its core, is idolatry of self. A proud person has put himself or herself in God's place.”

?????

Unbelief – Every sin ultimately must dismiss at some level God’s right and power and certainty to judge our actions, therefore we reason that our lust is greater than the reality of His Judgment (deception). It calls the existence of God and His righteous judgment into question, which is **unbelief**. Lust deceives us into thinking sin is something less than it is (Eph 4:22). For if one believed that God existed and will judge our actions according to righteousness, there would be a willing submission. Unbelief is a **proud dismissal of reality** since God has clearly made Himself known, and conscience is a witness against sin.

Romans 1:18-22 - For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because **that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them**. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, **have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse**. 21 For even though **they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks**; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. NASB

Romans 14:23 - 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and **whatever is not from faith is sin**. NASB

Ephesians 4:22 - 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, **which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit**, NASB

Insubordination – Because sin is a transgression of God’s law, it is always insubordination, which is a proud dismissal of God’s Sovereign authority, expressed in His Law. Words appropriate to describe this are; Arrogance, Haughtiness, Loftiness, Defiance, Rebellion, Audacity, Treason, Contempt, Mutiny, to name a few.

1 Corinthians 15:56 - 56 The sting of death is sin, and **the power of sin is the law**; NASB

Romans 4:15 - 15 for the Law brings about wrath, but **where there is no law, neither is there violation**. NASB

Romans 6:12- 12 Therefore **do not let sin reign** in your mortal body that you should **obey its lusts**, NASB

1 John 3:4 - 4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and **sin is lawlessness**. NASB

Lust and Law - Although the **conscience may warn against sin** because of our accountability to God, yet **our heart proudly decides** that our will is better than God's because ultimately what we want (**our lust**) is greater and more important than what God wants (**His Law**). See the nature of temptation is always to violate a law, otherwise it would NOT be a **temptation to sin (transgress law)**. The **disposition of the heart** that sins is **proudly lifted up against God**, and voluntarily overthrowing His rule in the heart.

Romans 7:9-11 - 9 And I was once alive apart from the Law; but **when the commandment came**, sin became alive, and I died; 10 and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; 11 **for sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me**, and through it killed me. NASB

Judgment – Sin always brings about judgment because God is good and always requires an appropriate penalty for transgression of law. Even in the case of the forgiven sin of believers, our sins ultimately bring forth the death of our sacrificial substitute, Jesus the lamb of God.

James 1:15 - 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and **when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death**. NASB

Romans 6:23 - 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. NASB

Pride is part of the nature of every sin, therefore killing pride is killing sin

Therefore, if you make war against your pride, you cutoff sin at the roots, and deprive it of its nutrients and life. And if you humble yourself before God and others, you allow every other virtue to flow freely from your heart and life.

