

“Humility” (Part 1)

Text: Isaiah 66:1-2

~ Delivered at Central Baptist Church on August 20, 2017 by Pastor Barton Priebe

INTRODUCTION

- **(SHOW SLIDE 1)** Please open your bibles to Proverbs 6.
- A famous Greek orator was once asked, “*what is the first rule for being eloquent in public speaking?*” He answered, “*delivery.*” “*What is the second rule?*” “*Delivery.*” “*What is the third rule?*” “*Delivery.*” Reflecting on this, one of the greatest early church leaders named Augustine said, “*in the same way, if you ask me what are the great precepts of the Christian Religion, I will answer, first, second, and third, ‘Humility.’*”¹
 - Augustine went so far as to say, “*Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues.*” Virtues such as love, patience, discernment, generosity, courage are all rooted in humility.
- Leonard Bernstein, the one time conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, was once asked which instrument was the most difficult to play. He thought for a moment and then replied,
 - “*The second fiddle. I can get plenty of first violinists, but to find someone who can play the second fiddle with enthusiasm – that’s a problem.*”
- This morning I want to begin a new three part series on humility. Now why am I speaking on this? To be completely forthright with you – because I need to hear it. I trust that God has worked some humility in me but I do not stand before you today as an authority on humility.
 - No, I can see pride in my life. I can see my need to grow in humility. I see pride most clearly in my life when for instance my wife points out one of my faults. She can be as gracious as possible but do you think I say, “*Honey, thank you so much for caring enough to correct me. Please explain it more so I can become more like Christ?*” No. Mostly I find myself defending and justifying and even turning it around to show that she needs correcting.
 - I see pride in my life when I find it extremely easy to point out others faults and pick them apart and yet only think that I need minor adjustments. I see pride in my life when I am impatient as if the world should revolve around me. Take a look at your heart and you will see how pride stains everything.
- So here is how I want to outline this series. Today I want to take a big picture look at the Bible’s view of pride and humility and ask this question, **(SHOW SLIDE 2) Why should we strive to kill pride and cultivate humility?** After giving a few answers to this question, I want to give you some very practical suggestions on *how* to kill pride and cultivate humility.
 - Next week we will get more specific and deal with the important subject of humility toward God and the following week humility toward each other.

GOD HATES PRIDE

- Why should we strive to kill pride and cultivate humility? Let’s deal first with the opposite of humility, which is pride. Let me give you at least two reasons why you should kill pride.
(SHOW SLIDE 3) First, God hates pride.
 - Do you want to know some things I hate? I have two lists. The one is humorous and the other is serious. I hate beets. I *dislike* peas and turnip, but I *hate* beets. I will literally dry heave if I have to eat beets. Do you know what else I hate? Sports teams from Calgary, particularly the Flames. As a 10 year old I wore my Gretzky shirt to a Flames game and got verbally attacked by an old lady. When I was 16, I wore my Pavel Bure jersey around high school in Alberta. It’s a good thing I was 6’2” or I might have got beaten up.

¹ Cited in John Calvin, “Institutes of the Christian Religion”, 2.2.11.

- I cheer first for the Canucks, second for the Oilers, and third for anyone who is playing the Calgary Flames.
- Those are the funny things I hate but there are things that I really hate. I hate that 100,104 babies were aborted in Canada in 2015.² I hate that 45.8 million people are held in slavery today.³ I hate the racism that ignites events like in Charlottesville. I hate war and all the ways it destroys people's lives.
 - God hates these things too but there is something else that God hates and that is pride.
- Look at Proverbs chapter 6. **READ 16-17** - *There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood.* The first thing the Lord hates is haughty eyes – that is eyes that reflect a proud heart.
 - Flip over to chapter 8. **READ 13** - *The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.*
 - Turn to Proverbs 16 with me. **READ 5** - *Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD.*
- Not only that, God is actively opposed to the proud. As James and Peter say, *“God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”*⁴
 - Why kill pride? Because God hates it.

PRIDE BRINGS DESTROYS US

- In the second place we should fight to weaken and kill pride in our hearts because **(SHOW SLIDE 4) Pride destroys us.** Turn to Proverbs 16. **READ 18** - *Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.*
 - In the summer of 1986, two ships collided in the Black Sea off the coast of Russia. Hundreds of passengers died as they were hurled into the icy waters below. News of the disaster was further darkened when an investigation revealed the cause of the accident. It wasn't a technology problem like radar malfunction--or even thick fog. The cause was pride.
 - Each captain was aware of the other ship's presence nearby. Both could have steered clear, but according to news reports, neither captain wanted to give way to the other. Each was too proud to yield first. By the time they came to their senses, it was too late.
- Why do a husband and wife collide so harshly with each other that they end up in divorce? Why do people collide with others in fits of anger and yelling? Why do you cause damage to others around you? Our hearts are prideful. We believe we are right. Others are wrong. We will not give in. We will stand our ground. We blame and justify and are too proud to give way.
 - And looking back over our lives we can see the collisions that we have caused, the ruin and destruction that come from our pride. Pride goes before destruction.
- Those are two negative reasons why we should fight against pride but let us turn now to three reasons why we should cultivate humility.

WHAT ATTRACTS THE HEART OF GOD?

- Turn with me to Isaiah 66. **READ 1-2** - *Thus says the LORD: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.”*

² <http://www.arcc-cdac.ca/backgrounders/statistics-abortion-in-canada.pdf>

³ <https://www.ijm.ca/slavery>

⁴ James 4:6; I Peter 5:5.

- What an astounding statement on humility. This is the one I esteem. A better way to say it would be, ***“this is the person I look to, this is the person who draws my gaze, whom my favour and blessing will rest upon.”*** God is drawn like a magnet to a certain type of person. Who is that person? The humble person. Why cultivate humility? **(SHOW SLIDE 5)**

Humility attracts the heart of God.

- What a picture! The God who when he wants to relax in the living room of his universe pulls up earth as his footstool, also dwells with the humble in heart. The God who is so majestic that his glory fills the heavens and cannot be contained in a temple, esteems the humble. The God who made stars like Antares which make our sun seem like a grain of sand, is more impressed with a humble person than with glory of Antares.
 - ***“But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble . . .”***

HUMILITY IS A NECESSARY CONDITION FOR SALVATION

- **(SHOW SLIDE 6) Humility is a necessary condition for salvation.**
 - You remember that Jesus condemned the Pharisee who exalted himself before God in prayer but Jesus said the tax collector who cried out for God to have mercy on him was justified before God. Why? ***“Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted”***
- Humility is a prerequisite for salvation. The proud lift their heads high and say, ***“This is my life. I don’t need God. I don’t need a Saviour.”*** But God opposes the proud. But to the humble salvation comes for the humble bow the knee saying, ***“You are the creator, you give me life and breath. As a creature I bow before you. As a sinner I can only come humbly asking you to have mercy on me.”***
 - To the humble God grants salvation. Psalm 149:4 – ***“For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation.”***

GOD BLESSES THE HUMBLE

- **(SHOW SLIDE 7) God blesses the humble.**
 - I scanned the psalms and proverbs to see what they taught on humility. Listen to a few of the blessings God gives to the humble.
 - Psalm 25:9 – ***“he guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.”***
 - Psalm 147:6 – ***“He sustains the humble but casts the wicked to the ground.”***
 - Proverbs 6:3 – ***“He mocks the proud mockers but gives grace to the humble.”***
 - Proverbs 11:2 – ***“When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.”***

HOW DO WE PRACTICALLY GO ABOUT THIS?

- So there are six reasons why we should fight to weaken and kill pride and strive to cultivate humility. But now let us switch gears and ask the question, “How do we practically go about weakening pride and cultivating humility?” This does not just happen. We must be intentional about this.
 - C.J. Mahaney wrote a great little book entitled, ***“Humility.”*** I am borrowing from it today. He gives some suggestions on this. I liked them so much I thought I would pass them along with some of my own thoughts interwoven into them. He groups them into at least two categories.
 - First, suggestions that you give special focus to over your lifetime. Second, suggestions for your daily routine, from when you get up to when you go to bed.
- Now because I want you to take this seriously and because there is going to be quite a list, I have written them up in the sermon notes and included books to read on the various subjects.

SPECIAL FOCUS SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR LIFETIME

- Let's begin with things you can give special focus to over your lifetime to weaken pride and cultivate humility. **(SHOW SLIDE 8) First, study and meditate on the attributes of God.**
 - Pride is seriously weakened when you behold the glory of the majestic, eternal, holy, and all-powerful God. Take for instance an attribute such as God's self-existence and self-sufficiency. Of this attribute R.C. Sproul writes,
 - **(SHOW SLIDE 9)** *"The grand difference between a human being and a supreme being is precisely this: Apart from God, I cannot exist. Apart from me, God does exist. God does not need me in order for Him to be. This is the difference between what we call a self-existent being and a dependent being. We are dependent. We are fragile. We cannot live without air, without water, without food. No human being has the power of being within himself...We are like flowers that bloom and then wither and fade. This is how we differ from God. God does not wither, God does not fade, God is not fragile."*
 - I cannot recommend enough that you study the attributes of God for when you behold God in his glory your pride will be weakened and you will not be able to help humbly bowing the knee.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 10) Second, reflect on the wonder of the cross.**
 - Martyn Lloyd Jones wrote, **(SHOW SLIDE 11)** *"There is only one thing I know of that crushes me to the ground and humiliates me to the dust, and that is to look at the Son of God, and especially contemplate the cross. 'When I survey the wondrous cross/on which the prince of glory died/my richest gain I count but loss/and pour contempt on all my pride'. Nothing else can do it. When I see that I am a sinner...that nothing but the Son of God on the cross can save me, I'm humbled to the dust...nothing but the cross can give us this spirit of humility."*⁵
 - Why the cross? Because we all have inflated views of ourselves but when we behold the cross we see Christ suffering brutally suffering. Why? For our sins. We see how awful our sin is and our pride melts away into humble thanksgiving.
 - One of the great evangelical theologians of the 20th century was Carl F. Henry. He was once asked how he remained humble after so many decades of ministry. His answer: **"how can anyone be arrogant when he stands beside the cross?"**
 - So always reflect on the wonder of the cross.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 12) Third, study the doctrines of grace.**
 - Study doctrines such as election, the Spirit's calling, justification, and the perseverance of the saints. If you have not heard of this before I highly recommend you get one of the books I recommend. Speaking personally, I fought hard against doctrines like election. I adamantly refused to believe that it is God who chooses those who will be saved. But when you see the glorious truth of election you find all your pride shattered. You are deeply humbled. There is no boasting for you realize the only reason you chose God is because God first chose you.
 - This subject is too big to deal with here so I recommend the resources to you.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 13) Fourth, invite and pursue correction from others.** This is vital. You cannot kill pride by yourself. Why do I say that? Listen to this story.
 - *"As I sat with my family at a local breakfast establishment, I noticed a finely dressed man at an adjacent table. His Armani suit and stiffly pressed shirt coordinated perfectly with a power tie. His wing-tip shoes sparkled from a recent shine, every hair was in place, including his perfectly groomed moustache. The man sat alone eating a bagel as he*

⁵ Cited in C.J. Mahaney, *Humility*, 66.

prepared for a meeting. As he reviewed the papers before him, he appeared nervous, glancing frequently at his Rolex watch. It was obvious he had an important meeting ahead. The man stood up and I watched as he straightened his tie and prepared to leave. Immediately I noticed a blob of cream cheese attached to his finely groomed moustache. He was about to go into the world dressed in his finest with cream cheese on his face. I thought of the business meeting he was about to attend. Who would tell him? Should I? What if no one did?”⁶

- Why invite and pursue correction? Because pride deceives us. We who can point out the cream cheese on everyone else’s faces are blind to our own cream cheese. Your flaws are obvious to every one else but you. David Tripp says, **(SHOW SLIDE 14)** *“My self-perception is about as accurate as a carnival mirror.”⁷*
- Try this: sometime this week go to some one you trust and say this: **(SHOW SLIDE 15)** *“I want to ask you a question and I promise not to get upset by how you answer. Can you clearly define one or two areas where you think I need to grow?”* That reaction you are feeling right now to ignore this suggestion – that’s pride. How serious do you want to be about weakening pride?
 - Invite and pursue correction. Then repent and continually seek that person’s help in change.

DAILY PRACTICES FOR CULTIVATING HUMILITY

- Let’s turn now to practices that you can perform daily to weaken your pride and cultivate humility. I agree with Mahaney that this begins with when you first wake up and start the day. This is the most decisive moment.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 16) First, begin your day by acknowledging your dependence upon God.**
 - Begin by posturing yourself before God in a place of need. As soon as you wake up pray, *“Father, I need you today. I am dependent on you for everything. I look to you for help.”*
- **(SHOW SLIDE 17) Second, begin your day expressing thanks to God.**
 - Michael Ramsey reminds us that, *“Thankfulness is a soil in which pride does not easily grow.”⁸* Ungrateful people are arrogant. They think they deserve everything as if the world revolves around them.
 - Thankfulness helps cultivate humility becomes it makes the heart affirm where all good things come from.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 18) Third, begin your day with spiritual disciplines.**
 - Spiritual disciplines are things such as reading the Bible and prayer. It is because our hearts are proud that we do not do these things but rather read the newspaper, magazines, or just rush into the day. Why is it pride? Because you are saying, *“I have life figured out. I am self-sufficient.”*
 - But every time you crack open the Bible or physically kneel before God in prayer you are taking a step toward humility because you are saying, *“God, I need you to give me the right heart, to help me live the way you want, to assist me in all things.”*
- **(SHOW SLIDE 19) Fourth, cast your anxieties on God throughout the day.**
 - Peter clearly tells us how we can practically go about humbling ourselves daily. 1 Peter 5:6-7. *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s might hand, that he may lift you up in due time.”* How do we do that Peter? *“Casting all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”*

⁶ Ibid. 124.

⁷ Ibid. 127.

⁸ Ibid. 70.

- Worrying is actually a form of pride because it is a lack of trust in God. It is trying to be self-sufficient. The good news is that humbling ourselves and casting our cares on him frees us from anxiety.
 - **(SHOW SLIDE 20) Fifth, transfer all glory to God at the end of the day.**
 - Let me ask you something. If you are walking along by a swamp and you see a turtle sitting on top of a six-foot fence post what would you think? I'll tell you what I would not think. I would not think, *“Wow, a turtle learned how to climb.”* A turtle on top of a fence post only got there because someone helped him get there.
 - As you lay down to sleep think of all that God gave you during the day. Pride starts to congratulate self on a job well done. But we cultivate humility by remembering that all we have been given to us and so we should transfer the glory to God.
 - **(SHOW SLIDE 21) Finally, receive the gift and purpose of sleep.**
 - Do you realize you will spend 1/3 of your life in bed? As you lay exhausted at the end of the day realize you are forced to realize that you are not all-powerful, that you cannot keep working, that you are weak and must rest. This humbles us when we remember Psalm 121, which says that God *“will neither slumber nor sleep.”* Mahaney gives a sample prayer to say at the end of each day.
 - *“Father, thank you for this gift. The fact that I’m so tired is a remind that I am a creature and only You are the Creator. Only you neither slumber nor sleep, while for me, sleep is something I cannot go without. Thank you for this gracious humbling refreshing gift.”*⁹

CONCLUSION

- So there are some practical ways that you can fight to weaken pride and strive to cultivate humility. For the good of your soul please go over this list over the next few weeks. Go on-line and read my manuscript over again this week. Buy some books for summer. Be intentional in how you do this.
- Has God been speaking to you about your pride today? Have you exalted yourself in how you talk? Do you look down on others? In pride are you holding onto bitterness against someone? Are you living your life apart from God as if you are so all-knowing, all-powerful? Are you humble before God daily seeking his face or are self-sufficient which is another word for prideful? Do you need to go to someone and humbly apologize for you're the way your pride has cause damage to them?
 - Today and the next two weeks I want us to do some serious heart work with God on our pride. At the end of each service I have asked the band to play a few songs to give opportunity to sing, to pray, to humble ourselves.
 - I want you take the next few minutes or so to do some serious heart work with God. Come before him in repentance. Come asking for his grace. I want to invite you to come to the front and kneel down. Kneeling is the best position for humbling yourself. You may stay seated but I want to challenge you to do serious work with God over the next few minutes.

⁹ Ibid., 84.