

Skillfully Arrogant? Or Graced with Humility?

By Lynn Warner

Humility is to respect, esteem, and love God and our brethren in Christ more than ourselves. In contrast, pride is to usurp God and take His place, making us His enemy. Satan is the Biblical example of God's enemy and our enemy. Since we are to know the weapons of our enemy, let's look at pride's arsenal of arrogance skills and contrast this arsenal with the God-given grace of humility.

The root meaning of pride is "to swell" or rise up. The root of pride is also used in a word meaning "to fret" or to be agitated. This agitation utilizes many sins to raise "self" and harm others because of our selfish and self-centered attitude. This agitation tends to spread by arousing pride in others, and strife takes root.

Pride discourages and undermines our foundation in Christ, Who was "*full of grace and truth*" and "*of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace*" (John 1:14a, 16). Because pride is on the heart's throne instead of God, it becomes an accuser and judge of others. By defining others as "guilty," pride acquires power. Pride likes to bring the feeling of failure and guilt to others, so when we feel this from others, we must rest in God's provision: a relationship with Him through Jesus. Humility looks to God for help. We can ask God for help from His Word, His provision. For example, we can read how Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness. God had just publicly announced at Jesus' baptism, "*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased*" (Matthew 3:17b). Satan began all three of his attacks by attempting to inject doubt in His identity by saying, "*If You are the Son of God...*" (Matthew 4:3a). Second, he challenged Jesus to "prove it" by changing stone to bread or jumping off the pinnacle. But Jesus went straight to the Word of God and God's provision for His life. He accepted His life and the suffering at the hand of man. Humility accepts the identity and the life God gives with gratitude.

Pride tempts us to doubt, but God's gift of the Holy Spirit instills our confidence in Him and His love and care for us. God does not withhold good things from His children but gives us what He determines we need. Pride has to be "right" and accuses us of being "wrong," and it makes us "prove" our identity and acceptance in the Beloved. Humility rests in God.

Pride also wants to keep us confused and unbalanced. Some of the weapons of confusion are domineering behaviors. To domineer means to "rush" or "push." When we encounter pride, we may feel constantly "off balance" or even fearful, but we don't know why. We often don't have the words to describe the strategies used against us. That's why it may help to study the lists of behaviors in the Bible and look up the definitions of all the words.* Also, we can ask God for discernment.

Pride excludes and rejects others. Abandonment is murder in the sense that it "kills" our existence. We are not "seen," "heard," or "felt." Companionship, presence, and compassion are withheld from us. But humility rests in the knowledge that God sees, hears, and acknowledges us. His presence is always with us.

Pride may be boastful and easily recognized, but it can also be hidden behind another arsenal of weapons. One way to see some of these strategies is by reading passages on the Pharisees. Jesus calls them "hypocrites" or actors, and He unmasked them. They used flattery, deception, and malicious "traps" to accuse Jesus. But Jesus did not step on their dance floor and play their game. He did not allow pride to rise up in Him. He remained in humility. He responded with truth about their methods and intent.

Finally, pride causes strife and stops the stream of the Holy Spirit. Some of these weapons are sarcasm, cynicism, scorn, disdain, contempt, intimidation, and "joking." Pride loves to take the place of God, accusing and judging others. It also usurps the Holy Spirit's authority, trying to control others – their beliefs, feelings, and actions, often using Scripture passages. Other ways pride stops the stream

of the Holy Spirit is through accusing, murmuring, complaining, and destroying another's credibility. But humility builds up through respect, esteem, and love. Humility accepts the life God has ordained for us and the suffering through which we learn obedience, with Jesus as our example.

In summary, pride plays "God" by defining everything and everyone according to its own wants and perceptions. Pride also plays "God" by usurping the role of the Holy Spirit. Pride accuses, judges, weakens, undermines, murmurs, complains, and teaches its own version of Scripture. Pride attempts to supplant God and have individuals worship a different "God," causing confusion. Pride's roots of "swelling," "fret," or agitation give us a clue to the types of attributes found in its arsenal of weapons. And the Biblical example of pride, Satan, gives us a clue to the attributes of our mortal enemy. Our enemy desires to arouse pride and strife in our own hearts against God and against others. But humility patiently submits everything to God and stands in the identity He has given us in Christ Jesus. Humility accepts what God has ordained for our provision, including suffering. Humility allows God to remove pride's sin of selfishness, self-centeredness, fretfulness, irritability, anger, and hatred of God. Humility is not rude and does not "rush" or push others but responds in the love described in 1 Corinthians 13. We can then obey Jesus' commands both to love God and to love one another. We can ask ourselves the question: Am I skillfully arrogant, or am I graced with humility?

*Romans 1:18-32; Galatians 5:16-21; and 2 Timothy 3 list ways pride may be revealed. Galatians 5 and 1 Corinthians 13 describe the fruit of the Spirit and ways love may be revealed.