



## A Scriptural Analysis

Grace Baptist Church

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### Introduction

There is no more important study for each of us to undertake than the study of the characteristics of pride and humility. Pride is the original sin that caused the fall of Lucifer and the fallen angels (Isa. 14:12-17) when pride created their desire to be a god like God. And it was pride that brought about the sin of Adam and Eve, who wanted to be like God by deciding for themselves what is right and what is wrong (Gen. 3). From the fall-in-the-garden to today, pride persistently troubles all of us – we all battle pride in our life. Pride is very deceptive and it is imperative that we know how to identify and see it in our own lives.

The exact opposite of pride is humility. Humility is the primary characteristic of a true believer's life that all should see. True humility is what Christ's life clearly demonstrated to us (Phil. 2:1-11); and humility in one's life is a primary evidence of true belief in Christ.

The Law of Contrast (presenting two vastly different alternatives in succession to clarify perception and understanding) can effectively be used to examine the difference between Pride and Humility. We will define and examine pride and humility on the basis of Scripture. By examining both we will be able to clearly define what rules our heart – pride or humility.

This short study of pride and humility will help you examine your own life to see who has control of your life; Satan and pride or Christ and humility. It is that simple because there can only be one master in your life; and the master of your life is the one of your own choosing. The scripture and questions in this short study will guide you into an understanding of who is in control of your life. The greatest challenge you will face in this study is this; are you willing to be honest with yourself?

## Pride: A Scriptural Analysis

**“There is nothing into which the heart of man so easily falls as pride, and yet there is no vice which is more frequently, more emphatically, and more eloquently condemned in Scripture.” C.H. Spurgeon**

As we begin our study, it is a requirement that we look at the definition of **PRIDE**. Following are the Hebrew, Greek and English definitions of pride:

**Hebrew definition:** arrogant haughtiness, lifting up proudly, raging swelling. A clear illustration of pride in the Old Testament is Hezekiah as found in II Chron. 32:24-26. Also, we see evidence of pride in the fall of Lucifer in Isa. 14:12-17.

**Greek definition:** boastful self-confidence, inflated with self-conceit, high minded (Mark 7:14-23) (cf. Pharisee – Luke 18:9-14)

**English definition:** a high opinion of one's own importance, merit, or superiority exhibited by an unreasonable **overestimation** of one's own superiority in talents, beauty, wealth, rank, knowledge, etc.; which often manifests itself in arrogance and a moral elite attitude that projects, internally and/or externally, disdain and **contempt** of others.

With the definition of pride firmly established, we need examine ourselves to determine if pride is ruling our life. Pride will kill you; and it will kill you for eternity. Pride is the sin that will keep you from honestly looking at your spiritual need for a Savior.

From the world's perspective, pride is looked upon as virtuous. The world teaches us that you must put yourself first before anyone else. It worships self-exaltation, self-esteem, self-satisfaction, and self-centeredness. The world today practices the religion of self-worship – and many are swept into that worship of man and themselves.

It is a truth that those who think they are well will not look for a doctor. Why go to a doctor to examine you when you are feeling well? But many times, when we finally go to the doctor because we are feeling bad, we find it is too late to effectively treat the malady effectively to return to full health.

This is the case for pride in one's life. As seriously dangerous as pride is, it's equally hard to spot. What makes pride so dangerous is that it blinds us to the reality of how sinful we really are. When it comes to diagnosing your hearts, those who have pride and have nurtured that pride have a challenging time identifying it. Pride distorts our ability to accurately view and diagnose our life. Pride is so effective in distorting our view of ourselves that we often convince ourselves that what we are doing is not sin but is something that is right to engage in. The deception that pride creates in our life is so distorting that we believe we are not being harmed by participating in sinful activities and thoughts.

Pride leads us to rebel against the one true and holy God. Pride seeks to dethrone God as the absolute sovereign Lord of this world. When men are left to their pride and self-love, they will never seek after God and follow Him. The reality is that we do not see pride in our life because it is so deceiving. Are we willing to examine our own life just as God examines our life? God knows your heart, nothing is hidden from Him (Luke 16:13-15). Do you often rationalize your thoughts and actions? Do you seek to justify your decisions and your direction in life? Or do you look at your life as God looks at it?

Pride yields fruit in one's life which is easily observed by others but it blinds the one who is prideful. In his essay on undetected pride, Jonathan Edwards points out seven symptoms of pride in your life.

### **1. Fault-Finding**

Pride takes great notice of opposition and wrongs or injuries that are received. Pride is on full display when conflict, disagreement, or offense occurs. We become so focused on what the other person has said or done that we become blind to our own sinful heart and attitudes. Pride creates spiritual blindness that causes us to filter out the evil we see in ourselves. Your response to an offense reveals the extent of how pride rules your heart. Pride responds to offense with anger, gossip and even slander. Many times we are so offended that we will not forgive the person who offended you. Pride blinds so thoroughly that we often do not see our own sin. Pride causes us to point out sin in the life of others while ignoring sin in our own life. Christ highlighted this in Matthew 7:5 where He instructs us to remove the plank from our own eyes before focusing on the splinter in the eye of someone else. Jonathan Edwards wrote: "The spiritually proud person shows it in his finding fault with other saints. . . . The eminently humble Christian has so much to do at home and sees so much evil in his own heart that he is not apt to be very busy with other hearts."

### **2. A Harsh Spirit**

Pride is the foundation for talking about others' sins with contempt, irritation, frustration, or judgment. Pride is the source of belittling (making light of) the struggles of others, which exhibits itself as having a harsh spirit. A harsh spirit is a sign of arrogance, which is very damaging to others and to the testimony of Christ before others. Jonathon Edwards wrote: "Christians who are but fellow-worms ought at least to treat one another with as much humility and gentleness as Christ treats them."

### **3. Superficiality**

Pride has a firm grip on your heart when you are far more concerned with others' perceptions of us than the reality of the condition of our hearts. We fight the sins that have an impact on

how others view us, and make peace with the ones that no one sees. We have great success in the areas of holiness that have highly visible accountability, but little concern for the disciplines that happen in secret.

### **4. Defensiveness**

Pride creates defensiveness. Pride in one's life creates words and actions that tell others about the perceived opposition and wrongs or injuries that have occurred to you. Pride causes one to seek ways and words to justify their own thoughts and actions because of the perceived injustice they have experienced. Christ addressed this type of behavior when He instructed the disciples about the superficial action of the Pharisees in Mark 7, specifically calling out the source of this sinful behavior, the unrepentant heart (Mark 7: 1-23 (20-23)). Words that defend the one's actions often degrade others in the defense of their actions (James 3:5-10, 14-16 (cf. Prov. 10:19)).

### **5. Presumption before God**

Pride creates arrogant and disrespectful behavior. Such behavior is exhibited before God when we do not approach God with humility. Approaching God with a cavalier attitude, with an attitude of "demand" is evidence of pride. Also, approaching God with no faith or confidence is equally prideful when one appears to be a humbly approaching God but there is no reality in their relationship with God. When we focus on our outward behavior that others see rather than getting our heart into a right relationship with God, we are effectively telling the LORD that we are more important than He is. If humbleness is missing in our relationship with God, our hearts are infected with pride. Jonathon Edwards wrote: "Some, in their great rejoicing before God, have not paid sufficient regard to that rule in Psalm 2:11 - 'Worship the Lord with reverence, and rejoice with trembling.'"

## 6. Desperation for Attention

Pride is hungry for attention, respect, and worship in all its forms. Do we boast about ourselves? Do we not say “no” to anyone because we need to be needed? Do we obsess to be admired and adored? Do we spend time thinking about having the right clothes or the right car or the right house or the right title at work? Do you seek the glory that comes from men, not God? Pride creates a life that is focused on what the world provides for recognition and satisfaction. Pride is also often manifested by how quick one seeks to assume the role of leader. The proud see themselves as uniquely qualified to teach and to guide, to direct and manage and expect others to regard them as leaders and to yield to their authority.

## 7. Neglecting Others

Pride prefers some people over others. It honors those who the world deems worthy of honor, giving more weight to their words, their wants, and their needs. Do you get “excited and pleased” when people with “power” acknowledge you? Pride causes us to put people into categories or ranks. Do we look at others and try to work our way into their favor? Do we consciously or unconsciously pass over the weak, the inconvenient, and the unattractive, because they don’t seem to offer us much? Such thoughts and actions cause us to neglect and separate from people because we are ranking them – and we often perceive ourselves as better than others. Pride causes one’s heart to turn away from serving others to serving ourselves. Pride leads us to seek glory for our self and not the glory of God.

There are many dangers to pride because it is powerful and deceiving. Scripture calls us to examine ourselves (II Cor. 13:5) because we are often blind to our own sin. Following are some questions for you to ask yourself. And as you examine yourself and answer the following questions honestly, you will find out if you have a heart condition that is allowing pride to rule your life.

## Questions to be asked and answered:

1. Jer. 45:5 – Do you seek great things for yourself? Do you have to be the center of attention?
2. Phil. 2:3-4 (cf. Prov. 10:19, 21:2) – What is your motive? Do you interrupt because you must be heard? Do you always have to say something?
3. Prov. 13:10 – Do you often experience disagreements and strife with others? Are you easily offended?
4. Luke 7:36-50 – Do you see yourself as being better than others?
5. I Cor. 4:6-7 / Gal. 6:3 – Do you believe you are more important and have better knowledge than others?
6. Eph. 5:21 (cf. I Cor. 1:10-13; I Pet. 5:5) – Do you believe you should be in control? Do you find it difficult to work under someone’s authority?
7. Prov. 10:17, 21:1, 13:1 – Do you ignore or dismiss critical words, rebuke or correction? Do you have a hard time acknowledging that you are wrong?
8. John 9:13-14 – Do you believe that your spiritual knowledge and experience is much better than anyone else’s?
9. Matt. 18:15-35 – Do you take the initiative to forgive others or seek forgiveness? Do you forgive others?
10. Matt. 7:3-5 – Do you minimize your sin while bringing attention to someone else’s shortcomings (maximizing their sin)?
11. Eph. 4:31-32 – Are you often critical of others? Especially of those who are in authority?
12. I Cor. 13:4-7 (cf. Gal. 5:26) – Are you envious or jealous of others?
13. Prov. 18:1-2 (cf. Heb. 10:24-25) – Do you find ‘reasons’ and excuses not to fellowship with believers?
14. Prov. 28:13 – Do you try to influence others by shading the truth? Do you have a pattern of lying?

15. Prov. 25:6-7, 27:2 (cf. Psa. 75:6-7) – Do you get upset when people do not recognize or honor you or your family’s achievements?
16. I Pet. 2:14-17 - Do you have an attitude of entitlement? Do you use your Christian liberty as the reason for your actions?

Were you honest with yourself in answering the questions? Did you study the scripture along with the question? More of us struggle with pride than we want to admit. The single greatest reason that pride is so dangerous is that it is not something that is easily recognized or admitted. Who wants to admit that they are prideful?

***Spiritual pride creates “Pharisee” believers that do not live a Christlike life that is characterized by humility, forgiveness, hope and service; esteeming others better than themselves. Spiritual pride creates a life that is focused on yourself and what the world can provide for recognition and satisfaction. “Pharisee” believers say ‘many spiritual words’ but their actions demonstrate that their words are lies.***

God opposes the proud (Prov. 3:34, James 4:6, I Pet. 5:5), therefore, we must confess and put away pride. Confession of the sin of pride to the Lord signals the beginning of the end for pride. When the Holy Spirit convicts us of the sin of pride, it is usually in a crisis of our own making where we are being faced directly with the results of pride ruling our life. It is only in those circumstances where we can we remove the lenses of pride from our eyes and see ourselves clearly and our need for Christ in our life. We either do that or pride will breed bitterness in our life toward others and God. By God’s grace, we can turn to Christ for our answer to pride. Just as pride once moved us toward eternal death, so the acknowledgement of pride in our life moves us toward life by causing us to cling to the

righteousness of Christ. If we humble ourselves, God has promised to give us grace to save us (Eph. 2:8-9).

## Humility – A Scriptural Analysis

**“Humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less.” C.S. Lewis**

**“Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil’s reach as humility. Humility leads the Christian to treat others that are in fault with meekness and gentleness, as Christ did His disciples, and particularly Peter, when he had shamefully denied Him.”**

**Jonathon Edwards**

As we continue our study, it is a requirement that we look at the definition of Humility. Following are the Hebrew, Greek and English definitions of humility:

**Hebrew:** to bring low, vanquish, subdue into subjection; to depress, submit self, to humble; abase, to bring down, and to put down. An illustration of this word is found in II Chron. 7:14 – where the people of Israel are called to humble themselves. An illustration of this is Ahab in I Kings 21:17-29.

**Greek:** to depress, abase; cast down, bring low; of low degree, of humble mind, of humble heart; self-modesty. An illustration of this is found in I Peter 5:5-6.

**English:** having a modest estimate of one’s own importance, being lower in dignity and importance to someone else, not proud because of awareness of weakness in one’s person.

With the definition of humility firmly established, we need examine ourselves to determine if humility is ruling our life. Humility will allow you to set aside pride in order to look to Christ for salvation, which will give you eternal life. Humility will allow you to honestly look at your spiritual need for a Savior (Luke 18:9-17).

The Word of God tells us of five truths about humility.

1. Humility begins with your submission to God in Christ (Matt. 10:24). We are to humble ourselves before God (I Pet. 5:6). Humility approaches God with humble assurance in Christ Jesus.
2. Humility does not demand better treatment in one's life than what Jesus got in His life. Therefore, humility does not return evil for evil. The humble do not live life based on their perceived rights (I Pet. 2:21-23).
3. Humility asserts truth, not to bolster one's ego with control over others, but as service to Christ (I Cor. 13:6, II Cor. 4:5).
4. Humility is dependent on grace for all knowing and believing (I Cor. 4:7, James 1:21).
5. Humility recognizes weakness and failure, and so considers criticism and learns from it. Humility also knows that God has made provision for human conviction and that He calls us to persuade others (I Cor. 13:12, Prov. 12:15, II Cor. 5:11).

Scripture calls us to examine ourselves (II Cor. 13:5) because we are often blind to our own sin. Following are some questions for you to ask yourself. And as you examine yourself and answer the following questions honestly, you will find out if you have a heart condition that is allowing humility to rule your life. Understand that as you answer the following question, God knows your heart as nothing is hidden from Him (Luke 16:13-15).

**Questions to be asked and answered:**

1. Phil. 1:21; I Pet. 2:1-3 – Do you seek Christ and His will in your life before all other things? Is Christ the center of your life? Do you desire to be in the Word of God?
2. Phil. 2:1-11 (cf. Rom. 12:9-21) – Is your motive to be Christlike? Do you listen to others with an open heart before speaking? Do you encourage oneness and unity, putting others before yourself?

3. Acts 20:32-38; Rom. 14:19; Heb. 12:14-15; Eph. 4:1-3 – Do you often experience heartfelt fellowship with other believers? Do you seek peace with others? Are you easily offended?
4. Rom. 12:3,10 – Do you prefer others before yourself? Do you think soberly of yourself?
5. Phil. 3:12-14, Psa. 119:65-72 – Are you open and honest about the areas where you need to grow in Christ? Are you teachable?
6. Heb. 13:17; James 4:6-10 (cf. Rom. 13:1-2) - Are you willingly submissive and obedient to the ones in authority over you? Do you submit yourself to God?
7. Prov. 15:31-33; 9:8, 27:5-6 – Do you listen to rebuke with an open heart and an attitude to change? Do you critically examine your life in light of the rebuke, criticism or correction you have received?
8. Rom. 9:19-23; I Thess. 5:16-18 (cf. Psa. 116:12-19; James 1:2-7) – Do you believe and trust in God in all circumstances you experience? Are you thankful to God for all things?
9. Col. 3:12-13 (cf. Matt. 18:22-35) – Do you forgive others as Christ forgave you? Do you forgive quickly?
10. Matt. 7:3-5; I John 1:8-10 – Do you critically identify and examine sin in your life before others? Do you repent of your sins and seek God's forgiveness? Do you encourage believers that are struggling with sin?
11. Eph. 4:25-32; Matt. 5:43-45; I Tim. 2:1-4 (cf. Rom. 12:9-21) – Do you speak truthfully yet kindly in love? Do you love your enemies? Do you pray for your enemies and those in authority?
12. Heb. 13:5-6 - Are you content?
13. Heb. 10:24-25 – Do you seek fellowship with fellow believers?
14. James 1:19; Prov. 11:12-13 – Are you quick to listen and slow to speak? Do you hold confidences of others?
15. I Pet. 5:5-7; Gal. 6:1-5 (cf. Luke 14:7-11; John 13:2-17) – Do you submit to others? Do you humble yourself before God and others? Do you seek to help others?

16. Gal. 5:13-15; Micah 6:8 (cf. II Cor. 12:7-10) - Do you seek to obey Christ's commands? Do you set aside your personal preferences for the sake of other's spiritual health? Do you lead by example in word and deed?

Were you honest with yourself in answering the questions? Did you study the scripture along with the question? More of us struggle with pride than we want to admit. One of the greatest needs in our life is a humble heart. It is a challenge to be humble as Christ was humble as He set the example of the humility we are to have in our life (Phil. 2:5-11). Do you have a heart that is humble? In Isaiah 57:15 we read that the LORD will "dwell...with the contrite and lowly of spirit..." What does God see when He looks into your heart

Humility is a prerequisite for one to become a Christian. When we come to Christ as sinners, we must come in humility (Matt. 5:3). We must acknowledge that we are paupers and beggars who come with nothing to offer Him but our sin and our need for salvation. We must recognize our lack of merit and our complete inability to save ourselves. Humility is the absence of self (Matt. 10:39-39, Luke 9:23-25); it is a bankruptcy of spirit (Matt. 5:3) that accrues no merit of its own but depends solely on God's righteousness for salvation (Luke 18:9-17). Humility is the sign of true faith (Micah 6:8) and it is necessary to enter God's kingdom (Matt. 5:3, 18:1-4). When God offers grace and mercy to us, we are to accept it in humble gratitude and commit our lives to Him and to others (Eph. 2:8-9).

After salvation, Jesus is our model. He did not come to be served, but to serve, so must we commit ourselves to serving others, considering their interests above our own (Phil. 2:3). This attitude precludes selfish ambition, conceit, and the strife that comes with self-justification and self-defense. Jesus was not ashamed to humble Himself as a servant (John 13:1-16), even to death on the cross (Phil. 2:8). In His humility, He was always obedient to the

Father and so should we, as believers, be willing to put aside all selfishness and submit in obedience to God and His Word. True humility produces godliness, contentment, and security.

True humility comes through:

1. Humbling yourself (James 4:10), and
2. Repentance of sin (Luke 13:3,5), and
3. Drawing near to God (James 4:8), and
4. Submitting to God (James 4:7), and
5. Resisting the Devil (James 4:7), and
6. Living like Christ (II Cor. 5:17-21, Gal. 2:20; cf. Phil. 2:5-8, II Cor. 13:5).

The truly humble are not inclined to talk about humility or to display it in their manner of living. True humility is not noisy, especially about itself. If you are inclined to say, "No one is as sinful and depraved as I am," be careful that you don't think yourself better than others. Be careful if you develop a high opinion of your humility. If you find yourself thinking often of your humility, it is likely that you have little of it (Luke 14:11).

The truly humble think of their achievements to be comparatively low as compared to others. They truly esteem others as better than themselves; true lowliness of mind naturally thinks that others are better than themselves (Phil. 2:3). They seek to hear and to learn rather than to speak.

The truly humble, humble themselves to be as little children (Matt. 18:4). They actually are more sensitive to their sin, lack of love and their ingratitude than they are of their own spiritual attainment and knowledge of God. The truly humble are devastated by sin in their life, more than their spiritual growth and obedience to God's Word.

The truly humble does not look at what they have attained but rather at the standard of life that Christ established by His example. The truly humble judges what one does and what one has accomplished by the standard of Christ's life. In light of this, the truly humble always view their holiness and maturity in the comparison to Christ's.

Humility yields fruit in one's life which is easily observed by others. Following are the fruits of humility that are seen in one's life that has genuine faith in Christ. True humility creates "Christlike" believers that:

1. Desire to live a life that is characterized by humility, forgiveness, hope and service; esteeming others better than themselves.
2. Take little notice of opposition and wrongs or injuries that are received; and speak to others to forgive and encourage.
3. Say the words and do deeds and actions that demonstrate that their words are truth.
4. Are focused on doing the will of God to bring others to salvation.

Those who stand in the strength of Christ's righteousness alone find a confident hiding place from the attacks of men and Satan alike. True humility is *not* knocked off balance and thrown into a defensive posture by challenge or rebuke, but instead continues in doing good, entrusting their soul to Christ.

"For the humble Christian, the more 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." Jonathon Edwards

As a believer in Christ, we are to live humbly with the mind of Christ just as Christ lived and set an example, a standard, for us (Phil. 2:1-11). Also, we are to love humbly with love toward others just as Christ loved, which set a standard for us (Eph. 5:1-21).

As we close this brief study of pride and humility, our desire and prayer should be the same as King David when he declared in Psalm 139:23-24; "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." We are to examine our self in the light of God's Word (I Cor. 11:27-32). What is God seeing as He looks into our hearts?

#### Resources:

**7 Subtle Symptoms of Pride from Jonathon Edwards** – Church Leaders - Fabienne Harford, September 2019

**Undetected Spiritual Pride, One Cause of Failure in Times of Great Revival** – Jonathon Edwards – Grace Abounding

**Humility in Scripture** - Greg W. Parsons

**Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life** – Donald Whitney

**Humbled under the mighty hand of God** - John Piper