

Life's Great Battle

Introduction: Gordon MacDonald, in his book entitled, *A Resilient Life*, says, "*We all know full well that the issue of the ego [pride] is likely to be one's greatest struggle until the end of life*" (185). Haven't we all felt this struggle - this battle with pride? Proverbs has a lot to say about pride and its converse character trait of humility. Its teaching could be summarized: Pride bad; humility good. It is as simple as that. In this study we are going to survey a number of passages that address pride and humility to understand what Proverbs says about these things. May this study help each of us better engage this battle with pride and see humility grow in our lives.

Opening Discussion: Is all pride bad pride?

Read Proverbs 6:17; 15:25; 16:5

1. What do these passages teach about pride?

Read Proverbs 11:2; 16:18

2. What is the fruit of pride?

Brian said:

God may bring circumstances into our lives to deal with our pride, but more often than not, the destruction we face is a result of the natural consequences of pride. A couple is too proud to admit that their marriage is struggling and so they don't get help when it could still help and they lose their marriage. A friendship explodes because one of the individual's pride keeps her from admitting her mistakes and asking for forgiveness. And the friendship ends. A business person, because of pride, refuses to receive counsel and recklessly pursues a course of action that takes the company under. Pride cuts people off from life giving relationships. Pride keeps people from getting help. Pride goes before destruction. The fruit of pride is a bitter thing indeed.

3. How have you seen this principle worked out that pride leads to dishonor and destruction (either in your own life or in lives of other people)?

Read Proverbs 8:13

4. How does the one who fears the Lord view pride?
5. What does it mean to hate pride and arrogance?

Read Proverbs 22:4; 29:23

6. What is the fruit of humility?
7. How have you seen this truth fleshed out that there is a reward for humility?

Brian said:

Humility does not mean thinking less of yourself than of other people, nor does it mean having a low opinion of your own gifts. It means freedom from thinking about yourself at all.

(Archbishop William Temple as quoted in *A Resilient Life*, 183)

8. Do you think this is a good description of humility? Why or why not?
9. How might your life be different if you experienced this freedom from thinking about yourself at all?
10. Brian suggested that the starting point of developing humility is to look to the example of Jesus (John 13; Phil. 2:1-11). In what ways do we see humility in Jesus' life?
11. Brian also suggested two other points of application for developing humility: (1) take the lower spot; and, (2) practice the discipline of service, especially hidden service. What ideas do you have about how you might practice these?

Definitions of pride and humility from Gary Collins, Ph.D. :

Pride is characterized by an exaggerated desire to win the notice or praise of others. It is an arrogant, haughty estimation of oneself in relation to others. It involves the taking of a superior position that largely disregards the concerns, opinions, and desires of other people. In essence, it is an attempt to claim for oneself the glory that rightly belongs to God. In contrast, humility is characterized by "accurate self-appraisal, responsiveness to the opinion of others, and a willingness to give praise to others before claiming it for one's self." The humble person accepts his or her imperfections, sins, and failures, but also acknowledges the gifts, abilities, and achievements that have come from God. Humility is not self-negation or the rejection of all our God-given strengths and abilities. Humility involves a grateful dependence on God and a realistic appraisal of both our strengths and weaknesses." (Christian Counseling, 316)