

Five Perspectives of Pride

by Kevin Brownfield

The sermon emphasizes the dangers of pride, highlighting God's hatred of it, its essence, and its manifestations, and encourages listeners to cultivate humility and dependence on God.

Duration: 1:16:24

Scripture: Matthew 5:1

Topics: "Pride And Humility", "Spiritual Vision"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher highlights the danger of living in a graphic world in the 1990s, where our focus on earthly things hinders our ability to see the things of God. He emphasizes the need for a vision of God and references Paul's words in 2 Corinthians about looking at the unseen rather than the seen. The preacher encourages young people to have the courage to ask God to show them His glory. He also discusses the manifestations of pride and how it adapts to different temperaments and situations, emphasizing the need for humility and the recognition of God's hatred of pride.

Transcript

One of the dangers of living in the 1990s is that we live in a graphic world and oftentimes our vision is so difficult to see the things of God because we are so content to see the things of earth. Paul said in 2 Corinthians, well we look not on the things which are seen but of the things which are unseen. For the things which are seen are temporal, the things which are unseen are eternal.

My young friends, what we need is a vision of God. We need to see Him sitting upon His throne. Every man who came into the presence of God, and by the way, there is only one man in Scripture who even dared ask to see the glory of God.

Only one man had the courage to look the Almighty in the face and say, show me your glory. Would to God that a group of young people like this would have the courage to say, show me your glory. Tonight we are going to broach a subject that is painful for me and I trust it will be as painful for you too because every one of us in this room are infected with it.

We are all gripped by it. It comes in many shapes and sizes and forms and I would like to ask tonight for three young men in this room who are full of the Holy Spirit, who would stand and ask God to show us His glory. In your words, from your heart to His, lead us in prayer.

Three young men. I will pause and I will wait until three have prayed. Father, show us your glory.

The glory is departed, Lord. We long to see you sitting upon your throne, high and lifted up. Father, all of us in this room need to see you.

So amazing, those men in Scripture who came into the presence of your glory, who fell down as dead men. When they saw the majesty and the power and the dominion and the might and the authority, they saw the justice, the judgment and the grace. Father, as Moses was hidden in the cleft of that rock and you passed before him, might we dare have the courage and the guts to ask to see your glory.

Father, tonight, would you dismantle our hearts so all things are naked and open into the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Therefore, God, there is nothing that will be preached on tonight that you are not already aware of. There is nothing that has occurred in any life in this room that you are not already profoundly known knowing.

So, Father, I pray that we would have the courage, the grace to simply acknowledge as we see our lives from your perspective. Father, would you give us the spirit of brokenness. And it is for this that we beg.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen. I was fully prepared earlier, Brother Kenison, to, as you were preaching, and as I, I don't know about you, but he dismantled me and put me back together all in one session.

It was a marvelous adventure of God's grace and God's conviction. But as he was preaching, he stopped and talked about the blessings of God that unfold. And then he talked about how he could take an hour.

And I kept saying, I wanted to say, go ahead, Brother. I think when we were done, you were up to seven hours that we were going to go, because I think we had seven things on the list that you had touched on. And I was fully ready to sit in the seven-hour service, Brother, because I was thrilling in what God was doing in my heart.

What a joy that that was and also a great reflection in the testimonies of heart. What a blessing it is to just be here and a blessing it is to be in ministry. You know, corporate America is very vicious.

My brother works in corporate America. He tells me many stories. And oftentimes whenever I hear my brother talking, I'm reminded of some quotes that I have written down in my own journals through the past, things that I've come across.

Margaret Hasley, who was born in 1910, she wrote a very interesting book. And the title of the book was, *With Malice Toward Some*. My, isn't that a book you just want to run out and get and read? *With Malice Toward Some*.

Here's what Margaret said on the subject of humility. She said, Humility is not my forte. And whenever I dwell for any length of time on my own shortcomings, they gradually begin to seem mild, harmless, rather engaging little things, not at all like those glaring defects in other people's character.

Muhammad Ali, born in 1942. Some of you will remember him. Fly, float like a butterfly, sting like a bee.

Muhammad Ali said this. It was reported in the *Sunday Express*, a London newspaper, on the 13th of January, 1963. Muhammad Ali said, At home I'm a nice guy, but I don't want the world to know.

Humble people, I found, don't get very far. We go back just a little bit to Samuel Butler. He was an English author.

Here's what he said. He said, I really do not see much use in exalting the humble and meek. They do not remain humble and meek long when they are exalted.

And then, John Selden said this, Humility is a virtue all preach, none practice, yet everybody is content to hear. The master thinks it's a good doctrine for his servants, the laity for the clergy, and the clergy for the laity. Dear friends, may I tell you tonight, as we broach the subject of humility, it is one of the most difficult subjects we will ever approach.

I have heard countless messages in my last 19 years of ministry on immorality. I've heard dozens of messages on the sins of the tongue. I've heard a multitude of messages, if you will, on being committed to Christ.

I can remember one message I have ever heard preached on the sins. As one man said, as I was reading a couple of weeks ago, there was a dearth of preaching on pride in this generation. In this entire century, it has been almost a neglected truth and doctrine among us.

Tonight, as we turn to Matthew chapter 5, I wish we had 12 sessions together. I have a whole body of material that I do called the Dynamics of Discipleship from Matthew chapter 5. We have often called it the Sermon on the Mount. I call it the Dynamics of Discipleship because I believe as Jesus saw the multitude and then was seated down and His disciples came to Him, I believe that in no uncertain terms, Christ was laying down the conditions of discipleship.

This is what the ultimate disciple looks like. These are the characteristics that are borne out and fleshed out in the heart of this ultimate disciple. And tonight we will have no time but to get beyond the first as we go down in our passage of Scripture in verse 2. And He opened His mouth and taught them saying, verse number 3, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom.

Blessed in the multitude. It's a plural term in the Greek language which for a very specific reason talks about, as our brother was saying, literally the multitude of blessings. Are poured out upon those who bear the marks and qualities of discipleship.

And you could almost piggyback upon what brother Denny was saying earlier and this entire passage of Scripture, because again, Christ reminds us that blessedness and the blessings of God are pouring out those spiritual blessings upon those who will dare breach what a biblical disciple is. And the number one quality, the very first mark and dynamic of discipleship is the mark of humility. The dynamic of humility.

Let's talk about a number of issues tonight. First of all, let's talk about the essence of humility. What is the essence of being poor in spirit? Very interesting words.

If you simply stopped at the word poor, you and I would get an understanding. This person, as there were several levels of poorness, this is not just an individual who just doesn't have things. This is an individual who is completely without resources.

It's an individual that is totally without any ability to accomplish anything. He has nothing with which he can use. Nothing from which to draw.

It's not just that he's got a little, as we would look out in America and say, oh, they don't live in a nice house. They're poor. That's not this individual.

It's an individual who has nothing. But Jesus qualifies it. He says they are not poor in things.

They are poor in spirit. There is a profound humility. What does it look like? It is to acknowledge our utter helplessness before God.

Our spiritual poverty. Our spiritual need. We are solely dependent upon God to meet our needs and there is nothing that we have that has not been given to us by the unmerited favor, the grace of Almighty God.

Everything we have has been given by Him. We find that the essence of humility is to acknowledge our utter lack of being able to face life and eternity apart from God. It is to acknowledge the real blessings of life and eternity will come from that right relationship with God.

It is understanding that there is nothing that I can produce in myself or nothing that I can do at all that will bring God joy and that everything I have is by His unmerited favor, His grace. It is to acknowledge our utter lack of superiority before men and others. That is what poor in spirit is.

It is to recognize our spiritual deadness before God and that we are no more superior to anyone around us and the next person is just as significant to God as I am. That I am not in any sense elevated. And it doesn't matter what occurs in life.

It doesn't matter what achievements have been made. It doesn't matter what toys or trinkets I may possess. Everything is level in Calvary.

To Jew and Gentile, to the rich, to the bond, to the free, to all, the Gospel is freely given. And all can receive the grace of God. That's spiritual poverty.

That is the essence of humility. My brother-in-law was in 4th Recon. Does any of you know what 4th Recon is? It's a very elite unit of the Marine Corps.

There's the Navy SEALs. There's the Green Beret and the Marines. It's 4th Recon.

My brother-in-law one time, as I was discussing things with him, was telling me, he's a brilliant mind and knows much of military strategy. As I was talking to him one time, he said, you know, one of the greatest things that you can do in warfare is to understand your enemy. For if you understand your enemy, and Paul bears this out and says we are not ignorant of his devices.

We are not ignorant of his tools. And my brother-in-law would say to me over and over, I've got to know my enemy. I've got to know who I'm fighting.

I've got to know what his tactics are so that I know how to face that enemy. And what I want to do tonight is not look at humility from humility's perspective. I'm not going to look at the essence of humility.

I want to look at the enemy of humility. I want to look at the antithesis. I want to look at pride because sometimes I think we do not get the full picture of humility until we see the enemy of humility and see pride in just how it wells up in our souls and how it entrenches itself in our life.

Let's look tonight at the next few brief moments that we have at the enemy of humility. And we will do that, dear friends, by looking at five perspectives of pride. Five perspectives of pride.

You know, the opposite of being poor in spirit is having a spirit that is full of self. And it is a world of difference between those two spirits. The church at Laodicea in Revelation 3 starting in verse 14.

And the angel of the church at Laodicea is right. These things say at the amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God, I know Thy works. And by the way, He knows yours too.

And He knows mine too. I know Thy works, that Thou art neither cold nor hot. I would that Thou were cold or hot.

I will spew Thee out of my mouth because Thou sayest, I am rich, increased with goods, and have need of nothing. And knowest not that Thou art wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. My dear friends, that's it.

That is where we live. And we wonder why in America there has been no movement of revival. You say, Kevin, why? The reason is, is because we're doing very fine without God.

Thank you. And we're not hungry for revival. And we sing about revival.

We pray about revival. We talk about revival. We just don't really want it.

Because revival will cost the death, the one we love the most, and that is self. And it is significant that Jesus begins the dynamics of discipleship with poor. They're poor in spirit.

What are the five perspectives of pride? Number one, God's hatred. How does God look at pride? No sin is more abhorrent to Almighty God. Sins of the flesh are revolting and bring very grave consequences.

But against none of those did God speak with such vehemence as He did against the sin of pride. Him that hath a proud heart will I not suffer. Psalm 105.

The proud He knoweth afar off. Psalm 138. These six things doth the Lord hate.

Yea, seven are an abomination to Him. A proud look. Proverbs 6, 16 and 17.

Pride do I hate. That's rather clear. Proverbs 8, 13.

Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord. Proverbs 16, 5. A proud heart is sin. Proverbs 21, 4. That's rather clear too.

Pride of man shall be brought low. Isaiah 2, 17. God resisteth.

What a powerful term. He stiff arms the proud, but gives grace to the humble. James 4, 6. No further words are necessary to express the hatred and revulsion of God to pride, arrogance, conceit, haughtiness.

It is an abomination to Him. And how in the world can we condone what God hates? How in the world can we entertain what is an abomination to Almighty God? God opposes the proud and holds them at a distance. There is no point of meeting between a proud heart and a holy God.

There is no point of meeting. But a broken and contrite spirit, He will not. God hates pride.

Perspective number two. The essence of pride. We saw the essence of humility.

What is the essence of pride? What is pride all about? The word pride in James 4, 6 carries the idea of one who considers himself above others. Pride is a deification of self. That's what pride is.

It thinks more highly of itself than it ought. It ascribes to itself the honor which belongs to God and God alone. It caused Rabbi Simon Ben-Jochai to say with profound arrogance, if there are only two righteous men in the world, I and My Son are the two.

If only one, I am He. This is what brought Nebuchadnezzar down to a level of the beast. I remember reading a story years ago about the servant of the last German king, the last German monarch, the Kaiser of Germany.

And here's what he said about his master, his king. He said, I cannot deny that my master was vain. He had to be the central figure in everything.

If he went to a christening, he wanted to be the baby. If he went to a wedding, he wanted to be the bride. If he went to a funeral, he wanted to be the corpse.

And unfortunately, that's exactly where some of us have locked ourselves internally because we are the center and we are constantly superimposing ourselves over God and superimposing ourselves and giving ourselves the glory that only God deserves. Pride is characterized by an independence from God. That was the heart of Adam's sin.

He wanted to be independent of God rather than being dependent on Him. He desired to be as God. And pride is perfectly self-sufficient.

It desires to submit to no one, to neither man nor God. And let me tell you something, my young friend, if you sit in this room tonight as our brother just a few moments ago said that he would have loved to have talked about being under authority and I would have loved to have heard him preach on it, my dear young friend, if you are locked in struggle with authority, the root of that struggle is pride. Because you are wanting to superimpose yourself and you do not want to submit yourself to man or to God when God has clearly and without reservation in Scripture in black and white laid down for you that you have a clear-cut responsibility before God.

And that is to be under authority. We find that pride involves contempt for others. You remember in Luke 18, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are.

Even as this publican in Luke regulates every other mortal to a minor role in life. And in essence, that's what pride is. Pride sees itself as center stage and everyone else is relegated to a minor role in the play of my life.

And I am the center of the universe. And that is the essence of pride. And it doesn't matter what you want because I desire and my desires are more important than yours.

That is the essence and the heart of pride. It uses others as the background to display its own brilliance. The proud considers others beneath him.

If you would, the hoi polloi. You say, what in the world does that mean? It's a Greek term. It literally means just the common herd.

They are the hoi polloi. I am the special one. Let me ask you a question, my young friend.

Do you find yourself wanting to be superior to your brothers and sisters at home? Do you find yourself degrading and downgrading them and wanting to constantly get things for yourself and constantly get the attention for yourself? Or do you find yourself deferring and wanting to give? You see, pride is at the essence of that. It has contempt for other people. And when pride is not the center stage, then pride has great difficulty.

We find that pride essentially is competitive. C.F. Lewis, who wrote a number of great books, he said this. He said, No one is proud because he is rich or clever or good looking.

He is proud because he is richer or more clever or better looking than someone else. It involves a comparison which always goes in favor of the one who makes the comparison. Isn't that amazing? How we all have our opinions and we all have our thoughts, but what we must understand is that when pride rears its ugly head, that those assessments always go in favor of the one who is making the judgment and that's me.

Because we find that we are people who love competition. And Paul said, They who compare themselves among themselves are not wise. But yet pride is essentially competitive.

Let's look at perspective number three. The manifestations of pride. Can I tell you something, my young friends? Pride adapts itself to every temperament.

Pride accommodates itself to every situation. Pride is remarkably fluid. It can be haughty or humble, all at will.

Pride is very interesting and we will do well if we will identify the specific forms of pride. Let's look at a few of them tonight. This is by no means exhaustive.

I could go on as my brother said for hours on this. But let's look at several of the forms of pride, what pride looks like. First of all, there is pride of faith.

Pride of faith. If we look around in this room tonight, we'll notice that there's many different shapes and sizes of people. There's many different faces and the way that people look.

And there is pride of faith. And can I tell you, every one of us in this room tonight, none of us can claim good looks of ourselves. We have nothing to do with it, dear friends.

But there is a pride of faith. And it is that kind of a pride of faith that oftentimes will drive people as I have witnessed myriads of times in youth groups. You'll get a young guy who's a jock and he's athletic and he really knows how to put on the dog and everybody likes him and all the girls swoon over him and they all like to be around him.

But yet there might be somebody else. And I don't know about you, but I was that kid in fifth grade when it came to choosing for basketball. I was not the one chosen.

As a matter of fact, they were fighting over who would take me. I was that kid. By the time I was in the third grade, I weighed 103 pounds.

Some of you girls don't weigh 103 pounds. I was a rather large young man. And here I was in the fifth grade.

They go to choose a team. No, you take him. No, no, you take him.

And this is what causes those young men who have it all together and who look so sharp to tip their noses up at somebody else and say, ah, I don't need to invest in you. I don't need to give you any time. You're not worth it.

Pride of faith. What causes a young lady in the youth group to be so snippy and be so arrogant and be so uppity and not have time for somebody else and not be able to give their life away, what causes that is pride because it says, I am better than you. I am prettier than you.

I am better looking than you. And I am more valuable than you are. I'll never forget years ago watching the Focus on the Family film a man called Norman.

A wacky old man living in a community. But a neighbor looked beyond his own heart, his own family, his own self and invested. And what a great thing God did.

Because he wasn't too proud to say, well, you know, I'm too important for him. He's just a wacky old coot. He's just a weirdo.

No, there was no pride of faith there. He didn't say, I live in a nice house in a nice mid-sized neighborhood. He reached out and brought that man literally into his home, into his family and invested his life in them.

There was no pride of faith. And listen to me, friends. All around you, there are people that are crying out.

Their lives are filled with need. They're longing to be loved. If we will simply not have pride of faith.

Secondly, there is pride of race. It's even sad that one would have to say something like this. But there is no room in the church of Jesus Christ for racism.

And yet our churches are filled with it. If I had a dollar for every off-color comment I've heard in the last 19 years, I'd have a nice little piggy stash. If I was to be able to look across America and go to all the different places I've been and hear all the things that I've heard, oh, my dear friends, there are those that say I am of one color and you of another, therefore, I am better.

Well, you better go memorize Ephesians 2. Because my dear friend, in Christ, everything is coming down and the middle wall of partition is not there. And dear friend, the Jew and Gentile are an even keel at the cross. Some of us sit in this room and we struggle with racism.

That's pride. That is sheer, unbridled arrogance. You are no better than anyone else.

I don't care what color skin they have. I don't care what country they come from. I don't care what socioeconomic status they live in.

My friend, there better not be in our souls a pride of race because you didn't get to choose what color you were when you were born. And what you have has been given by Almighty God. But my young friend, pride of race crushes and cripples many.

We find that there is also a pride of place. A pride of place. Paul sternly warned the Corinthians that pride puffs up.

In fact, of the eight times that that phrase puffed up is used, seven of the eight times is to the Corinthian church. You know, it's very interesting. If you've ever read any of the life story of Charles Dickens, people who met Charles Dickens for the first time would have never suspected that he was the most distinguished literary man of his time.

When you walked into the presence of Charles Dickens, it was often said that he made you feel like the royalty of England. No matter who you were, no matter what your status, whether you were a little tiny snotty-nosed kid from the street, when Charles Dickens got you in his audience, he would make you feel like a king. There is a pride of place.

It is this kind of pride that causes a senior... and by the way, you can look up here and you can think I'm a radical too, brethren. But I get sick and tired of the senior mentality, making seniors rule. That makes me sick.

It makes me nauseous. Seniors rule. Everybody else drools.

That's a pride of place. Would to God we had some seniors who would go out in their lunchtime and go to another school and sit with some seventh graders and give their life away. Go out and find the Normans and say, I want to be your friend.

I want to love you. I want to invest in you. There's a pride of place.

It is this kind of pride that we find a place that very frequently will destroy Christian schools. It will frequently destroy church youth groups, everybody vying for position, wanting to be the leader, wanting to be the best. I'll never forget a number of years ago a young man named Kevin.

Kevin was a senior. Let me back up. He was a junior.

He went to a Christian school of 1,000 students, a very large Christian school by most numbers. Kevin's junior year, he went to a camp and at that camp, God revolutionized his life. Kevin would never be the same.

Kevin went back to his Christian school his junior year. Kevin began to live as a servant. He began to give his life away.

The summer between his junior and senior year, you know what Kevin did? Oh, Kevin could have gone out and got all kinds of jobs. Kevin could have done numbers of things. Very popular kid.

Very athletic kid. Very prominent kid. Everybody wanted to be Kevin's friend.

You know what Kevin did during his junior and senior year? He became a coach. He and another friend of his, a very close friend, became a coach of a t-ball team. You know what they did their whole summer? They gave their lives away to little tiny kids, loving them, having them over to their house, having extra special practices with them and gave devotions every time they got together.

Kevin had an impact on that team that was unreal. You know what Kevin did his senior year? Rather than sitting with all the seniors. You know what Kevin did? Kevin got up and he walked over to sit with the 6th,

7th and 8th grade kids.

And Kevin so invested his life in those kids his senior year. Let me tell you something. When most kids graduate from high school and they walk away, there is nothing of value left.

As a matter of fact, most people say, glad you're gone. Get out of here. But you know what happened? When Kevin walked away, it was completely different.

Two groups of people can come back to that church and that school. One of them was a group of people that didn't care. They were the seniors' rule.

They were the we are the dominators. And you know what? When they come back, nobody cares. Nobody cares whatsoever.

As a matter of fact, they kind of say, you get out of here. Your turn is over. It's our turn now.

But you know what happens when Kevin walks back on campus? He is mugged from one end of that campus to the other and everybody wants to know, how are you Kevin? Oh, what are you doing? How long are you going to be here? Everybody, all those little kids who were 6th, 7th, and 8th graders are now sophomores, juniors, seniors. And they want to know how Kevin is and what Kevin is doing and what can we do for you and how can we serve you. You see my friends, that's what comes when pride goes.

That's one of the blessings. When we do not have that pride of place and that pride of position and we don't look at our position as something that we flaunt around, but we look at it as an opportunity of ministry. That's all that it is.

Next, we find that there is a pride of grace. A pride of grace. Do you know that it is very possible to be proud of spiritual gifts? Isn't that incredible? God has entrusted to us and we can actually strut about ostentatiously forgetting that we have nothing that we did not receive.

It is God who gave the gift, did He not? And we can actually be filled with pride at the eloquence and brilliance of our message on humility. Some of you will get that about tomorrow afternoon. I wrestled with this this afternoon.

You know you can actually be proud about your message on humility? And I'm going along and I'm reading through this and I'm studying and all of a sudden, I was gripped with the fact that I'm proud about my message on humility! How incredible! Is not pride very fluid? Does it not adapt itself to every situation? Does it not constantly look for a place to rear its head and to grab a hold of the heart and life? There's pride of grace. Dr. John McNeill had just finished preaching a message on humility and when he was greeting people afterwards, a woman approached him and said, yes, Dr. McNeill, humility is my forte. I don't think she got it.

I don't think she understood. My dear friends, can I tell you something? Everything you have tonight in Christ was a gift of God. And there's not one of us in this room that can look out.

As a matter of fact, I like the way one writer put it. He said, you know what? He said, the preaching of the Gospel is one beggar telling other beggars where to find bread. That's what it is.

We can't look out at this world with such a condemning heart and say, oh, that naughty, awful, wicked, bad world. Yes, it is naughty. Yes, it is awful.

Yes, it is wicked. And my friends, that's where we were too. For Paul said to the Ephesian believers, such were some of you.

Could God be thanked by His amazing grace? And is not His grace amazing? Is not His grace incredible? Is not it wonderful to live in the grip of grace? Well, my friend, grace is the gift of God. I'm not the author of my gift. God is.

I'm not the author of ministry. God is. It is even possible to be proud of the pride of grace.

Pride is an obsession with self. It is a person whose soul loves and worships at the shrine of self, much like Narcissus, who in Greek mythology was gazing into the fountain. He was so infatuated with himself.

But there was one problem. As he tried to reach out and grab a hold of this one that he was so infatuated with, the one whom he loved, he could not obtain the object of his affection, so he committed suicide. He's a perfect example of the folly of being a lover of self.

But pride in its essence is loving me. That's what it is. It's demanding my rights.

It's wanting my way. That's what pride is. Pride thirsts for flattery and praise because it gratifies self-love.

Pride is elated when it is given all kinds of accolades and all kinds of compliments. And pride is depressed when they are withheld. In a palace at Versailles, there's a hall known as the Hall of Glass.

It's the hall of 1,000 mirrors. And when you enter, 1,000 hands are outstretched to welcome you. When you smile, 1,000 smiles meet yours.

When you weep, 1,000 pairs of eyes weep with you, but they are all your own. Hands and eyes and smiles, such are the proud, surrounded by self, engrossed in self, and imprisoned by self. The essence of pride.

Pride is a germ that transforms nutritious food into venomous poison. There's multitudes of biblical illustrations about pride. 1 Chronicles 21.

It was pride of His kingdom that caused David to divide and number the people. He was living in arrogance. And there was pride that rose up in his heart in thinking of the greatness of His kingdom.

He numbered the people. It was pride in 2 Kings 20. He showed all of His covetous enemy the house and the precious things of silver and gold, and then He lost all of them because He was so filled with arrogance and wanted to show off and show them just how important He was.

He turned over the things of God to the enemies of God. Somebody say that for me. Thank you.

I knew He was in there somewhere. I just call Him Nebo sometimes because I can't spit all that stuff out. Nebuchadnezzar's pride fed His own achievements.

Is this not great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of My power for the honor of My majesty? His haughty spirit went before a gigantic fall while the word was in the king's mouth. There fell a voice from heaven saying, The kingdom is departed from thee and they shall drive thee from men and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field and they shall make thee to eat grass as an oxen. When His sanity was restored, the focus of His worship was shifted from self to God.

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor Thee, the King of Heaven, who came to recognize who He was before a holy God. Uzziah's heart, Scripture says, was lifted up in pride. And his supposed military might and success, 2 Chronicles 26, but when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God and went to the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

The leprosy even rose up to his forehead before the priests and the house of the Lord from beside the incense altar. He was lifted up in pride. It was Herod that lapped up the pride and praise of the people of Tyre as they accorded to his orientation.

It is the voice of God and not of man. And immediately, the angel of the Lord smote him because he gave not glory to the Lord. Peter's pride made him feel so superior in mortal courage to his fellow disciples that he boasted, Though all men forsake Thee, I will not.

Arrogance. Boasting. James 3, 3-5 Pride causes one to act superior and self-sufficient.

1 Corinthians 4-7 Sacrifice godly values on the altar of acceptance. That's arrogance and pride. It causes one to seek positions.

Luke 14-7 It causes one to seek recognition. Luke 14-12-14 Causes one to turn from God to idols. Romans 1-22-23 It causes conceit of the heart.

Romans 12-16 It causes one to elevate oneself over others. Romans 2-19 Romans 11-18 Romans 12-16 It causes idolatry. Romans 1-22-23 It is the author of strife in the heart.

Pride is at the root of all of those. Please say, Kevin, those things are all wonderful. They're all nice.

They're all good. And that is so great that you're preaching that because my neighbor really needs to hear this message. And man, did my parents... I wish my parents... Oh, and you know, as one man said, if the phone rings, answer it.

How about perspective number four? What is the proof of pride? How many of you like tests? You say, Kevin, I'm out of school. Do not do this to me. Well, let's go to the school of God for a few minutes, shall we? I don't like to go to doctors because they poke and jab too much.

But this last year I learned a very important lesson. Some of you... Were any of you here in January when I was here? Were any of you here? You may not have known this, but in January, I was having a number of very major physical problems. I didn't tell anybody here.

I wanted to go on with the conference. You'll notice I didn't spend a lot of time out and about with people because I was having physical problems. Literally, I thought I was dying consistently.

I didn't have any idea what the problem was. I'd go to a doctor. He'd look me over.

Do blood tests. Say, you're fine. Everything's okay.

I finally found the right doctor. He looked in my left ear, and every time I'd been to doctors, they'd look in my left ear, and they'd say, Oh, you've got a real bad ear infection. We need to give you some antibiotics.

So they'd all give me the most powerful antibiotics that they could come up with, and they were drugging me to death. And no matter how many antibiotics I took, nothing changed. Everything was still the same.

I finally found this doctor. He looked in my ear. He said, We have a problem.

I said, Really? Yes. I said, Oh, that infection? He said, I don't think this is an infection. He said, Your eardrum is missing.

I said, Oh. That's kind of important, I take it. He said, Yes, it is.

Oh. Okay. What do we do now? He said, I'm going to send you to a specialist.

Okay. I walked into this man's office. If there was ever a man that I have ever met in my life that looked like the Apostle Paul would have looked like, I think it's this man.

Really. Really. He reminds me of all the descriptions I've read of the Apostle Paul, but he is the most wonderful and most brilliant physician I've ever really known.

And I walked into his office, and he sat me down, and he looked in my ear, and in 30 seconds he said, You have a major problem. I said, What is that? He said, You have in your ear something that's called an attic cholesteatoma. I said, Is that bad? I've always been tempted when I get in an airplane to take ketchup packets whenever I eat a meal and dribble some ketchup down the sides of my ears and go up to a stewardess and say, Is it supposed to do that? But I constantly had stuff coming out of my ear.

And so he's telling me, He said, You've got this thing. I said, So what is an attic cholesteatoma? He said, It's a tumor. Oh.

It kind of turns your conversation rather serious when people start talking tumors. I said, Well, tell me what it does. Well, he said, It's very simple.

It destroys everything it touches. It destroys bone. It destroys flesh.

It destroys tissue. It destroys anything it touches. And he said, Your cholesteatoma is rather large.

Actually, it's the size of my thumb and my entire middle ear was taken up with a cholesteatoma. This cholesteatoma was actually wrapping itself around the vagus nerve. That's why my heart was constantly going haywire.

I didn't know what to do. My stomach was in a turmoil. I couldn't hardly eat.

Everything was all messing up. My dear friends, can I tell you something? Just a little tiny cholesteatoma in my ear messed my whole body up. I couldn't function.

Do you know that one little tiny issue of pride that is unresolved will mess you up? One little tiny area. One little tiny thing of pride. We say, Kevin, how do I know? Let's take a test.

Number one, let's have the test of preeminence. What is the test of preeminence? May I ask you a personal question? How do you react when others are selected for something that you wanted? Have you ever had something you really wanted? I remember a young man one time, he was trying out for a musical position in his school music, a small chorale, and he was trying out for it, and he didn't make it. And his attitude and actions as a result of that were an evidence that his heart was lifted up in pride.

He began to badmouth the teachers and began to say they don't know what they're doing and they chose them because of this and all kinds of things. He said, you see, there was something he really wanted, but he didn't get it. Let me ask you a question.

How do you respond when there's something that you really want but you don't get? How do you respond when you want something or want to go somewhere and your parents say, no, it's not best? That is an issue of pride, dear young friend. How about when somebody else is promoted while you're overlooked? Does that ever happen to you? Have you ever had somebody else, and even sometimes through the course of ministry, I've seen two friends, two best of friends, one gets promoted, the other doesn't, and watch their friendship blow apart because of pride, because of error. These are the tests of preeminence when we are overlooked but somebody else is promoted.

How about when another is honored and we are ignored? Can I tell you something, my young friend? You find out very quickly just how deeply pride is rooted in your soul when you go out as a servant and you do something and you serve and then you expect for somebody to stand up and say, we are just so glad because so and so just did this. You find out whether there's pride or not when you do something and you invest your life and nobody says anything. Nobody says thank you.

Nobody says wonderful job. That's when you really begin to discern whether or not pride is there in your soul. When someone overlooks what you did and they don't really see it and it's not noticed, then you begin to see whether or not you really are looking to be preeminent.

When someone outshines us, does it stimulate us to jealousy or ill will? You'll see this happen in schools. You'll see it happen in youth groups. Somebody brand new comes in and they're bigger and they're better and they're prettier and they're nicer.

Your response to that will either be a response of humility or a response of pride. You'll either find yourself jealous of them and down-talking and trash-talking them or you'll find yourself reaching out to them to pull them in, to respond. It will either be one of pride or one of humility.

Can we really rejoice in another's achievement or greater ability? That's a part of the test of preeminence. Can I really rejoice when somebody else outshines me and somebody else is better? We preachers struggle with this, don't we? I don't know how many preachers' conferences I've been to and you get guys and I'll be one of the preachers and you're sitting back there and you evaluate it. Is he preaching better than me? I mean, is he going to get more of a response than I got? Are people going to like him better? It is amazing just how deeply pride is rooted in us.

We as preachers struggle with it. It's been an omnipresent problem for me. The most difficult position to play in the orchestra is second fiddle.

You ever notice that? Thanks be to God for a man by the name of John the Baptist who said, He must increase, I must decrease. He did not long to have the preeminence. He longed to hide in the shadows and give Christ the preeminence.

Test number two. The test of sincerity. The test of sincerity.

You say, Kevin, what is the test of sincerity? You know, we are often prone to say all kinds of bad things about ourselves. But the test is when somebody else says something bad about us. Is that not the way that it is? Oh, we'll get up and we'll say, Oh, you know, I'm really no good and I'm really this and I'm really

that and we'll do that and it'll look real spiritual and it'll look real nice.

But you let somebody else talk about us and say something about us and we can become like vicious tigers on revenge. As a matter of fact, we often find ourselves fighting fire with fire. How many of you ever heard that term before? Fight fire with fire? I said this at the men's advance here in January.

I'll say it again. You know, when I was a kid, I wasn't real intelligent, but I went to a fire station one time and all the little kids, they'd line them up next to the fire engine and they would get up and tell us how they put out fires and I learned then that the most effective way to put out fire was with water. Isn't that really profound? I mean, that's deep, isn't it? But yet you'll hear people say, I'll fight fire with fire.

You know what that means? I'm going to give better than I got. You said that about me, you wait till you hear what I say about them. Fighting fire with fire.

You know what that is? P-R-I. That's pride. We find out when we're faced with an issue of responding, when others say bad things about us.

Do we fly to justify ourselves? Do we find ourselves in hostility and resentment when somebody says something about us? Do we criticize the critic and try to disdain the critic and denounce the critic and thereby remove the criticism? We find that oftentimes that is how we respond and that is the test of sincerity, the test of truth. And we find, number three, there is a test of truth. You say, Kevin, what is the test of truth? Let me ask you a question.

Do you lie? You say, what do you mean? Do you lie to impress others because the truth is not exciting enough? Have you ever found yourself lying and saying things that are not really true about your home or about the place you live or about what your dad does for a living or about this or that because the truth just isn't exciting enough? You know what the birth and heart of that is? Pride. That's the test of truth. Are you just willing to say things as they are because it's the truth or do you constantly long to press it just a bit because the truth just isn't exciting enough? Then we find, number four, there is the test of inferiority.

There are a lot of people that I have met in ministry who claim to have an inferiority complex. It is my opinion that they are not necessarily free from pride. As a matter of fact, indeed, I think the very complex may be a clear indication of pride.

Pride which is hurt because somebody didn't accept me, somebody didn't like me, somebody didn't love me the way I wanted to be loved, and so now I'm going to huff and puff and hide in my shell. I think that is just as much bold-faced pride as arrogance and flaunting, and yet we call it inferiority. So, Kevin, God's exposed my heart.

Oh, beloved, who of us in this room can stand before the searching eye of God tonight who knows everything we've ever said, everything we've ever done, knows how we've responded to situations this day. Just a few moments before I got up here to preach, I had to confess publicly with my brother an issue of pride. This is an ongoing struggle, an ongoing problem, and which of us in this room tonight, if we dare look into the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, if we dare look and beg to see His glory, would not be completely flattened to our faith and recognition that at the root of who we really are are multiple issues of pride.

My friend, it is my contention that pride is that very branch from which the self-life seeds all of the issues. That's it. It all comes back to an issue of pride.

Whether it's the pride of not wanting to submit myself to God and humbly obey His Word, or the pride of not submitting myself to authority here on earth, or the pride of sticking my nose up at somebody else because they're not as good as me or they don't look like me or they have different skin, or whether it's the pride of place or the pride of grace or whatever it might be, all of them go back to the single, solitary issue of pride. Say, Kevin, what's the cure? Let's look at perspective number five. The cure of pride.

I'm going to briefly touch on these, dear friend. Pride is overcome, first of all, by acknowledging one's sinfulness. I want you to turn, if you would, tonight to Luke 18.

I want you to look at this account with your own eyes. It is a very familiar account. We have all heard it on numerous occasions.

But Luke 18. Luke 18. And by the way, did you realize that there are two people in the Bible, two individuals in the Bible that prayed with five eyes? You say, five eyes? I didn't know anybody ever had five eyes.

I'm not talking eyes. I'm talking eyes. The first individual who prayed with five eyes is an individual called Lucifer.

And in Isaiah chapter 14, if you will read that text, you don't have to turn there, you will find that he prayed, I will. I will. I will.

I will. I will. I will.

Eyes. But there's a second individual in Scripture who prayed with five eyes, and the reason that I know that these two are related is because this one prayed just like his father. You say, Kevin, what do you mean? Let's look in Luke 18 starting in verse number 10.

Two men went up into the temple to pray. One Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself.

God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are. Extortioners. Unjust.

Adulterers. Or even as this publican, I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all that I possess.

And the publican standing afar off would not lift so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner. My young friend, I don't care what the issue of pride. I don't care where God found you.

I don't care where He pointed His finger. I don't care what it is. My young friend, your only response to a holy God is to fall upon your face broken without anything and simply cry in the agony of soul, God, be merciful to me a sinner.

Forgive me for my arrogance and pride. That was the heart of this one called the publican. The cure of pride is acknowledging one's sinfulness.

And secondly, pride is only corrected by genuine faith. Romans 3, verses 27-31, where is boasting then? It is excluded by what law? Of works? Nay, but of the law of faith. Therefore, we conclude that man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

My friend, you and I must understand that genuine faith in Christ produces within the soul a humility in recognizing the grace of God that everything that He has given, all the abundance of His mercy, is not of anything that I could ever have done. It was by His sheer choice and His amazing grace, He bestowed it all upon me. And I am unworthy of all of it.

It is that kind of heart of faith that overcomes pride. Humility in Philippians 2, 3, and 4, we already looked at today. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness.

And by the way, that word lowliness is a powerful term. The actual Greek term is carpet-mindedness. Are you willing to be walked on? Jesus was.

But yet when our rights are touched, what do we do? We raise our ugly head of pride. We find that it is also defeated by not loving the world. You say, Kevin, what do you mean? 1 John 2, 15-16, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and what? Do you know that literally you can draw all sin back to these three roots of sin in the Garden of Eden, in Genesis 3? As Eve is there, she is drawn away. There are three roots.

You find the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. I believe it overshadows all of it. You find as you move up to Christ, as Satan tried attacking Him there, Jesus, as He dealt with Him, Satan's attacks all came, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

And then you go to John, and you find He says that all that is in the world. Do you realize that since the dawn of the fall, Satan has never changed his tactics? Does that not blow your mind? Normally, an enemy will adjust. Satan has never had to adjust.

Do you know why? It works. Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride. Not loving the world.

Serving and giving quietly is something that we must learn to do to defeat the issue of pride in our life. Matthew 6, verses 3 and 4, But when thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward openly. We must be so careful even in these issues that we talk about the servant's heart because oftentimes we find ourselves even in the servant's heart doing it so we can get the accolades of men.

No, Jesus said don't let your left hand know what your right hand does. If you want to serve, fine. Do it quietly.

Do it so that God in heaven and by the way, I would much rather have reward by God. You know why? Jesus said that not even a cup of cold water given in His name would lose its reward. Boy, He keeps detailed accounts, does He not? Is that not overwhelming and incredible? We find that pride is also defeated by submitting to others and serving others.

Matthew 20, 26-28, and 1 Peter 5, verses 5-7. You know, it's very significant if you just take your Bible and turn back with me for a moment to Matthew 5. It's very significant that Jesus begins by dealing with poor in spirit, by dealing with arrogance, by dealing with pride. You say, Kevin, blessed are the poor in spirit.

Yes, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. You say, why is this so significant? Because all the virtues that Christ commanded and the beatitudes, it is significant that the very first is humility being poor in spirit. Why? Because that underlies all of the others.

What do you mean? You cannot be one who mourns without appreciating how insignificant and insufficient you are to handle in your own strength. That's humility. You cannot be meek unless you have needed gentleness yourself.

And knowing that need is humility. You cannot hunger and thirst for righteousness if you proudly think of yourself as already attaining and already righteous. You will not be filled.

That spiritual longing and appetite demands humility. We find as we go on down here that you cannot be merciful without recognizing your own need for mercy. You cannot be pure in heart.

If your heart is filled with pride, there is no way to be pure in heart. You cannot exclaim and have the humility that is afforded. You cannot be a peacemaker if you believe that you are always right.

And finally, you cannot identify with Christ no matter what your reaction to others when they revile you and say all manner of evil against you falsely. You cannot have that humble response in the face of adversity if there is pride. You will bristle.

You will buckle. You will retaliate. When people give, you will give back.

Dear friends, the issue of pride. Let's bow our heads and close our eyes. One of the greatest things that you will ever learn in the Christian life is that the way up is down.

What has God said? Has God found you coddling and courting issues of pride in your own soul? Has God found you hanging on to them and loving them and feeding them? I wonder tonight, as you look into the face of the incomparable Christ, as you look into the glory of God, into the majesty of eternity, what's your response? What will you do? I don't know if there's a pianist here that can just simply quietly play a song of invitation. But if there is, I'll ask him to go to the piano now and play simply a song like all to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give. As our brother shared with us earlier.

What's our response? Did God find the root of pride that is deeply embedded in us? Did He find specific, tangible issues of pride? Did you go through the tests of pride? Did you find yourself having to acknowledge that that's the way you really are? That that's the way you really respond in the consistent testimony of your life? That that's the way it is? What are you going to do? Well, my friends, I would pray that your response would be sitting upon your face before God. For that is really the only response that a believer can have in the face of pride, in the face of the grace of God. Tonight, with heads bowed, with eyes closed, I'm not going to pull anybody's teeth.

I'm not going to sing 27 verses of anything to make you do anything. That's not what this is about. But the bottom line is this, if God has confronted you with an issue of pride, if He has uncovered and opened up and unveiled an area that needs to be resolved, maybe tonight there are people sitting around you and their whole perspective of you is one of arrogance and pride because that's the way you've basically puffed yourself up and you've basically strutted around in your youth group or your home.

Maybe there's moms and dads that need to hear a broken teenager say, please forgive me because I've lived in rebellion and the issue is one of pride. Maybe there's kids from your youth group who need to hear

you say, I am so sorry, I am wrong because I have offended you with my tongue. And it was all done in pride.

Maybe there are people in your sphere of influence that you have completely neglected because they were different. They were, as you thought, inferior. They didn't need to be involved in your circle of very special friends because you're too good.

Well, my friend, maybe it's time to get on your face and acknowledge flat your pride. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. My dear friend, the only ones who are looking around are people who are moving to do the business of God.

You may need to tap somebody on the shoulder and move to obedience right now. You may need to go get alone with God privately in a quiet place and fall upon your face and beg the mercy and grace of God like that publican who beat his chest and said, be merciful to me. Right now, maybe the issue for you is one of genuine salvation.

Maybe it is your pride and your arrogance that has kept you from truly coming and submitting your will to Christ as Lord and Savior. Kevin, what do I do? I would give you this challenge to get up from your place and walk this way and stand in the front here. And we'll take a Bible and show you tonight how you can know Christ and be just like that publican.

Anyone else? Just move right now. We're not going to wait. We're not going to play games.

Right now is the time to move. Let's all stand, if you would, to make it easier for some to get out. Stand to your feet.

Let's sing that song together. I surrender all. My dear friends, you can move.

There's an old-fashioned altar here. There's a place over there in the quietness of the prayer seats you can go. If you are without Christ, you just simply come and stand here in the front and we'll have somebody take a Bible.

But right now, you move. You may need to grab somebody to simply obey what God has already said and to move into a relationship that is right. A rightly related relationship right now.

Move to that. Right now, as we sing together, would you respond in obedience? Would you respond in broken humility before the holy God of heaven? Would you lead us, our brother, as we sing this song, this invitation, and we'll simply sing one or two verses. All to Thee.

Sing quietly. How about you, my young friend? What will you do? Did God deal with a specific issue of pride? Does it need to be resolved? How about it, moms, dads, leaders, pastors, youth workers? One of the greatest things that may ever happen in your youth group is for you to swallow your own pride, to admit your own needs, and to deal with issues of pride. Oh, don't sing the song unless it's reality.

Something of pride that is unbroken, unsubmitted. One more verse and I'm turning the service over. I'm done.

You one, is the Spirit of God prompting your spirit right now? Do not delay. Do not say no to the Spirit of God. Do not harden your hearts.

Do not develop a seared conscience. A seared conscience is developed when one says no to the promptings of God's Spirit. If He is prompting, the only response is instant obedience.

Respond. Let's pray for a moment tonight. This message was given at the 1999 Youth Prayer Advance.

This message, as well as others, are available from Christ Life Ministries, P.O. Box 399, Venton, V-I-N-T-O-N, Virginia, 24179. Or you can visit our website at www.ChristLifeMens.org.

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