

LIFE QUESTIONS



Pride

Elim Church, Clapham

Pride or being proud is often understood as being a positive emotion in today's society, for instance, a person feels proud or satisfied of their achievements or the accomplishments of someone else. This may not appear to be a bad thing on the face of it. However if you take a look at the scriptures, pride is not painted in a good light and comes across as extremely destructive in nature! Yet a number of dictionaries define pride in a healthy way and make no reference as to its negative aspects. This omission could well be one of the enemy's ploys to cause you to become complacent as to its destructive nature of pride and the many things closely associated with it eg. arrogance, boastfulness, self esteem, haughtiness, and the feeding of your own ego.

The Bible shows that pride was the key factor that lead to Lucifer's downfall, when because of his looks, position etc., felt that he was equal with God and deserved the praise and worship that was given to God. As a result he was thrown out of God's presence. James points out God's attitude to pride when he states that God *actively [author's word]* opposes the proud (4:6). Pride is so abhorrent to God because it goes against His very nature. The Bible says that 'God is love!' Love is outgoing in nature and considers others, whilst pride is the opposite and on the whole is selfish! Pride causes an individual to believe or act in a way that says they don't need God and can live without Him! Thereby thinking that they can live independently of Him! Pride causes a person to think more highly of themselves than they should (Romans 12:3), a belief that originates in their heart causing them to believe and promote themselves and their accomplishments and achievements at the expense of others. As pride is an attitude of the heart, it won't be long before they begin to believe their own lies, and think of themselves as being righteous and even self sufficient. On the other hand, shyness and timidity can also be another aspect of pride, as such an attitude causes the individual to rely upon their own fear and insecurity to hold to the position they believe is part of their make up.

A number of years ago, I was listening to someone who was going to do a public performance. Before they started, an apology was made as to the lack of finesse of their presentation. Listeners were asked to overlook their mistakes and the lack of professionalism that was going to take place. As I listened to the performance, a mischievous thought went through my mind, wondering what would be the response if afterwards, I said to them, "I have to agree with you - it wasn't that good!" Even though I was tempted, I decided it best not to say anything. However, some time later, I was in another setting and at the end of the performance, I went up to thank the performer for his contribution. His response was, "Don't thank me, thank Jesus", meaning that it was Jesus speaking through him. I surprised myself when I responded, "It wasn't that good!". The look on his face said it all! I can only assume that both of these individuals were using different approaches to conceal their pride. Paul boasted and spoke of his suffering as well as his failures as a Christian, but always turned it round in giving glory to God for the help and grace he received from Him as a result!

The fashion industry goes to great lengths to appeal to a person's pride in trying to persuade individuals to purchase their products by making them believe that they would appear to be more attractive or acceptable if they had that particular product. On the whole pride is selfish in nature and goes against love which looks to and considers others - this is more akin to the nature and virtues of God!

The scriptures are filled with examples where people battled pride. Samson took the credit for his great strength (Judges 15:14-17), whilst Naaman almost missed his healing from leprosy because his pride would not allow himself to dip in a dirty river (2 Kings 5:12). The wise man of Proverbs points out that quarrels and strife are the result of pride (13:10). Jesus' disciples argued amongst themselves as to which one of them would be the greatest (Mark 9:34), no doubt an attitude of hearts filled with their own importance (Luke 18:11-14) and righteousness.

James gives us the key as to the best way of overcoming pride when he says, "... God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble" (4:6). Pride is selfish in nature whilst humility looks for those you can listen to, encourage, promote or build up, rather than looking for someone who will do these things to you! Pride is an indicator of the love deficit that exists in your heart. The love that is being referred to is where a person believes without a shadow of doubt that they are loved by God and they have to do nothing to receive His love. After all, He loved you when you were at your worst (Romans 5:8) when you were a sinner! Humility recognises this and gives thanks and rejoices in how God feels and thinks about you! Now ask God to help you to reveal His love to those around you, which may be prepared to give others a gift that they do not deserve, and do not forget to thank God for these very individuals as God loves them in the same way He loves you!