**SPIRITUAL MATURITY SERIES**

 “Poisonous Pride”

 **Key Verses**: **Proverbs: 6: 16 – 19 James 4:6**

Pride may be defined as: an inordinate amount of **self**-esteem, conceit or an unreasonable or unjustifiable amount of **self**-respect or **self**-satisfaction arising from some act, possession or perceived ability or trait. Others definitions may encompass a more positive tone. However we choose to define it, whenever it is mixed with sin, it becomes a perverted condition and something that God most definitely hates.

**“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ…” 2 Peter 3:18 (KJV)**



**The God That Loves and Hates**

I must say a word about the fact that a God that says “I love”, can also declare just as sincerely that “I hate.” God is love, but God also hates sin. If you love your child, you will hate the cancer that is destroying their little body. In many portions of scripture, God is referred to as terrible and dreadful. Some examples are in: **(Neh. 4:14, Deut. 7:31, Dan. 9:4**); and**,** that God has capacity to show anger is mentioned in **(Heb. 10:31)** Part of our spiritual maturity requires us to acknowledge that God is more than just a God of mercy and kindness; he is also a God of wrath, anger, vengeance and judgment. All such teaching that presents salvation without repentance, mercy without judgment and heaven without hell is a total perversion of the bible’s message.

**The Sins of the Flesh and of the Spirit (2 Cor. 7:1)**

Of all the sins that God could have listed in the top seven, pride opens up the list! Indeed all sins (even the sins of the flesh) are grievous to God and bring about their own particular consequences. But against none of these does God speak as strongly as he does against pride. Examples: **(Ps. 101:5, 138:6, Prov. 8:13, 21:4)** In many instances, sins of the flesh that appear outwardly and are more easily seen or distinguished often rack up more negative points among people than those sins that tend to lounge around in the hearts of people.

**QUESTION:** Why do sins of the flesh often get more of a bad rap than those of the heart?

Though we may hold a greater fascination with sensual sins than spiritual sins, the Apostle Paul in **2 Cor 7:1** references them both with equal trepidation and requires that we be cleanses from all of them.

**Pride the Catalyst Of All Sins**

Perhaps the greatest reason that pride made the top of all the sins that God hates is because pride is the necessary ingredient in all other sins. Pride’s ultimate agenda is to get us to declare our independence from God. The Genesis account of Adam and Eve’s fall from grace into sin was motivated by Satan’s promise in **(Gen. 3:5);** that by eating of the forbidden tree, you will become as “gods.” In other words Satan’s message was simply “do this and you won’t need God anymore; you can do life on your own.” The same message was conveyed to Jesus while he was fasting in the wilderness in **(Matt 4:3);** here Satan interrogates Jesus by suggesting that if Jesus is indeed the Son of God, why has God left him out here in the wilderness to starve? Satan suggests that Jesus exerts his independence from his Father and take it upon himself to provide for his own needs and simply “command these stones be made bread!” In each instance, selfish pride was the motivating factor that attempts to lure us away from any dependency on God.

**Satan The Origin of Pride**

**(Ezek. 28: 11 – 19 and Isaiah 14: 12 – 17)** The authors of both scriptures employ a somewhat apocalyptic or hidden or shrouded writing technique to convey their message. Initially, it appears that the prophets are speaking of the King of Tyre or the King of Babylon respectively. However, as the passages progress, it becomes apparent that the historical figures mentioned in the text could have in no way lived up to the descriptions and deeds mentioned by these prophets. As the description of this individual emerges it becomes clear that both prophets are speaking of Satan himself. **QUESTIONS**: What are some characteristics mentioned in the Ezekiel and Isaiah scriptures that lead us to believe the authors are not referring to some earthly king or ruler? How many times is the pronoun “I” used in the Isaiah text? – What does that say about Satan’s motives?

The text in Ezekiel emphasizes the pre-fallen beautiful appearance of Satan (Lucifer) and the Isaiah text confirms what that beauty led Satan to begin to feel within himself. I think it is important to inform you that “at the end of the day” when Satan completes pulling off his antics and shenanigans, he will always end up demanding a stage! One of Satan’s tactics is to redirect our focus from God and to make himself the center of attention and he doesn’t mind using you or me to accomplish that goal!

**Pride The Silent Killer**

The American Heart Association has called high blood pressure the silent killer because it often produces no obvious signs that something is wrong. Left undetected hypertension can wreak havoc in our cardiovascular system, kidneys and brain. In many ways, pride is just like this. Pride can enter a Christian’s spirit and go almost totally undetected because it has the capacity to mask itself as: self confidence, high self-esteem, dignity, independence and self assurance. Left untreated pride destroys are relationship with God by reducing the flow honor and glory due him and by minimizing or restricting the flow of the value of those around us. **QUESTION:** How is it that a person infected with pride is often oblivious of its presence while others can plainly see it? Like so many other physical diseases, the spiritual disease of pride may not always present itself in obvious ways. Here’s a quick pride test:

The **ME FIRST TEST**: How do you feel when another is promoted while you are overlooked? Or when another is honored for something you initiated or can do much better? It has been said that the *“hardest instrument to play in the orchestra is the second fiddle.”*

The **SINCERITY TEST**: We often say unflattering things about ourselves, but how do you feel when others say these kinds of things about us? *“Many a man declines an office, so he might be pressed a little harder to accept it.”*

The **CRITICISM TEST**: How do you respond to criticism of any kind? Do you immediately criticize the critic? Do you become defensive? Do you look for ways to quietly erode the critic’s reputation? *“Most of us would rather be ruin by praise than saved by criticism.”*

**The Cure:** First and foremost let’s established this fact; all of us have been infected by pride! – we couldn’t have sinned without the presence of pride. With that in mind, we can better affect a cure**. (A) Humility**: **(I Pet. 5:6)** God sees every picture that hangs on the walls of our imagination. **(B) Mortification**: **(Rom. 8:13)** A wise farmer cuts down the weeds while they are still young.

**(C) Contemplation**: **2 Cor. 3:18** Pride withers in the light of God’s infinite holiness.