

## I. Set Up

A. Welcome. Introduce self

B. This is second week of our fall series entitled Seven: Life Lessons from the Seven Deadly Sins. And the topic is pride.

C. There are many verses we could turn to to begin to center our thoughts. James 4:6 is short and to the point: God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. But I am going to read a brief story instead. It's found in Daniel 4:29 - 37

## II. Introduction

A. There are a few things I want to say about what you just saw. First, clearly I have no pride (or self-respect) if I am willing to make that big of a fool of myself in front of this many people. Or at least... that's what I'd like you to think.

B. Secondly, the sin most specifically on display in that video is vanity more than pride. They are related, but different. Vainglory is an "image is everything" mindset.<sup>1</sup> It's the desire for recognition and acclaim whether it's deserved or not. Vainglory flourishes in the celebrity culture in which we live. Garrison Keillor rightly accused himself of vainglory when he said:

B.1. I lust after recognition, I am desperate to win all the little merit badges and trinkets of my profession, and I am less real use in this world than any good cleaning lady.

C. Pride is related – they are both spiritual vices as opposed to physical ones<sup>2</sup> - but it's different.

C.1. People who are proud do not simply want to be viewed as important, they want to be important. People who are proud don't simply want the acclaim that comes with greatness, they want greatness. People who are proud want a world that pivots around them not God. At its core, pride is a self-orientation not a God-centered one.

D. Pride is the opposite of humility. Each of the Seven Deadly Sins – each of the Seven Deadly Vices – has at least one corresponding virtue. Pride is juxtaposed with humility and gentleness.

D.1. Humility is the noble choice to forgo your status, deploy your resources or use your influence for the good of others before yourself.<sup>34</sup> Pride is the opposite.

D.2. Humility is not low self-esteem.<sup>5</sup> Humility does not require us to hide our talents – to say that we are not good in something when we are. Being humble does not mean we cannot have strong opinions or that we should act like doormats. Humility does not require us to actively dislike ourselves. That is actually quite selfish. Loving yourself and hating yourself are not opposites. In both cases we are still quite consumed with ourselves. We are thinking about ourselves. Hating ourselves is more selfish than selfless. Part of the goal is to be self-forgetful not self-referential. Pride is the ultimate self-referential orientation.

D.3. Pride is seeking status beyond what God has granted us. It may look like Mohammad Ali's "I'm the greatest in the world" claims, but for cultural reasons it seldom does. Few openly, brashly talk like that today. It's not acceptable.

D.4. Pride is the excessive belief in one's own abilities that interferes with our recognition of the grace of God. Pride is working its evil ways whenever we place ourselves in God's place – when we retain for ourselves the ability to decide what's good and bad. When we become the definers of what's good. When our world revolves around us – which is pretty much always.

### III. Four Things to Understand About Pride

#### A. Our problems start here.<sup>6</sup>

A.1. Many (not all, but many) smart people believe that all our problems start here – that pride was the first wrong turn and remains the principle sin, the sin out of which all other sins flow.<sup>7</sup>

A.2. Those who advocate this position – as C.S. Lewis does in your reading. He says pride is, "the essential vice, the utmost evil. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that are mere fleabites in comparison. Pride leads to every other vice; it is the complete anti-God state of mind." Those who argue this way note that:

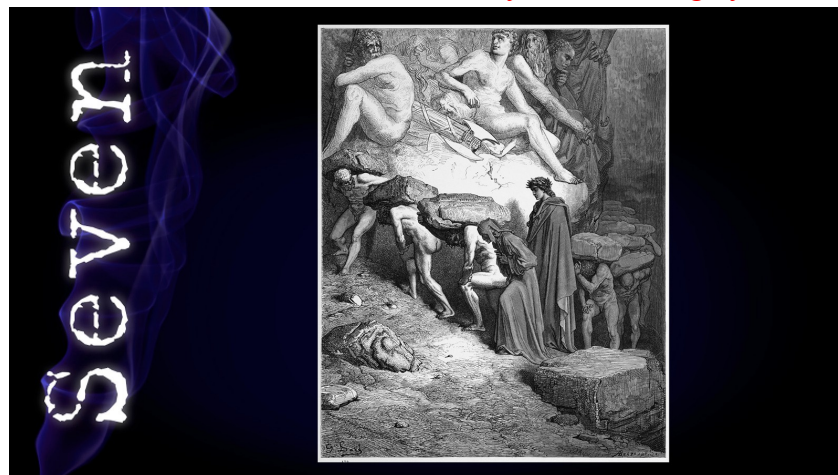
A.2.a) It's through pride that the devil becomes the devil. The report of Lucifer's fall, and that of the other angels, which is all pre-Genesis 3 activity, is traced back to pride. His desire to, "ascend to the heavens, raise his throne above the stars of God... to make himself like the Most High."<sup>8</sup>

A.2.b) That same self-promoting mindset is behind the events of Genesis 3, where mankind falls. They were enticed with the promise to, "be like God."

A.2.c) These observations are part of what lead Gregory the Great, the 6<sup>th</sup> century Bishop of Rome, to remove pride from the list initially drafted by Evagrius Ponticus a couple hundred years earlier, and place it as the foundation from which all sins emerge. (Picture of two trees)



A.2.d) This is also the view suggested by Dante in *The Divine Comedy*,<sup>9</sup> which describes Dante's supposed travels through the various realms of the dead. At one point he describes their descent down concentric layers of hell. There are nine levels, they sort of line up with the Seven Deadly Sins. At the bottom is treachery which is understood to be motivated by pride, and the punishment for this – each punishment is designed in light of the sin – the punishment for the proud is to be forced to walk (or crawl) with great weights on their back so they are forced to look down not up. We see that illustrated in this 19<sup>th</sup> century wood carving by Gustave Dore.



A.3. Point one, most theologians feel that our problems begin here. This is a foundational sin.

B. Second: Not everyone agrees.

B.1. Many think that pride is the principle sin, but some do not think it's a sin at all. The Romans and Greeks exalted pride, which they called honor. In fact, they saw humility as weakness – the appropriate mindset of a slave but not of a Roman citizen.

B.2. Friedrich Nietzsche, the 19<sup>th</sup> century German philosopher famous for declaring that God is dead, thought that same way. He argued for self-love, self-promotion at all costs.

B.3. As I mentioned in Men's Fraternity a couple days ago, Ayn Rand, the novelist famous for *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*, taught that humility was for fools. We should push ourselves to be our best and we should push ourselves to the front of the line – we should make sure others know how good we are.

B.4. Not long ago, John Frohnmayr, the retired chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, suggested that the list of Seven Deadly Sins be updated.<sup>10</sup> He argued that we need to stop being concerned about angering a deity and work harder to not anger each other. He also felt like envy was critical to keep capitalism going and that pride was a good thing. Many agree with him.

B.5. The church is hardly alone in saying pride is bad. In his book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins, the preeminent management and leadership thinker, argues that humility is one of the two characteristics that mark the very best companies.<sup>11</sup> The list of those who think pride is dangerous and humility is wise, beautiful and strategic is long. But not everyone agrees. Some think it should be celebrated.

C. **Third: Pride is insidious.**

C.1. Last week I suggested that one of the reasons you should be a part of this series is because sin is tricky, consequently you might not understand what you're up against quite as well as you think. Pride is a great example of this. It gets you going and coming. You cannot beat it. All you can do is admit it – confess it. Let me illustrate this.

C.2. I would imagine that over the last thirty years I've taught, preached or written about the dangers of pride – and advocated for humility – twenty times or more. In fact, when it comes to humility you might say that I'm an expert on the topic. I, of course, would never say that because I realize what that sounds like. But, let me be honest, I do sort of think it. I'm quite taken with what I know about humility. Hey, I actually think this is a good sermon! Now, this causes me no small amount of alarm and angst and leads me to wonder if I'm qualified to speak about pride when I'm so proud of what I'm saying about it. And it doesn't stop there. I'm actually proud of my distress – I'm quite taken with how deeply suspicious I am of my own motives.<sup>12</sup>

C.3. The challenges with pride go on in almost every direction. Humility is a shy virtue. As soon as you start to talk about it, it goes away.<sup>13</sup> Pride never does. It just adapts. It just finds another angle.

C.4. I learned early in ministry that I could never have totally pure motives. All I could do is confess that they were impure. In a similar way, I realize that I will seldom operate outside of the self-centered orientation that is, at its core, the definition of pride. All I can do is confess it and move on. It's insidious.

D. **Four: Pride is deadly.**

D.1. Some think the problem with pride is that it's ugly. That people who are full of themselves are hard to be around. Which is true. People who are proud – who are self-absorbed, people who think they are better than others – are jerks.<sup>14</sup> It may take a while for us to figure that out but people who try to force the world to revolve around them are either clueless or insecure. Neither is very attractive. Eventually that posture looks small and desperate.

D.1.a) A couple years ago, when Austin – our oldest son – was working at a Peace Corps volunteer in the Dominican Republic, Sheri and I went down to visit him and, rather than staying with him in the tool shed he was living in, we opted to stay at a nice resort about twenty minutes away.

D.1.b) And this resort had lots of exotic birds on the grounds: parrots in the trees, flamingos in the pond and a flock of peacocks that hung out right next to the food court. Well, apparently it was mating season because the male peacocks were doing their best to attract the attention of the females. They were fanning out all of their feathers and hopping around to try to stay in their line of sight. The first time I saw a male all fanned out I was quite impressed. I'd seen pictures before but never seen a live peacock on display. At first it was impressive. But as time went on it stopped being impressive and started looking desperate. These guys were strutting around saying "Look at me. Look at me" while the females were completely ignoring them. I tried coaching one of the guys, saying. "Dude, you are trying way too hard here. Subtle. You are embarrassing yourself."

D.1.c) I asked Sheri if she thought the guy was over the top and showing off, and I believe her words were, "Typical male."

D.1.d) So, I think we can all agree. Pride is poor form.<sup>15</sup>

D.2. And while we're here, we should note that pride is also dangerous.

D.2.a) Solomon makes this point several times in Proverbs.

(D.2.a.1) Proverbs 11:2 reads: When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

(D.2.a.2) Prv. 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

(D.2.a.3) Prv. 29:23: Pride brings a person low, but the lowly in spirit gain honor.

D.2.b) The suggestion is, pride sets us up to fall. And we see this in real life. The Titanic sank because of pride. If you read the promotional material for the ship you see the captain thought she was unsinkable. Not long before her ill-fated maiden voyage her captain, Edward Smith, said: "Modern shipbuilding in the 20<sup>th</sup> century renders sinking a near impossibility. 'I cannot imagine any condition which would cause a ship to founder. I cannot conceive of any vital disaster happening to this vessel. Modern shipbuilding has gone beyond that'"<sup>16</sup>

D.2.c) That attitude led him to take inappropriate risks: 1) He didn't have enough life boats on the ship for all the passengers;<sup>17</sup> 2) he didn't slow down after receiving transmissions from other ships stating that there were ice floes in the vicinity; 3) he didn't stop after he hit the iceberg, which led to her sinking more rapidly.<sup>18</sup>

D.3. Pride is ugly and it's dangerous. But I'm arguing that it's more than that. I'm claiming it's deadly.

D.3.a) It's deadly because it blinds us of our need for God. It turns us into Pharisees who rest in their own merit. It leads to a self-sufficiency that is opposed to the Gospel.

D.3.b) Remember the story Jesus tells about the tax collector and the Pharisee? Let me read it for you. It's found in Luke 18:9

(D.3.b.1) <sup>9</sup>To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: <sup>10</sup>“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup>The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup>I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

(D.3.b.2) <sup>13</sup>“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

(D.3.b.3) <sup>14</sup>“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”



D.3.c) **Picture: Here is another word carving rendition of it.** The man on the left is striking a posture of humility. The Pharisee on the right is strutting around like a peacock. And Jesus affirms the first. Jesus, who says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall inherit the Kingdom of God,” says the Pharisee – in spite of his great efforts to be good – is lost.



D.4. Pride keeps us from God. Pride keeps us from repenting. Pride keeps us from the Gospel. It's not just dangerous it's deadly.

D.5. In order to move towards God we have to start with an awareness that we are profoundly, deeply, grievously selfish and misguided. That we were created to love God and others. That God is first and others are second and we are third. We get that order wrong.

D.6. Our pride sends us down the wrong path. We need to understand that God loves us in spite of who we are not because of who we are and that God's great, unconditional love for us is all about God being great not that we are great.

IV. **How do we deal with our pride?** How do we step back from pride? How do we deal with this sin? There are a number of things we might do.

A. **Focus on God.** Enter into times of worship where you marvel at God. Read and engage with the passages of Scripture that describe Him – that reveal Him and His nature. We do not need to tear ourselves down, beat ourselves up, declare that we are pond scum as much as we need to focus on Him and allow His greatness to reframe our self-perception.<sup>19</sup>

B. **Listen to your critics.** We need to listen to our critics because they just may be right. Probably are at least partly right.<sup>20</sup> It's very natural to protect our heart from the pain of criticism. But at some level we need to take it in. We need a perspective outside our own to see who we really are. This can make you a much better person.<sup>21</sup>

C. **Humble ourselves.** We need to follow Christ's example and do the very things we think we are too good to do. In Philippians 2 Paul tells us:



C.1. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

C.2. <sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature<sup>[a]</sup> God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature<sup>[b]</sup> of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

D. Believe the Gospel. I want to emphasize two ways forward today. The first three apply but I suspect these last two may be most helpful. Believe the Gospel!

D.1. Tim Keller wrote: “The gospel destroys pride, because it tells us we are so lost that Jesus had to die for us.... The Gospel also destroys fearfulness, because it tells us that nothing we can do will exhaust his love for us. The gospel, if it is really believed, removes neediness – the need to be constantly respected, appreciated, and well regarded; the need to have everything in your life go well; the need to have power over others. All of these great, deep needs continue to control you only because the concept of the glorious God delighting in you with all His being is just that – a concept and nothing more. Our hearts don’t believe it, so they operate in default mode. Paul is saying that if you want to really change, you must let the gospel teach you – that is to train, discipline, coach you – over a period of time. You must let the gospel argue with you. You must let the gospel sink down deeply into your heart, until it changes your motivation and views and attitudes.”<sup>22</sup>

D.2. Believe the Gospel – that is, that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. God is the star. We are broken. We are not the hero of the story. There is no room for pride.

E. Finally, Confess your sins. The final way to break our pride is to confess that we are broken – is to agree with God that we are sinful and to ask for his mercy and favor. This ongoing habit of naming our sins and asking God for forgiveness is a nonnegotiable part of moving forward.

E.1. In I John 1 we read: <sup>8</sup> If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

E.2. If we claim to be without sin – if we are so proud that we think God should love us because of our goodness – we are calling God a liar. That is not the posture of a child of God.

E.3. I invite you to confess your sin, to repent of your pride, to acknowledge that the self-orientation you have runs so deep that you need God to climb back to the only sane view of reality – that God, not you – belongs at the center.

F. We are going to close with a time of confession. We are going to take a moment to confess our self-sufficiency and desire for control. To respond together in an act of repentance, as a community and as an anti-pride admission of sin.

G. I will prompt you to privately reflect on your sin in a particular area. After a brief moment of silence I'll lead us in prayer. That prayer will end with, "Lord have mercy upon us." Your response will be, "Lord, forgive us for our pride." I will then move us into the next area for prayer.

V. Let's pray.

A. I invite you to take a moment to confess your self-sufficiency and desire for control

A.1. Leader: "Lord, we confess that we often depend more on our own abilities and adequacy than in Yours. We confess that we are more comfortable when we feel that we are in control of our lives, than when we relinquish that control to You. Lord have mercy on us"

A.2. People: "Lord, forgive us for our pride."

B. Let's take a moment to confess our self promotion, and desire for our own gain

B.1. "Lord we confess that we do not 'consider the needs of others above our own'. We confess that we often think of how we will benefit from a relationship, or an action, rather than simply loving others. We confess that we are often selfish with our time, with our money, with our possessions, rather than being open handed and generous. Lord have mercy on us"

B.2. People: "Lord, forgive us for our pride."

C. Let's take a moment to confess the ways that we are concerned with image, with how we are perceived by others.

C.1. “Lord, we confess that we think too much about our image, about what others think of us. We confess that we want to be seen as skilled, accomplished, together, stylish, cool, confident, successful. We confess that we long for recognition, respect, and the approval of others, instead of simply being secure in Your love for us and in our identity as Your children. Lord have mercy on us”

C.2. People: “Lord, forgive us for our pride.”

D. Let’s take a moment to confess our defensiveness and self preservation

D.1. “Lord we confess that we often think we are the ones that know best. That our position is the right one, rather than being open to listen to others’ ideas. We confess that we defend ourselves when criticized rather than considering how we can grow. Lord have mercy on us”

D.2. People: “Lord, forgive us for our pride.”

E. Let’s take a moment to confess any false humility or self hatred

E.1. “Lord we confess that we dwell too much on our mistakes, thinking about how it made us look in the eyes of others. We do not give *ourselves* the grace that You have freely lavished on us. Lord have mercy on us”

E.2. People: “Lord, forgive us for our pride.”

## VI. Announcements / Benediction

A. Jesus was the most humble person ever. We are called to follow his example. Work towards a God-centered universe not a self-centered one. And consider others more important than yourselves. This is the place to start.

B. As is prayer. If you would like to pray with people....

C. Finally, your worship folder highlights a number of upcoming events and the web site has lots more information on everything. I want to be sure you know that in the lobby today you can sign up for:

C.1. Next Saturday’s BBQ. This is a great way to meet people. We’ll be grilling brats, burgers, and hot dogs and have ice cream and a fire pit outside for making s’mores. We’ll even have special kids area & an illusionist (don’t say magician, please) is coming for a special show and to make balloon animals for the kids.

C.2. We have a bus tour of Lake Country after church on Oct. 13<sup>th</sup>. This is to see ministry opportunities that are all around us.

## VII. Quotes

- A. No sooner do we believe that God loves us than there is an impulse to believe that He does so, not because He is love, but because we are intrinsically lovable. C.S. Lewis
- B. Vanity is so anchored in the heart of man that ... those who write against it want to have the glory of having written well; and those who read it desire the glory of having read it. Blasé Pascal
- C. It is much easier for me to imagine a praying murderer, a praying prostitute, than a vain person praying. Nothing is so at odds with prayer as vanity. Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- D. The true way to be humble is not to stoop until you are smaller than yourself, but to stand at your real height against some higher nature that will show you what the real smallness of your greatness is. Phillips Brooks
- E. Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven. John Milton's depiction of pride.
- F.

1 In *Glittering Vices*, Rebecca DeYoung describes vainglory as the “excessive and disordered desire for recognition and approval of others.”

2 Spiritual vices have a spiritual rather than a bodily good as the object of their disordered love.

3 I like the definition put forward by John Dickson in his book *Humilitas*. A few years ago Dr. Dickson, who has a PhD in ancient history and who serves as a pastor in Sydney, Australia, was involved in a study with other ancient historians designed to determine the source of “the humility revolution” that occurred in the first century. As I note later in the sermon, under the Greeks and Romans, humility was despised. Honor was the most important thing. You were expected to be proud of your accomplishments. But something happened to change all of that. The question this group set out to determine was, what? Dickson notes that the date of the humility revolution was easy to establish. “You just read the writings of the ancient world and identify the first time humility and greatness were ever linked – that connection was made in Jesus.” Interestingly, they felt that it was not his teaching as much as it was his crucifixion. Crucifixion was the worst way to die at the time. It was a heinous form of death that Roman authors would not even write about it. The crucifixion of Christ initially presented the followers of Christ with a massive problem. They were forced to go in one of two directions: To admit that Jesus was not as great as they thought because no great person could be crucified, or to redefine greatness. They decided that they had to rethink greatness. That if the greatest man ever known had willingly died as he had, then greatness must exist when people sacrifice for others. Today almost everyone admires humility. This is just one of the many ways Jesus changed the world. This does not mean that you have to be a Christian to be humble or appreciate it. Nor does it guarantee that those who follow Christ are humble. But humility is a Christian virtue and it has shaped western culture.

4 You’ll note a couple things here. First, this definition assumes a certain dignity among those acting in humility. They are not “lesser people” who simply know their place. The exact opposite is true. They are operating out of a position of strength. Second, you’ll notice that humility has an active quality about it. You are not being humble if you simply remain silent – i.e., if you fail to assert yourself or don’t brag about your accomplishments. Not talking about yourself is modesty but it is not humility. Humility is actively redirecting your power – your assets – for someone else. It is much more about how we treat others than it is about how we think about ourselves. (See Dickson, p. 24)

5 Pride is not self-esteem. As the JB Philippi’s translation of the prayer of confession says: We need a sane estimate of ourselves.

6 Pride is the ground in which all other sins grow, and the parent from which all other sins come.” William Barclay.

7 Discussions of the Seven Deadly Sins generally either start or end with pride because it’s in a class all its own.

8 Isaiah 14, which is ostensibly a report of the King of Babylon and an allusion to the arch-angel we now refer to as Satan, reads: “You said in your heart, “I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.”

9 Years ago there was a list of books most likely to be bought and not read. Salmon Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* was first on the list. I tried three times to read Rushdie’s book and got nowhere. But I still think Dante’s epic 14<sup>th</sup> century poem should rank higher on the list. Few make it through the 14,000 plus lines of verse.

10 Frohnmayer’s revised list of Deadly Sins includes: distraction (think pervasive electronic devices), selfishness (think reality television), apathy (think nonvoters), dishonesty (think Wall Street), hypocrisy (“Americans still think we are exceptional”), cowardice (think laughing at a friend’s racist joke) and ignorance (think talk shows).

11 We were surprised, shocked really, to discover the type of leadership required for turning a good company into a great one. Compared to high-profile leaders with big personalities who make headlines and become celebrities, the good-to-great leaders seem to have come from Mars. Self-effacing, quiet, reserved even shy – these leaders are a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will. They are more like Lincoln and Socrates than Patton or Caesar. Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap ... and Others Don’t* (New York: Harper Business, 2001), 13. Also, John P. Cotter tracked careers of 115 students from HBS. Marcell stood out. Average student. But was incredible leader. Thought it must have been a lucky break. After analysis and interview realized it was his humility. “Confronting his mistakes, Marcell minimized the arrogant attitudes that often accompany success. With a relatively humble view of himself, he watched more closely and listened more carefully than did most others.”

12 Can someone actually think they are qualified to speak on humility? I mean, if I think I’m an expert on humility that almost certainly means that I’m not. But would you want to hear from someone who didn’t think they were qualified? Because, while claiming to be humble likely means you are not, the opposite is not true. Not thinking you are humble doesn’t mean that you are. You might be right. You might not be humble. Both the humble and the arrogant are likely to think they are humble.

13 About all I can say by set up is, I did not entitle this sermon, “Humility and How I Achieved It.” And, with the possible exception of my wife, few people think I am less qualified to speak on this topic than I do. John Dickson writes about the paradoxes that plague anyone attempting to write or speak about humility in his very good book, *Humilitas*, from which I have borrowed heavily. Dickson is well aware of the challenges. A friend of mine – who does not lack ego-strength – was goaded into studying humility by many of his friends. He did, only later to claim that I should borrow his notes on humility because he had done such a good job compiling them.

14 People who think they are great treat others as props to their own life. They are, by definition, not as important. This is offensive. Humility – the opposite of pride – is about actively redirecting your power, assets, attention to someone else. It’s much more about how we treat others than about how we treat ourselves. Pride leads us to ignore or look down on others.

15 Correspondingly, humility is beautiful. We are more attracted to the great who are humble than to the great who want us to know how great they are. People who brag end up looking small. People who are great who act small look big – in fact, they look bigger. I read a story the other day about another man who was humble – and as a result, who made you like him more. He was a black man sitting in the back of a bus in the middle of the last century when three young white boys got on and started to taunt him. They mocked him. Threatened him. Said they were going to beat him up. He said nothing. Rode quietly to his destination and then got up to get off. As he did he took out his card and handed it to one of them. It said, Joe Lewis, professional boxer. It might have said, “Joe Lewis, greatest fighter of all time.” Lewis – AKA, the Brown Bomber, was the heavyweight champion of the world for 12 years. Experts say that despite Mohammad Ali’s claims to be the greatest, Lewis was probably the greatest fighter of all time. His punch was supposedly so powerful he could knock out a horse. He would have destroyed those punks. The fact that he did not – the fact that he actually acted in their best interest – makes us like him more. Humility is beautiful.

16 Kaylor

17 Harland and Wolff, the parent company of the White Star Line, had suggested using a different kind of davit (the small crane used to launch lifeboats) in the ship’s design, which would have allowed *Titanic* to carry 48 lifeboats with more than enough room for passengers and crew. But while the White Star Line spared no expense in the ship’s amenities for its wealthy passengers, the company cut costs by mounting only 20 lifeboats on *Titanic* — only enough for 52% of the people on board.

18 J. Bruce Ismay, the chairman of the White Star Line, was on the voyage, and some reports say he persuaded Captain Smith to keep sailing despite the hole in the ship’s hull, sinking her faster than if she had stood still. Had *Titanic* stopped at the point of impact, the eventual rescue ship, *Carpathia*, may have arrived in time to transfer passengers and crew without loss of life. Ismay was widely criticized for making it to a lifeboat, while many others perished.

19 In the City of God, Augustine wrote that everyone belongs to one of two cities: the City of God, which consists of those who “love God to the despising of self,” or the City of Man, populated by those who “love self to the despising of God.”

20 All leaders, and especially Christian leaders, must be on guard against this inevitable temptation and this terrible sin. It is natural, when under criticism, to shield your heart from pain by belittling the critics in your mind. ‘You stupid idiots.’ Even if you don’t speak outwardly to people like Moses did, you do so inwardly. That will lead to self-absorption, self-pity, maybe even delusions of grandeur, but the great sin is that the growth of inner disdain leads to pride and a loss of humble reliance on God’s grace. Moses treated God with contempt when he became contemptuous toward his people. This is what leaders face. Is there any hope for us? Yes, because we are in a better position than Moses was for understanding the grace of God. Don Carson writes: ‘In light of 1 Corinthians 10:4, which shows Christ to be the antitype of the rock, it is hard to resist the conclusion that the reason God had insisted the rock be struck in Exodus 17:1–7, and forbids it here, is that he perceives a wonderful opportunity to make a symbol-laden point: the ultimate Rock, from whom life-giving streams flow, is struck once, and no more.’ Tim Keller



21 As a pastor I've learned that devastating criticism presents us with an inflexion point – that there is great potential for good or for ill. People do not stay in that spot forever. They move through it and come out the other side better or worse. There is great spiritual opportunity at these moments. But being “humbled” doesn't mean that you are humble, because the terms are actually different. They have the same Latin root – *humilitas* – but they are very different words.

22 The quote is by Tim Keller, who also said: It is the normal state of the human heart to try to build its identity around something besides God. Spiritual pride is the illusion that we are competent to run our own lives, achieve our own sense of self-worth and find a purpose big enough to give us meaning in life without God. Søren Kierkegaard says that the normal human ego is built on something besides God. It searches for something that will give it a sense of worth, a sense of specialness and a sense of purpose and builds itself on that. And, of course, as we are often reminded, if you try to put anything in the middle of the place that was originally made of God, it is going to be too small. It is going to rattle around in there.