

The Counseling Solutions Group, Inc
Guarding the Heart

Proverbs 4:23

Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.

- I. **The Problem:** Pride¹
- II. **The Purpose:** To develop a systematic approach that will assist the counselee in overcoming the sin of pride. The focus of this project will cover the spiritual, educational, and practical aspects.
- III. **The Project:** In order to get the most out of this project, read it completely and carefully before beginning the first assignment. The assignments are throughout the project, so it would be best to highlight the assignments as you come to them in your initial reading. After the initial reading, go back and begin the highlighted homework assignments.

This topical study will incorporate the model in 2 Timothy 3:16: **Teach, Rebuke, Correct, and Train.**

Teaching and Rebuking

Pride is the number one enemy in the counseling office. It brought Lucifer down and it is the plague that keeps people in the ditches of life. There is an inherent danger with pride: primarily, knowledge.

- ◆ Knowledge without humility makes one arrogant. Sometimes with the acquiring of knowledge, we forget from where it came. It is easy to feel good about yourself as you begin to master some of the principles in the Bible. With much learning comes greater susceptibility to pride. Christians can spend years learning principles, technique, models, plans, ideas, philosophies and methods. Without understanding God's grace in the sense that all we have come from him, we can become lifted up in pride. Typically this kind of attitude is subtle. The world, flesh and the devil does not always tempt us in overt ways. It is so subtle that you can drift unknowingly. Some of the proudest people you will ever meet are Christians. Pride, like death, does not discriminate. Its seeping influence winds into the heart of any person of any stature or background.

The most profound outworking of pride is articulated in the statement, "I don't need God." Or, "I can do this without God's help." That is what pride is: *without God*. With

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much learning a person is in peril of drifting from the humility that brought him to the Savior initially. Christians, be careful!

Identifying and Dealing with Heart Attitudes

I. Assessing the Situation

A. Pride is the root to a sinful heart. The greatest sin struggle that a Christian will be confronted with will be pride. There are two primary reasons for this.

1. Wrong view of God

We cannot sin without drifting from God. God, sin, and fellowship with Him do not go together. If you sin, you drift from God. This is an unalterable law. A person who drifts from God has forgotten, does not know, or has obscured his view of who God is. There is a skewing of his/her working theology. Eve had an awesome working theology. Then something entered the picture that changed the image. Her view of God was penetrated and altered. When her theology altered, her life patterns took a turn for the worse.

2. Wrong view of self

People are not empty cups. If you drift from God (take Him out of the picture) then you must replace Him with something else. It has never been stated better than when Tedd Tripp said, "The question is never will we worship, but the question is always, 'What will we worship?'" We are born worshippers. We will worship someone or something. If you drift from God, chances are good that you will begin a form of self-worship. You cannot sin and worship God at the same time.

In Eve's case, she became the determination of what was right and wrong. She based her experience and circumstances upon her opinions and determined the way she ought to go based on those determinations. She had a wrong view of God and a wrong view of self. Whenever our thoughts, ideas, and experiences become the benchmark for truth, we have a wrong view of self and God.

B. Thinking that you can live a Christian life, practically, without the need of the Holy Spirit.

The next mile-marker in the drift as your view of God and self alters is the devastating thought that you can live without God.

C. Learning great techniques can be a delusion.

We should never stop learning. We should spend our lives sounding the depths of God's Word, ever learning and ever growing. Peter told us to grow in grace and knowledge of God. Growth is not merely an academic pursuit. Growth is also a pursuit in grace.

The dangers are obvious. Typically, the more men get, regardless of what it is, the more susceptible they become to pride and all its accompaniments.

D. Having your own desire to ‘be like God’ idol of the heart nurtured by the praise of men.

There is a desire within every bosom to be like God. We would, if we could, destroy the throne. We would attack God, ascend to the heights, and secure the kingdom for ourselves. This truth would shock some people.

Often in counseling (and other venues) people categorize sin. They are aghast at homosexuality, but they are gossips. They condemn the pornographer, but they are loyal only to themselves. They accuse the adulterer, but they break the law by speeding. It is true that consequences for sin varies from sin to sin. There is no argument here. But, still yet, sin is sin! If you break one law, you are guilty of them all. The truth is you do not have to break any law. You are still guilty. We are not sinners because we sin. We sin because we are sinners. We’re all messed up!

Poor intricated soul! Riddling, perplexed, labyrinthical soul! –John Donne

Paul said that we dare not make ourselves of the number. The number that measures themselves by themselves and compares themselves among themselves. He said that only fools do this. (2 Corinthians 10:12)

Hence that dread and amazement with which, as Scripture uniformly relates, holy men were struck and overwhelmed whenever they beheld the presence of God...Men are never duly touched and impressed with a conviction of their insignificance, until they have contrasted themselves with the majesty of God.
–John Calvin

Once you get a clear picture in your mind of your own sinfulness and insignificance, then people who sin against you (or those who sin period) will not be a big problem. –RLT

The bigger your God is, the more problems will be swallowed up by Him. –RLT

E. Having other idols nurtured:

When you get to the root problem (pride), you may find more than one idol in the heart. Calvin said that our hearts are like idol factories. It is sort of like window-shopping. We shop, look, like, buy, and go to the next window. Idols are odd creatures. They are never satisfied and will literally compete for ruler-ship of your heart. Even the person may enjoy such competitive sport by swapping idols from time to time.

Some of the more common idols are:

Pleasure	Comfort	Power	Intimacy
Control	Authoritative	Self (ego)	Manipulative
Bizarre cravings	Fear	Pain	Forms of lust

You must remember that no idol is healthy. People typically do not see fear and pain as an idol. They understand why a person will worship pleasure, comfort, and power but not pain. It does not matter what idol you worship, whether it feels good or not, the end-result is separation from God. As for pain and fear, some people get their identity from living in a state of pain or fear. Some people thrive on a crisis. I have met severely abused counselees (sexually, physically, or verbally), who have learned that particular environment and as an adult, they are more content being miserable than being free. Freedom can be a scary proposition for some people.

II. Familiarizing Yourself with the Relevant Scriptures

A. From the Old Testament

In order to understand any problem, you must go to God's Word to find out what He says about it. A study of some passages dealing with the specific issue of pride would be in order. You want to give your counselee an assignment regarding these passages.

- ◆ Write out the verses in longhand.
- ◆ Write out what the verse means.
- ◆ Write out what the verse means to you.
- ◆ Write out a one to two sentence application of the verse/passage to your life. The application should be in the form of an action plan. It must be specific and concrete.

Example:

1. Genesis 3:5—I can be like God!

- ◆ *For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*
- ◆ Satan was tempting Eve *away from God's Word* and into a form of self-centered introspection that stirred up a desire to satisfy ungodly cravings.
- ◆ I have ungodly cravings for lust and power in my life.
- ◆ I am going to make a list of as many verses I can find on the holiness of God and begin memorizing one a week for an indefinite period. I am going to tell a friend, and get him to hold me accountable. Then I am going to share the truth of the verse I am meditating/memorizing with at least one person a week.

Proverbs 3:34

Proverbs 6:16-19

Proverbs 8:13

Proverbs 11:2	Proverbs 13:10	Proverbs 16:5
Proverbs 21:24	Isaiah 14:12-14	Dan. 4ff
Isaiah 57:15		

B. From the New Testament

Acts 12:20-23	Romans 12:3	Eph. 4:1-3
Phil. 2:3-10	James 4:1-10	1 Peter 5:5-7
Matthew 11:28-30	Jn. 13	2 Cor. 12:7-10

III. Isolating the Main Heart Attitude

A. The Epidemic Vice

As you begin to reflect upon your own pride, you will learn of the epidemic proportions in which it permeates. Not epidemically from a societal perspective, though that is certainly true, but epidemically regarding total permeation of the person's being.

B. The Problem

Pride is the number one sin issue in counseling. A careful counselor should not say this right off the bat however. For example, if a lady comes in and is suffering under imaginable pain and suffering, you do not tell her that she is full of pride. That would be ignorant. You would cry with her. If you were a female counselor, you would go to her and hold her for awhile. You would pray and cry some more.

Even in the most extreme circumstances God's plan is at work. Suffering, no matter how painful is a stewardship issue. Suffering allowed by God, is part of His plan to His children. The biblical record is clear. You can study any life in Scripture and see a merciful, loving, compassionate, heavenly Father bringing glory to Himself through some of the most horrific circumstances. Joseph, Job, David, Elijah, and Jeremiah testify to the necessity of suffering. They would tell us today, in various ways, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." –Genesis 50:20. God accomplishes His purposes through this crucible.

It pleased the Lord to bruise (crush) Him. –Isaiah

The prophet was speaking of God's pleasure in crushing His Son. The apex of all suffering was the day God died on the cross.

It may not be wise to tell a counselee that pride is a reason they cannot come to terms with the pain and suffering in their life. Not in the beginning anyway. If a person never comes to grips with the suffering in their life, then there is a pride issue to discuss. There

is no route around this truth. Therefore, you must take deliberate time to teach them God's sovereignty, love, mercy, plan, eternity, hope, and more. **Knowing God intimately is the only cure for pain and suffering.** That does not mean the pain and suffering will go away. It does mean you can now survive in the crucible. Pride is the last obstacle to this freedom.

C. Scriptural Terms.

1. The Hebrew has several words that describe the word pride: arrogant, boastful, lifted up.
2. The Greek has its words as well: magnify, haughty, blindness: to envelop in smoke.

D. A succinct definition for pride is – To be high and blind.

E. There are scores of characteristics for blindness. Read the list. See if you can find yourself. Circle all of the characteristics that apply to you.

Shyness, being blind, unthankful, critical, complaining, discontent, angry, grumble, impatient, brags, seeks independence, difficult to work under someone else, needs to be better than others, viewing yourself in terms of accomplishment, cutting oneself down, blames themselves for what is not their fault, monopolizing the conversation, too rigid, stubborn or headstrong, doesn't depend on others, easily upset, devastated by criticism, doesn't listen very well, sarcastic, a person who needs to be praised and coaxed often, needs praise, jealous, envious, covetousness, fear of others, deceitful, defensive, trivializing and rationalizing your faults, justifying sin, judging others by self-made standards (raising or lowering God's standards), rarely asking for forgiveness from God or others, unbelief, lack of biblical praying, lack of service to other people, lack of deeds of love, touchiness, irritableness, lack of close friends (tends to alienate other people), rarely concerned about the concern of others, voices preferences when not asked (and does it without compassion), unapproachableness, will criticize when not around because they aren't there to serve, or they volunteer for the up front positions, doesn't learn from trials and afflictions.

IV.A Few Examples

We have looked at the reason for the study. We then looked at the dominating heart attitude of a wrong view of God and self. We studied other heart attitudes like the various accompanying idols. We looked at various Scripture references and worked through some action plans. We looked up some Hebrew and Greek words for pride, gave it a definition and identified several characteristics of how pride works out in our lives. Now we need to look at some of the biblical characters that allowed this seepage to control their heartstrings.

For each of the Bible people, write out a homework assignment following a similar format used for the verses dealing with pride on page 81 and 82.

A. David

◆ What did he do?

David committed adultery with Bathsheba.

◆ What does it mean?

It means many things. He sinned against God, his wife, children, Uriah, and country. He walked away from God. He needs to seek forgiveness from many people. There will be consequences for his sinfulness.

◆ How have you committed a similar sin?

I have lusted toward other women.

◆ What specifically will you do about it?

I will confess the sin of lust to God and seek His forgiveness. As part of my repentance, I will find an accountability partner and begin meeting with him once a week. Together, we will begin working on spiritual projects.

Annaias and Sapphria

Peter

Manassah

Achan

Nebuchadnezzar

Eve

Correction and Training in Righteousness

V. The Endangered Virtue

A. The Need: humility

This is a mystery: how can you humble yourself at the cross and live your whole life in a proud attitude after the cross. It appears to be a contradiction that would or could indicate lack of salvation.

B. Scripture Terms

1. The Hebrew uses such terms as *opress*, *crouch*, *bow down* and *grieve*. All of these words refer to the attitude of the mind.
2. The Greek word *tapeinos* means the lowest of the low. Jesus took this term and raised it to the highest position: the virtue of the believer.
 - a. The Greeks struggled with *tapeinos*. It was a word to be despised. It means lowly in mindset.
 - b. A servant's mindset: the virtue of the believer.

- c. Other aspects of the word are to yield, to be considerate, to give way. It is a deep sense of one's littleness.

C. Quotes:

1. An angel is a knowledgeable creature, but take away humility and he is a devil. – Watson
2. Self-seeking blinds the soul to where it can't see the beauty of Christ –Brooks
3. The donkey who thought the shouts and palms were for him rather than the Christ he carried. – Chesterton
4. Everything in the preaching of the Word comes across and against the minds of proud men. –Owen

Homework: From what you have learned thus far, list on a separate paper 30 specific ways in which a *lack of humility* has worked itself out into your daily practical life.

D. A Definition

We know what pride is and how it works out in our lives, now let us take a closer look at humility and see how it works out in our lives. These definitions are general, you will have the opportunity to be more specific and personal.

1. Humility is evident when you are consumed with Christ and loving others primarily.
2. Humility is evident when you know how lowly you really are before God.
3. Humility is evident when this lowliness is accompanied with joy and bliss.
4. Humility is evident when you are most satisfied in glorifying your God.
5. Humility is evident when you have a daily mindset that from God, to God, and through (by) God belong all things. –Romans 11:36

Homework: Working from the five definitions above, list on a separate sheet of paper, one specific, practical, obstacle (per definition) that prevents this Christlike quality to manifest itself in your life.

VI. Several Characteristics

1. A humble believer will be focusing on Jesus Christ and love Him supremely. (Phil. 1:21; 3:10).
2. A humble believer will be overwhelmed at God's goodness and therefore will overflow with thankfulness for all things (Romans 11:33-12:2).
3. A humble believer will be communing with God and be extremely dependent upon God in prayer (1 Thess. 5:17).
4. A humble believer will be serving others (Mark 10:45; Romans 12:3ff; Phil. 2:1-11).
5. A humble believer will be experiencing God's power by obeying God's revealed will in all things (Jn. 14:21; Phil. 4:13; Col. 1:9-12).
6. A humble believer will be learning from others (Acts 17:10-15).
7. A humble believer will be encouraging others (Heb. 10:24-25).
8. A humble believer will be pursuing integrity in his life (1 Tim. 4:16).
9. A humble believer will be denying himself (Lk. 9:23f; 14:25-35).
10. A humble believer will think rightly about himself while he is bowed low before God and others (Romans 12:3).

Homework: For each of the characteristics listed above write out one specific, practical action you can begin to practice in your life. This next week, write out beside each item what you did and the response from the one you served.

This final session is a microcosm of the macrocosm. We have approached the topic of pride using the model of Teaching, Reproving, Correcting, and Training. In this last section, we are going to do a smaller version of that model.

Additional Homework

TEACHING

VII. Replacing Heart Attitudes

- A. **The use of biblical instruction is to teach us what is right. This section (Replacing Heart Attitudes) is a five-week devotion. Each number has five assignments to be**

completed weekly. It would be better to do one assignment per day for five days in order to develop consistency in your devotion to God.

1. Study five passages on the character of God (e.g. Ps. 139; Isa. 40). Write a one-page journal on what you learned about God's character. His character may include His holiness, love, mercy, forgiveness, and patience. The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 include some of God's characteristics. The passages you study should be action passages where God is doing something or someone is describing the actions of God.
2. Study passages on Pride/Humility (e.g. Prov. 6; Phil. 2). Write a one-page journal on five pride or humility passages. Be specific regarding yourself. Do not be vague or write in generalities.
3. Study biblical examples of both – pride and humility (e.g. Dan. 4; Lk. 18:9-14; Jn. 3:25-30; Acts 12:20-24). Write a one-page journal on what you learned concerning five biblical characters who exercised either pride or humility.
4. Especially focus on the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 2). Write a one-page journal answering the following questions regarding five different scenes from his life. What did he do? Why do you think he did it? What was the result of what he did? What kind of sacrifice did he make?
5. Seriously meditate on the brevity of life (Jas. 1:9-11). Meditate this week on the brevity of life. From your meditations develop five ideas or thoughts regarding the brevity of life. Write a one-page journal, each day, for each idea or thought.

REBUKE, REPROVE or CONVICTION

B. The use of biblical reproof teaches us what is wrong. For this section, briefly write out the answers to the following questions.

1. Realize that God calls it sin – Prov. 21:4.
 - ◆ What does God call sin?
 - ◆ Why does He call it sin?
 - ◆ What are the results of a person who refuses acknowledge this sin?
2. Realize that God hates it – Prov. 6:16-17; 16:5.
 - ◆ Give five reasons why you believe God hates the sin of pride.
3. Realize that God removes it from His presence – Ps. 5:5; 138:6; Job 35:12.

- ◆ Write a one-page journal entry on how to remove pride from your presence.
4. Realize that God promises to judge it – Job 35:12; Ps. 31:23; Prov. 15:25; Isa. 2:12; Jas. 4:6.
 - ◆ List five promises regarding judgement in these verses.
 5. Realize that a person may need to stay here (reproof) a little longer than you might think (Job 38 – 42).
 - ◆ Read these chapters everyday for one week (seven days). Meditate upon them.
 6. Interview other honest friends.
 - ◆ Ask five people how they have seen pride in your life. Write down what each one of them says to you. Ask them to pray with you at that time.
 7. Acknowledge the seriousness of it, confessing it as sin (1 Jn. 1:9).
 - ◆ From the work you have completed thus far, make a complete sin list of all of the areas you can think of where pride has manifested itself in your life. Write it out specifically.
 8. Ask forgiveness and repent (Ps. 51).
 - ◆ Go to God (and others if necessary) and specifically ask forgiveness.

CORRECTION

C. The use of biblical correction is teaching us how to make it right. Study the passages listed in this section and write out a one-page journal entry regarding each topic. You may enlist the help of a friend.

1. At the level of motives (1 Cor. 8, 10).
2. At the level of thoughts (Rom. 12:3).
3. At the level of our speech (Jn. 8:28-9; Eph. 4:25-32).
4. At the level of our will (Lk. 22:42; Jn. 8:28-9).
5. At the level of deeds (Jn. 8:28-9; 1 Cor. 8, 10).

TRAINING in RIGHTEOUS DISCIPLINE LIVING

D. The use of biblical training toward righteousness teaches us how to persevere and keep it right.

1. One may want to enlist the help of other godly believers.
2. Have the mindset that this is for the rest of your life.
3. Be discipling others in the same process.
4. Invite the input of others close to you.
5. Continue to study the character of God.
 - ◆ Read *The Holiness of God* by R. C. Sproul. Your Bible and book reading should never stop for the rest of your life. Do not stop growing!
 - ◆ Continue Bible memorization. A good list would be the verses in this workshop. Put them on index cards and memorize them.
 - ◆ Continue meeting with your accountability partner weekly.
 - ◆ Find a person you can disciple.
 - ◆ Meet with your counselor monthly for awhile for updates.