

Power

Part 1 of the series: PMS (Power, Money and Sex)

1 John 2:15-17

Sunday, February 24, 2008

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Introduction: A mother told her son not to go swimming. However, when he came into the house his mother noticed that his hair and bathing suit were wet. "Johnnie," his mother scolded, "I told you not to go swimming." "I couldn't help it mom," he defended himself. "The water looked so good." "But why did you take your bathing suit with you?" The kid replied, "In case I was tempted."

The issue is not if we will be tempted but when. Temptation is an inevitable part of life. Regardless of how long you have followed Christ or how spiritually mature you are you will never outgrow temptation. It will be with you for a lifetime. In James chapter one we see that temptation comes when we are drawn away by our own lusts and desires and enticed. The good news about our temptations is they haven't changed since the beginning of creation. Satan doesn't have any new tricks up his sleeve. He is entirely predictable. Every temptation that we have ever or will ever face in life can be classified into three distinct categories: the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life.

- The lust of the eyes is the desire to have whatever you see. You see and you want it. This is called materialism.
- The lust of the flesh is the desire to feel good. You lust for that which makes your flesh feel good. This is called hedonism. Our generation has bought into this lie hook, line and sinker. The mantra of this generation is "If it feels good do it."
- The pride of life is the desire for power and control. It is the desire to be. This is called egotism.

It's interesting to note that the very first temptation that mankind faced involved each of these three elements. The fruit that Satan offered to Eve was pleasing to the eye and felt good to the flesh and promised the wisdom and power to become a god.

When Jesus was in the wilderness Satan tempted Him with the same three temptations. The lust of the eye – I will give you all the kingdoms of the world if you worship me. The lust of the flesh – If you are God turn these stones into bread. The pride of life - Jump off the

pinnacle of the Temple and prove you are God. So when Satan tempts you it is going to be in one of these three areas.

Today I want to talk to you about the pride of life. The pride of life is arrogance, haughtiness and boasting about what one has accomplished. It is taking credit for everything you have achieved in life. It is the craving and thirst for status, applause and recognition. It is the temptation to be. It's believing and acting as if it's all about you. In its basest form the pride of life is about power. Power is seeking to be in control; to be in control of your life, your finances, your relationships, your circumstances and your destiny. It's living as if you are a god. When we are in control we feel safe and secure. We rebel against giving up control of our lives. This is why faith is so difficult for some people. Faith requires that we relinquish control of our lives and that takes away our power. Power is so dangerous because it becomes all consuming.

Consider the depths to which people will descend to gain their 15 minutes of fame. People will do anything and everything no matter how degrading or dehumanizing. All you have to do is watch a few of the reality television shows to see the shocking things that people will do to achieve fame and status. They sell their soul for a little power and fame that is here today and gone tomorrow.

What we don't realize is that power and control will never make us truly happy. No matter how much status, fame and power you gain in life it will never be enough, for the pride of life is a monster that is never satisfied. All we have to do to see the truth of this is to look at Hollywood. These entertainers have all the power and control in the world yet they are miserable because power and status can never bring true happiness.

At the root of the desire for power, control and status is pride. Pride is mankind's greatest enemy. Pride is satanic and demonic, *"But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there"* (James 3:14-16).

Because of pride Lucifer was kicked out of heaven and transformed into Satan. Pride is comparing ourselves to one another instead of comparing ourselves to Jesus. Pride is envying the success of others instead of celebrating their success. Pride is believing that you are

god and that you are in control. Pride is the matrix of many kinds of sin.

Transitional Sentence: What does God have to say about pride?

1. God hates proud people.

"These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look..." (Prov.6:16-17).

It's important to notice the words that the Holy Spirit uses here to describe how God feels about prideful people: "hate" and "abomination." Those are very strong words. You may have a problem with me saying that God "hates" anything or anyone. After all, God loves people. But consider the following verses:

"The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity" (Ps.5:5).

"All their wickedness is in Gilgal, For there I hated them. Because of their evil deeds I will drive them from my house; I will love them no more..." (Hosea 9:15).

God is love but sin must be punished. God does not punish sin He punishes sinners. Sin affects the very identity of a person so that they are unrecognizable to God. Pride is a sin that infiltrates the very identity of a person. A proud person is person who is fully wrapped up in his own egocentric identity. God hates everything that is associates with that identity.

2. God opposes proud people.

"...God resists the proud..." (1 Pet.5:5).

God opposes the proud and powerful. God's favor and blessing does not and cannot rest on the proud. In Romans 8:31 we read that if God is for us who can be against us? But that does not include the prideful person. For the prideful person we could translate that verse to read, "If God is against you who can be for you?" God never chooses proud people He always chooses the weak,

"Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many

influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him” (1 Cor.1:26-29).

3. God brings down proud people.

“The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished” (Prov.16:5).

“Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov.16:18).

Pharaoh king of Egypt was a prideful man daring to trust in his own power and his entire army was drowned in the sea. Nebuchadnezzar was the proud king of Babylon that one day looked at his kingdom and said, “Look what I have built” and then he lost his mind and ate grass like an animal for seven years. Herod the Great one day sat upon his throne dressed in his royal robes and gave an address to his subjects and the people shouted, “It is the voice of a god and not a man” and immediately Herod was struck by God and he died (Acts 12:23). The moral of the story is that God will bring down the proud.

Transitional Sentence: There is an antidote to pride and power and that is humility.

Humility - Humility is the displacement of self by the enthronement of God. Humility is not denying the power you have but admitting that the power comes through you and not from you.

Transitional Sentence: Let’s look at a few characteristics of humility.

1. Humility means not being concerned with appearance.

The humble man or woman doesn’t worry about what they look like to others. They do not crave recognition and applause from men. They only want to glorify God. Think about how much time we spend fretting over our appearance. I’m not necessarily talking about our physical appearance but how others perceive us. The truth is that we are a lot more concerned over how others perceive us than how God perceives

us most of the time. The proud person has to be affirmed and complemented and has to "fit in" in order to feel accepted and loved. The proud person is constantly asking, "What does this person think about me?" But the humble man finds his affirmation in doing the will of God and asks "What does God think about me?"

The Bible tells us, "*Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe*" (Prov.29:25).

Let us seek to be God-pleasers and not people-pleasers. We must also be careful that we don't engage in false humility. False humility is pride wrapped in disguise. False humility is when someone says you're great and even though you know you did a great job you say you didn't just to get more compliments. Beware of false humility.

2. Humility means being honest about weaknesses.

One of the best definitions for humility I have heard comes from Rick Warren, "Humility is not denying your strengths but being honest about your weaknesses." The humble man or woman readily acknowledges their errors and imperfections. Humility means that you never try to save face. The humble man or woman realizes they don't know it all and possesses a teachable spirit. Paul said that if he was going to boast about anything he would boast about his weaknesses. For it's only in our weakness that we gain God's strength.

"God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1 Pet.5:5).

3. Humility is the path to promotion.

Humility is countercultural and stands opposed to methods and standards of the world. In the world you get ahead by pushing your way to the top, by exalting yourself and convincing others of your worth and value. But those methods are antithetical to the kingdom of God. The way to promotion in the kingdom of God is not to exalt yourself but to humble yourself. The way up is down.

"For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matt.23:12).

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time" (1 Pet.5:6).

"...I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt.18:3-4).

In Luke 18 Jesus tells a parable about a Pharisee and a tax collector. They both go to the Temple to pray and the Pharisee thanks God that he is not a sinner like other men but the tax collector beats his chest and asks for God to have mercy upon him because he was a sinner. Then Jesus said that the tax collector is the one who went home justified before God.

"Before his downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honor" (Prov.18:12). In other words if we will humble ourselves we will be honored and promoted but if we exalt ourselves we will be humiliated. So it's either humility or humiliation!

4. Humility is the path to true happiness.

Many people think power will make them happy, but the truth is that power doesn't make people happy it only inflames them to seek more power and it causes them to be suspicious of everyone around them. The world says that true happiness is found in fame and celebrity but Britney Spears would probably tell you different. The Bible tells us that the path to true happiness is found in humility.

"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life" (Mk.8:34-36)?

"..This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word" (Isa.66:2).

"For this is what the high and lofty One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place,

but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite” (Isa.57:15).

5. Jesus Christ is the greatest example of humility.

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Php.2:5-11).

Jesus, the God of the universe, left the glories of heaven and came to earth and imprisoned himself in a human body. In theology this is called the *kenosis*. He became incarnate. Interesting that incarnate is a root word of incarcerate. He became Emmanuel, “God with us.” Not only did He incarcerate Himself in human flesh, He gave up the independent use of His divine attributes and bowed to the will of the Father. Jesus humbled Himself even to the point of being executed like a common criminal. He washed His disciples’ feet, even the one that would betray Him as an example to us of humble submission and service. Because Jesus was obedient and humbled Himself God exalted Him to the highest place. Let us follow the example of Christ’s humility and see what God does with our lives.

Conclusion: Let us seek to crucify the pride at work in our life and live humbly before God. It will either be humility or humiliation!

Humility leads to promotion
Jesus said he that loses his life will find it.
It's either humiliation or humility