

MY 4 BIGGEST CHALLENGES

PRIDE

Brother's Weekend 2017

- As you can imagine, these classes were quite introspective
- It was kind of hard and very much eye-opening
- I spent a lot of time in preparation for this next class, thinking a lot about my own personal life

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- It's been quite troubling to think about how much Pride affects what I do
- I think that I can honestly say that I feel like Pride impacts almost every aspect of my daily life
- I find that Pride is present in how I act at work, at home, and even at the Ecclesia
- The clothes I wear, my personal grooming, what I choose to eat, the conversations I have, the things that I say in Bible Classes, what I drive... Are all reflections of decisions I've made that were influenced in one way or another by Pride
- Hopefully, you aren't as wrapped up in self-image as I am...
- But, let's just say that it's scary for me to read Proverbs 16 every year...

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- Proverbs 16:18

18) **Pride goes before destruction**, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

- I've struggled with Pride my whole life
- Pride is defined as:

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“A feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own qualities or possessions that are widely admired, or one's own achievements”

- The funny thing about pride is that it's causes are often not even true...
- I would redefine pride as...

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*“A feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own **PERCEIVED** qualities or possessions that are widely admired, or one's own achievements”*

- The easiest and quickest way to build your own self-image is to try to reduce others
- Pride is often connected with belittling others and putting others down
- That's something that I really struggle with...
- It's doubly hard because it's often quite funny to put someone down
- And, I'm good at it
- I get the double enjoyment of making people laugh, and the satisfaction of reducing someone else, which makes me feel better
- I'm trying to learn to not take those shots
- Learn to just let it gently slip by you
- I remember walking around Wrestling Tournaments with my Wrestling Coach, and he would point out that the good wrestlers were the ones who sat quietly
- The bad wrestlers were the ones who were standing in a crowd talking smack about how good they are, and how bad their opponents are
- If you're not good, then you want people to think that your opponents are worse
- But, let's be honest, many times it IS true

- That's the hardest time to fight a battle against Pride
- It's not that you're lying
- It's not that you're making it up
- Maybe you are really good at something
- Maybe you do own something very desirable
- Maybe you have made some significant achievements in your life
- *It's hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way*
- God does bless us in many ways
- He may even have brought something into your life as a trial to see how well you would deal with it
- But, whether the quality or possession or achievement is real or whether it's perceived
- I find that the thing that has helped me the most in my battle against Pride was when I learned what Humility really is

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- Humility isn't thinking less of yourself.

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- Humility is thinking of yourself less.
- That really has been helpful to me in working through some of this
- I never had a very good picture in my mind of what the opposite of Pride was supposed to be
- I knew that pride was wrong, but it wasn't really clear about what Humility looked like
- I think I had a picture of an "eyes cast down, kicking the dirt, 'Aw, Shucks' kind of Humility"
- Not that I found that offensive, or wrong...

- But, it just didn't seem like a realistic life goal for me...
- I realized that it's mainly an adjustment you make in how much time you spend thinking of yourself, and how much time you spend focusing on others
- The key to fighting pride is to think more about your Brothers and Sisters

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- Philippians 2:3

3) Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility **count others more significant than yourselves.**

- I love the way that the verse specifically says, ***"Count others more significant than yourself"***
- The NIV actually says to *"Consider others better than yourself"*
- The Greek word used here specifically denotes *"holding something above"*
- Alternative phrases might be to *"lift up"*, or *"elevate"* or *"place above"*
- Humility is about lifting up the concerns of others, placing them above your own
- It's an active, internal decision that God is calling on us to make
- It doesn't say that others ARE better than you
- That would just be depressing
- And, in many cases, in many Ecclesias, it simply wouldn't be true
- It's just telling us to place them above us
- To make a conscious decision to elevate your opinion of someone
- Making yourself look at others that way has a wonderful effect on how you treat them
- God doesn't treat us the way that we deserve to be treated

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- Psalm 103:8-10

- 8) The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- 9) He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.
- 10) **He does not deal with us according to our sins**, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

- Why should we treat others as they deserve?
- In love, consider them better than yourself
- Give them the benefit of the doubt
- Don't hold them to an unrealistically high standard
- Don't assume the worst, or even assume the realistic
- Hold your opinion of them above where it would normally be
- That is how you successfully battle against Pride
- Stop focusing on how smart you are, and all the wonderful things you have done
- Instead focus on raising the concerns of others and placing their concerns above your own
- Part of the challenge of Pride is thinking that you are the smartest person in the room
- Let's be honest, for several of us, on a normal day, that is actually the case
- That doesn't mean that we are given any freedom to derive satisfaction from that situation
- That doesn't bestow upon you any rights
- You still have to be humble
- About 10 years ago, right before my sons got married, and they were both still living in the house, we had a funny conversation at Dinner one night
- Something was said about someone being the smartest, and there was this awkward pause

- I looked up and realized that all four of us were sitting there thinking to ourselves, *“Well, I am the smartest person in the room.”*
- So, I actually asked, and sure enough, every one of us four Gelineau Adults were sitting there thinking that they were smarter than the rest
- It made me think of the two men who went up to the Temple to pray...

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- Luke 18:9-14
 - 9) He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt:
 - 10) “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

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- 11) The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.
- 12) I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’

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- 13) But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’
 - 14) I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but **the one who humbles himself will be exalted.**”
- One of my favorite stories is about a Sunday School teacher who was giving a lesson about the proud Pharisee who prayed, “Father, I thank you that I’m not as other men are.”
 - She did a good job, but when class was finished she said, “Now, boys and girls, aren’t we glad we’re not like that proud Pharisee?”
 - I do think that the story of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector can help us recognize our own Pride
 - If you step back and look at this story from the outside, it’s an alarming picture

- Place these characters in your Ecclesia today...
- One of them is a highly respected Brother
- He arrives in a Lexus, is wearing a professional, dark navy pin-stripe suit with a strong red tie
- The other has a less than reputable career
- He works for a debt-collection agency that uses threats and coercion to get people to pay
- He arrives quite disheveled, as usual, and arrives by bus because his car isn't running (again)
- They both walk in and sit down
- One in the front, one in the rear
- What are you thinking right now?
- What kind of feelings are you feeling towards these two men that Christ died for?
- I'm sure that you can relate
- I'm sure that you've got people in your Ecclesia at home that approximate these two
- Then they begin to pray...
- People don't pray out loud in your Ecclesia, do they?
- No, they are both praying silently to themselves
- One Brother is standing up front, with his head and hands raised to heaven, praying, *"Dear God, I thank you for blessing me beyond what I deserve, and making me so that I do not struggle with the same problems as other men, like crooks, sinners, or even adulterers. I'm thankful that you've given me a good job, not like this bill collector. I'm able come here twice a week; and I give 10% of my paycheck."*
- Notice in his prayer that his focus is not really on God at all but on how good he is and how bad others are
- Here is Pride wrapped in the cloak of Religion and frankly giving it a bad name

- The poor Bill Collector is so painfully aware of his own personal sins and unworthiness before God that he cannot even lift his eyes as he stands in the back of the hall
- Pounding his breast in sorrowful contrition over his sins, he can manage only the desperate plea, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."
- His focus is very much on his own sins, not the sins of others, and especially on his need for God's mercy
- I think we know whose prayer God answers
- However, chances are good that most of us do not see the Pride in our lives
- It's often much easier to see Pride in others, and it is very difficult to see it in ourselves

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- C.S. Lewis writes that *"There is no **fault** which makes a man more **unpopular** and no fault which we are more **unconscious** of in ourselves. And the more we have it in ourselves, the more we **dislike** it in others."*
- C.S. Lewis does go on to suggest a couple of ways to detect the presence of Pride in our lives

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- First, Lewis quotes William Law *"There can be no surer proof of a confirmed pride than a belief that one is sufficiently humble."*
- He also says, *"if you want to find out how proud you are the easiest way is to ask yourself, 'How much do I dislike it when other people snub me, or refuse to take any notice of me, or patronize me, or show off?'"*
- I think it's probably a good idea to spend a few minutes, and look at some suggestions on how to detect Pride in our lives
- It's important to sort this through, because Pride can kill you
- Pride is the sin that is most likely to keep you from crying out for help from the Savior
- Those who think they are well will not call for a Doctor

- As seriously dangerous as pride is, it's equally hard to spot
- Pride causes us to view ourselves through a lens that colors and distorts reality
- Pride miraculously is able to even paint our ugliness in sin as beautiful and commendable

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- Here's 7 ways that Pride can affect you, and therefore, 7 Signs to look out for:

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1) Fault-Finding

- While Pride causes us to filter out the evil we see in ourselves, it also causes us to filter out the goodness in others
- The spiritually proud person reflects it in his finding fault with others
- The humble Christian has so much to do at home and sees so much evil in his own heart that he is not apt to be very busy with other people's hearts
- If you find yourself finding fault in everyone else... Look first at the Pride in your heart

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2) A Harsh Spirit

- When you are full of Pride you tend to speak of others' sins with contempt, irritation, frustration, or judgment
- Pride is crouching inside our belittling of the struggles of others
- Pride is cowering in our jokes about the 'craziness' of our wife
- Pride is lurking in the prayers we throw upward for our Brothers and Sisters that are tainted with exasperated irritation
- If you are inordinately affected by the sins of others, it could be a symptom of your own sin in your heart full of Pride

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3) Superficiality

- When pride lives in our hearts, we're far more concerned with others' perceptions of us than the reality of our hearts
- We fight the sins that have an impact on how others view us, and make peace with the ones that no one sees
- We have great success in the areas of holiness that have highly visible accountability, but little concern for the disciplines that happen in secret
- If you find yourself constantly concerned about what others are thinking of you, then pause for a moment and truly examine your heart for Pride

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4) Defensiveness

- True humility is not knocked off balance and thrown into a defensive posture by challenge or rebuke, but instead continues in doing good, trusting in God
- The Proud will go down swinging
- They will defend their position, no matter how unsound or unstable, because that is a reflection of who they are
- If you find yourself always defending your beliefs or actions, then maybe it's time to look at the Pride in your heart

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5) Presumption Before God

- Humble Servants approach God with Humble Assurance
- If either the "Humble" or the "Assurance" are missing in that equation, our hearts very well might be infected with pride

- Some of us have no shortage of boldness before God, but if we're not careful, we can forget that he is God
- Others of us feel no confidence before God
- While this may sound like humility, in reality it's another symptom of pride
- In those moments, we're testifying that we believe our sins are greater than God's grace
- We doubt the power of Christ's blood
- You have to approach God with Humble Assurance
- If you find your relationship with God is lacking in either the "Humble" or the "Assurance" then it's time to examine your Heart for Pride

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6) Desperation for Attention

- Pride is hungry for attention and respect in all of their forms
- Maybe it sounds like shameless boasting about ourselves
- Maybe it's being unable to say "No" to anyone because we need to be needed
- Maybe it looks like obsessively thirsting for relationships in which you can be adored
- Maybe it looks like being haunted by your desire for the right car or the right house or the right title at work: all because you seek the glory that comes with them
- If you are desperate for attention, then you need to give some attention to the Pride in your Heart

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7) Neglecting Others

- Pride prefers some people over others

- Pride honors those whom the world deems worthy of honor, giving more weight to their words, their wants, and their needs
- There's a thrill that goes through me when people with "power" acknowledge me
- We consciously or unconsciously pass over the weak, the inconvenient, and the unattractive, because they don't seem to offer us much
- If you see yourself neglecting the "less comely members" of the Body, then probably the problem is the Pride in your Heart

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- The good news is that if you see these things in your life, then you are halfway there...
- Confession of Pride signals the beginning of the end for Pride
- Only after you acknowledge the problem, can you begin to remove the lens of Pride from your eyes and see yourself clearly, identifying the sickness and seeking the cure
- And, it's really important that we figure out some way to deal with this issue
- This issue can stand between us and God
- Pride can ruin our relationship with our God and Savior
- There's a good reminder of the importance of addressing this issue in 1st Peter

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- 1st Peter 5:5-7
 - 5) Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "**God opposes the proud** but gives grace to the humble."
 - 6) **Humble yourselves**, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,
 - 7) casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.
- The Bible doesn't just say, "God fails to help the one who is proud"

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- The Verse actually says that **God opposes the proud!**
- The Bible says that God becomes the adversary of the one who is proud!
- Why? Because Pride defies God
- Pride says, *“God, I don’t need you. I can do it myself. I will be my own God.”*
- Of course, we would never actually say that...
- But, our Pride speaks louder than our words
- We need to change our attitudes
- We need to fundamentally change our personality to create a humble servant
- To develop a different mindset
- We looked at Philippians 2:3 earlier...

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- Philippians 2:3
 - 3) Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility **count others more significant than yourselves.**
- I’d like to circle back to that verse and look at the context that it comes in

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- 4) Let each of you **look not only to his own interests**, but also to the **interests of others.**
- Again, Paul continues with this same advice in verse 4
 - Focus on the interests of others, and not solely on your own interests
 - Self-Interest and Pride are close friends

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5) **Have this mind** among yourselves, which is yours in **Christ Jesus**,

- Paul tells us that this is the same mind that Christ had
- This is the mind that we want to develop

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6) who, **though he was in the form of God**, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

- I spent too much time of my life trying to show how this verse doesn't really prove that there is a Trinity, that I completely forgot to look at the message that the verse teaches
- Imagine the temptation to allow Pride to fill your heart!
- Talk about being the Smartest Person in the Room!
- What about realizing that you are ONE WITH GOD!
- Coming to the realization that you are the Son of God
- You are God's physical representation on the Planet Earth
- But, Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped
- Jesus understood what God wants from us, and he knew that he needed to focus on others, and not on himself

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7) **but emptied himself**, by taking the form of a **servant**, being born in the likeness of men.

- So, he emptied himself
- What a great phrase!
- Are you having a problem with Pride?

- Feeling a bit “Full of Yourself”?
- Empty yourself!
- This is how you start the journey away from Pride
- Empty yourself!
- Rid yourself of your “self”, and all of the things that your “self” wants to fill your mind with
- But, it’s not about finding some spiritual zone of complete emptiness, is it?
- Jesus has a plan...
- He took the form of a Servant
- He could have been anything
- He had the unlimited power of God
- He could have fulfilled any dream or fantasy
- He could have shaped and formed himself into whatever his heart would have desired
- He took the form of a Servant
- That is how we learn how to be like our Father
- By not looking to our own interests, but instead by looking to the interests of others

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8) And being found in human form, he **humbled himself** by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

- Jesus took on the role of Servant
- When everyone around him **SHOULD** have been serving him!
- He knelt down and unlatched their shoes

- He humbled himself
- He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death
- That is the kind of obedience and commitment that it's going to take
- It's not easy to continually hold others above yourself
- To continually set aside your goals, and your agenda, and your plans in order to serve the least of your Brothers and Sisters
- To completely give up your life in an effort to help the lives of those around you
- That is Humility
- That is the opposite of Pride
- I mentioned 1st Peter 5 as a warning against Pride, but it's also a wonderful, positive message for us to close with...

SLIDE

- 1st Peter 5:5-7
 - 5) Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but **gives grace to the humble.**"
 - 6) Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the **proper time he may exalt you,**
 - 7) casting all your anxieties on him, **because he cares for you.**