

Question: As a child, I was taught that pride is a virtue. What would Jesus say about pride?

The Bible says many negative things about pride (over sixty verses), yet many people think of pride as a wonderful virtue. We hear talk about taking pride in work, home, country or family. Many appeal to pride as a motive for giving our best efforts. However, Jesus and the Bible present humility, not pride, as an important trait of godliness.

There may be an appropriate sense of pride that is an expression of positive self-esteem which promotes strong work ethics, but far too often the line between this kind of pride and having too high an opinion of one's self is blurred. The problem may not be with the way we define or use the word but the way we exhibit the attitude which reflects pride. Because pride centers on the self, it tends toward selfishness. Pride can cause even the best of us to become overconfident in self and too independent. Pride has led some people to go to extremes to prove they can go it alone. I've often heard individuals say, "I guess we have too much pride, but our family doesn't accept charity."

In contrast, humility allows us to give and receive help graciously. A person of humility is easier to work with because he is willing to follow the leadership of others when needed. While pride tends to look down on those who are different from us, humility rejoices in and enjoys the abilities and successes of others. Humility knows the joy of forgiveness that comes from admitting our mistakes. The proud person is unhappy because his "pride" is often offended. However, a person of humility graciously considers others and their counsel without feeling himself to be inferior.

Consider the words and example of Jesus. Concerning pride of position, Jesus said, "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:12 NIV). The apostle Paul wrote: "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!” (Philippians 2:5-8). The brother of Jesus wrote, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6 NIV; cf. Proverbs 8:13; 15:25; 16:5, 18, 19).

Instead of our being proud, I believe Jesus would emphasize the importance of having a spirit of humility which leads us to be more concerned for others than for ourselves. That spirit of humility does not center on a person’s own abilities and accomplishments but focuses on living in thankfulness for God’s blessings. Because of gratitude to God for life and health, we should seek to do our best to care for and properly use those blessings.

I pray that more of us will “swallow our pride” and give ourselves in humble and grateful service to Jesus Christ and one another. Humility and gratitude are the attitudes that Jesus preferred.

[Send questions or comments to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12th, Murray, KY 42071 or phone 270-753-1881. This article is reproduced on the web: www.nchrist.org] 2013/10/18