

# ***The* BATTLE PLAN *for* PRAYER**

FROM BASIC TRAINING TO TARGETED STRATEGIES

PART III: CONDITIONING

## **LESSON 5**

### **VERTICAL: Repentance versus Pride**

*Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord and He will exalt you. (James 4:10)*

Jesus described two men who went to the temple to pray. (Luke 18:9-14) One was an impressive, religious Pharisee and the other a sinful tax collector. The Pharisee stood and expressed thanks for what a great guy he was—unlike the wicked sinners around him.

He boasted about the good things he had done and self-righteously assumed he didn't need to repent of anything. But the tax collector stood off by himself, recognized his need for God and forgiveness, lowered his head in repentance, and begged the Lord for mercy in light of his sins.

Jesus ended the story by saying the tax collector walked away justified and right with God, but the prideful Pharisee did not. This parable was likely shocking to Jesus' audience because they esteemed Pharisees as being holy before God, but viewed tax collectors as the sinful scum of the earth. Here's how Jesus drew the bottom line: "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted". (Luke 18:14)

Which attitude best describes how you approach God in prayer: humbly or pridefully? In humility we more clearly see our need for God—for His guidance, grace, and forgiveness. And in humility we honestly admit our sin and willingly cry out to Him while turning away in repentance from any thing that displeases Him. Pride, however, resists this attitude—too vulnerable, beneath us, a sign of weakness. Pride assumes self-sufficiency and boasts of self-righteousness.

Pride says, "I'm a good person. I haven't done anything that bad. I don't really need to repent of anything." Pride also proclaims, "This is my life. I'm in control. I should get what I want and get the credit for

what I do." In terms of our relationships with others, pride quietly whispers, "I know better than they do. I'm more important than they are. I deserve better than what they get." Basically, "Mine is the kingdom, mine is the power, and mine is the glory."

The deception behind pride is that it makes us believe we're much more important than we really are. "For if any one thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself". (Galatians 6:3) We get into trouble anytime we overlook the fact that our lives are a gift from God and we are undeserving of the mercy, grace, and blessings He has given us. Even our accomplishments come only as a result of abilities He's given us. That's why pride is one of the greatest sins of all. (Proverbs 6:16-17) It leads to almost every other sin.

Proverbs 11:2 warns, "When pride comes, then comes dishonor, but with the humble is wisdom." The irony is that prideful people see themselves as wise. They are looking to gain honor believing they likely deserve it. But the opposite is true. A prideful attitude hurts us and disqualifies us, while a humble attitude is what God blesses and builds up.

Proverbs 29:23 concludes, "A man's pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor." The lack of humility in today's culture is in part what blinds us to our desperate need to seek God daily in prayer and to walk in repentance. It's hard to be sorry for what you're proud of and to ask for forgiveness when you don't really think you need it.

As we look at those in Scripture who walked closely with God and were used in miraculous ways, we find a consistent attitude of humility. David, Israel's greatest king, repeatedly asked, "Who am I?" feeling unworthy of the things he experienced. (1 Samuel 18:18; 1 Chronicles 17:16; 29:14) The apostle Paul called himself the "chief" of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15 NKJV)—the "worst of them," the "foremost of all"—he wrote almost half of the New Testament and was used of God to draw countless thousands to faith in Christ. In the Old Testament, Joshua bowed humbly before the Lord, recognizing his need for God's help, and God conquered the Promised Land through

him. Esther walked in humility and submission, even when acting boldly for her people, and God protected the Jews from extinction. Daniel maintained a humble spirit in Babylon, gaining favor from the king.

All of us could admit that when we're around others who think too much of themselves, their attitude disgusts us. God would agree. Speaking to our relationships, God's Word says, "All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another". (1 Peter 5:5) Think about this. What would change in our marriages, homes, and church relationships if we all *clothed ourselves with humility* toward one another? We would be more others-centered and less self-centered. More thankful, less complaining. More respectful, less judgmental. More cooperative, less stubborn. Harder to offend, more readily apologizing. We would listen to advice, counsel, and rebuke rather than getting upset when confronted. Basically, we would be more like Jesus and less like Satan.

"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you". (1 Peter 5:6-7)

James 4:6 tells us God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble, and that we should submit ourselves to God and resist the devil (who wants us to walk in pride). God tells us to draw near to Him, knowing He will then draw near to us as we repent and seek His cleansing. So why carry self-pride in our hearts? If others hate our pride and God calls it a sin, then what does it gain us? Nothing good. The things we tend to chase in life—wealth, success, applause, awards—can all lead to greater pride if obtained.

Scripture warns us, "'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,' declares the Lord." (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

Anything good we do or own should be redirected in service,

thanksgiving, and gratefulness to God, never letting them feed any boasting or pride. Like John the Baptist, we should be looking for ways to honor Christ more and more and ourselves less and less (John 3:30). God may even lovingly send a need, weakness, or problem into our lives for a season, primarily as a real—life opportunity for learning how to walk in humility, stay close to Him, be more usable to Him, and receive more of His grace. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

To sum up, God hates pride and loves humility. It's that simple. And this truth should be branded on our hearts as we seek to walk closely with Him. The only way to properly approach a holy, sovereign, omnipotent God is in total humility and in total confession of sin. We must stay at war with our own pride, resolving to quickly deal with any thing that displeases Him so we can stay unhindered in our relationship with Him and mighty in prayer. Humility is a fundamental attitude of the heart for maintaining intimacy with God and a vibrant prayer life. By repenting of our sins and humbling ourselves daily before God, we will please the Lord and pray much more frequently and much more powerfully.

*Lord, too often and in too many ways I've put myself first- above my loyalty to You, above my recognition of sin, above my need for repentance, and above my humble reliance on You for everything. But where I've worked so hard to build myself up, I see now I've actually been tearing away at what my relationship with You can be. Today, Lord, I come to You with nothing but gratitude, asking You to purge me of pride and help me see things as they really are. You first. You always.*

### **HOMEWORK:**

1. Name two men who went to the temple to pray Jesus described in the Bible?
2. Look at their roles:
  - ☞ The PHARISEE stood and \_\_\_\_\_ thanks for a great guy he was.
  - ☞ The PHARISEE \_\_\_\_\_ about the good things he had done.
  - ☞ And the PHARISEE \_\_\_\_\_ assumed he didn't need to repent of anything.

- ✓ The tax collector stood \_\_\_\_\_ by himself.
- ✓ The tax collector \_\_\_\_\_ his need for God and forgiveness.
- ✓ The tax collector \_\_\_\_\_ his head in repentance.
- ✓ The tax collector \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord for mercy in light [expose or cover] of his sins.

☞ Who walked away justified and right with God?

- The audience was shocked to hear what Jesus taught, because they esteemed [think highly of] the PHARISEES as being \_\_\_\_\_ before God.
- The audience viewed tax collectors as what?

3. Which attitude best describes how you approach God in prayer?

☞ PHARISEE or a tax collector?

☞ pridefully or humbly?

☞ **T F:** In pridefully we less clearly see our need for God—for His guidance, grace, and forgiveness.

☞ **Y N NS:** In humility you honestly admit your sin and willingly cry out to God while turning away in repentance from anything that displeases God?

4. **PRIDE**, however, \_\_\_\_\_ this attitude—too vulnerable, beneath [under] us, a SIGN of \_\_\_\_\_.

5. **PRIDE** assumes \_\_\_\_\_ and boasts of \_\_\_\_\_.

☞ **PRIDE** \_\_\_\_\_,

- "I'm a good person."
- "I haven't done anything that bad."
- "I don't really need to repent of anything."

☞ **PRIDE** also \_\_\_\_\_,

- **"This is my life."**
- **"I'm in control."**
- **"I should get what I want."**
- **"I get the credit for what I do."**

☞ **PRIDE** quietly \_\_\_\_\_,

- "I know better than they do."
- "I'm more important than they are."
- "I deserve better than what they get"

✎ Name one behind pride is that it makes we believe we're much more important than we really are.

✎ Describe '..pride is that it makes we believe we're much more important than we really are' means to you?

6. Getting into trouble anytime, what fact your life is that you overlook?

7. Name one is the greatest sins of all in Proverbs 6:16-17?

8. Name one that leads to almost every other sin?

9. The irony is that prideful people see themselves as wise. They are looking to \_\_\_\_\_ honor believing they likely deserve it. **BUT THE OPPOSITE IS TRUE.** A prideful attitude \_\_\_\_\_ us and \_\_\_\_\_ us, while a humble attitude is what God \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

10. Name one that blind us the lack of humility in our culture today?

11. **T F:** It's easy to be sorry for what you're proud of and to ask for forgiveness when you don't really think you need it.

12. As you look at those in Scripture who walked closely with God and were used in miraculous was, we find a \_\_\_\_\_ attitude of humility:

✎ David, **Israel's greatest king**, repeatedly asked, "Who am I?" feeling \_\_\_\_\_ of the things David experienced.

✎ Apostle Paul called himself the 'chief' of sinners—the worst of them, the foremost of all—yet he wrote almost half of the N.T.

and was \_\_\_\_\_ of God **to draw countless thousands to faith in Christ.**

✂ In the O.T., Joshua bowed \_\_\_\_\_ before the Lord, recognizing his need for God's help, and **God conquered the Promised Land through Joshua.**

✂ Esther walked in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, even when acting boldly for her people, **and God protected the Jews from extinction.**

✂ Daniel \_\_\_\_\_ a humble spirit in Babylon, **gaining favor from the king.**

13. **Y N NS:** Are you admit that you're around others who think too much of themselves, their attitude disgusts you?

14. Where do you get this '*clothed ourselves with humility*'? How?

15. **Y N NS:** We would be more self-centered, less others-centered.

☞ **more:** thankful? or complaining?

☞ **more:** respectful? or judgmental?

☞ **more:** cooperative? or stubborn?

☞ **more:** readily apologizing? or harder to offend?

☞ **more:** listen to advice, counsel, and rebuke [correct]? or getting upset when confront?

☞ **more:** like Jesus? or like Satan?

16. James 4:6 tells you God is opposed to the proud but give grace to the humble, and that you should submit yourself to God and resist the devil (who wants you to walk in what? \_\_\_\_\_)

17. If others hate your pride and God calls it a what? \_\_\_\_\_ Then what should you do about it?

18. Anything good you do or own [boast]: you should \_\_\_\_\_ in service, thanksgiving, and gratefulness to God, **NEVER LETTING THEM FEED [increase] ANY BOASTING OR PRIDE.**

19. God may even lovingly send a \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_ into your lives for a season primarily as a real-life opportunity for \_\_\_\_\_ how to walk in humility, stay close to Him, be more usable to Him, and receive more of His grace.
20. **T F:** God loves pride and hates humility.
21. Name two important issues are the only way for you properly approach a holy, sovereign, omnipotent God?
22. If you didn't stay at war with your own pride, resolving to quickly deal with anything that displeases Him so you can **HINDERED or UNHINDERED** in your relationship with Him and mighty in prayer.
23. What is a fundamental attitude of the heart for maintaining intimacy with God and a vibrant prayer life?
24. By you repenting of your sins and you humbling yourself **ONCE A WEEK** or **DAILY** before God, you will please the Lord and pray **MUCH LESS** or **MUCH MORE** frequently and **MUCH LESS** or **MUCH MORE** powerfully.