

Pride, we know, is a deadly sin. No one likes an arrogant person, one whose pride makes them claim status they do not hold, power they do not possess, skills they have not acquired, and standing they do not deserve. God condemns pride severely, the scriptures make plain. Pharaoh lost his firstborn and then his army and life out of pride. Michal lost her marital rights for wanting her husband David to act with greater pride. Naaman nearly refused his healing out of pride. Nebuchadnezzar lost his kingdom and mind until he relented in his pride. Belshazzar lost his life for drinking proudly from the stolen temple goblets. Herod died a horrible death in the moment of his pride. Pride was the downfall of Bible figure after Bible figure. Why, though, is pride such a deadly sin, met with such harsh judgment?



God must condemn pride harshly because pride undermines the very authority for God's fundamental order. A good way to think of pride is as a false ascent up God's mountain. God is a mountaintop God in the scriptures, placing Adam and Eve in his mountaintop Eden garden, meeting Moses atop Mount Sinai, and inhabiting his temple on Jerusalem's holy hill. God is also symbolically atop the mountain, at the apex of authority, identity, and meaning, with everything descending from him. One approaches God by looking up, not down, by climbing the mountain, not descending to the valley. And one approaches God in humility, not bringing our own standing but instead recognizing and relying on his standing atop the mountain.

Pride, though, ascends the mountain as if it, not God, sits at the top. Pride claims the mountain as belonging to its bearer rather than to God. Pride inverts the mountain, placing its bearer at the top and God further down. Pride, in effect, denies God, claiming that its bearer's being arises from someone or something other than the great I Am atop the mountain of his glorious creation. Pride is in fact a descent down God's mountain into the darkness and chaos, indeed the tomb, at the mountain's bottom. God doesn't especially need to judge the proud, as if God needed anything, because the proud have instead made their own bed among the tombs at the mountain's bottom. We, though, follow Christ up the mountain, knowing that he alone is the way to its top.