

"Love is not proud" 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 5

Sometimes when I talk negatively about pride people say to me, "Surely you can't mean it's wrong to feel proud of yourself for doing something good, or achieving something, or of your children for the things they do." No, I don't mean that, but that's not the sort of pride that the bible is talking about here.

I would define this kind of pride as the desire to shape my environment and everyone in it according to my own plan, purpose and agenda. It is the impulse in me to shape the world in my own image. Because this is the inevitable consequence of dethroning God in our lives, this kind of pride is in all of us to one degree or another. It is the outcome of our desire to rule in God's rightful place in our own lives. As such, it is the direct opposite of love, which wills and works for the best good of others, even if that is at the expense of my own interests.

So if my love towards others is to be without pride, then there are several things I must relinquish;

The demand that things are done my way. That's not to say that I don't sometimes know better than others how things should be done. I may have expertise that others don't. But there are plenty of times when my way of doing things is simply one among many, and I have no natural right to impose my way on others, simply because, for example "That's how my mum taught me to do it."

The demand that everyone conforms to my opinion. I may well be right, but that doesn't mean that being right gives me the right to command and control others. My wife coined a phrase; "Relinquish the right to be right," meaning "don't think that being right necessarily gives you the authority to tell others what to do."

The demand to be in charge. I may consider myself to be the centre of my own universe, but I am not the centre of everybody else's. We all know people who dominate proceedings as soon as they enter a room. They do it with highly extroverted personalities, or with over sensitive moods and offences, or with petty demand and conditions.

This kind of pride may work well with people, as long as we are content to bully, manipulate and coerce them into conforming to our will, but I'd advise against trying it with God. Jesus wants his disciples to walk a different road, in which love, not pride, motivates us. So he tells them "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

Prayer.

Father, I know that pride is in me, and I all too often surrender to it. Please show me how to genuinely humble myself, and refrain from trying to be number one. Help me, please, to always think, speak and act in love and humility towards others, and may the love that I show them be yours.. In Jesus' name, amen.

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