

Overcoming Pride and Rebellion

“I want to do what I want!” “I know best!” “I can do it my way!” Does that sound familiar to you?

We’ve probably all experienced it: pride, the misuse of power, and people’s rebellion against God has caused damage in our lives and in the world around us. God wants us to live differently. He sent Jesus to model a life without being proud or rebellious, restoring people and leading them to see who they are.

If we overrate ourselves we allow ourselves be deceived. We so easily forget that much of who we are is dependent on others. We wouldn’t even be alive without others. The reality is that we have no control over so many things. Plus we are limited: our knowledge, our time, and our abilities are all finite. God created us to live in connection with other people and with Him. However, pride and rebellion lead us into isolation and destroy healthy fellowship. They distort our view of reality and block our connection with God – but often we don’t see, or even ignore, their consequences for us and others.

Arrogance and pride

For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. (Luke 18:14)

Arrogance starts in my heart – I believe that I’m better than others. The more I give room to this conviction, the bigger the consequences for me and the people around me: I don’t want to see my mistakes and I can’t ask forgiveness. I treat others unjustly or inconsiderately because I don’t take them seriously or maybe even look down on them. I don’t want to ask others for help or for advice and become unteachable. The result is that I disconnect more and more from reality and live in my own world.

Pride is praising myself instead of praising God. There is a difference between joy and pride: When we’re successful, we want to rejoice in it. If our achievement is something good in God’s eyes, we can and should celebrate that appropriately. It becomes unhealthy if we forget that God gave us the possibilities to do so and don’t give thanks to Him.

The opposite of these patterns is healthy humility: I see myself just as God sees me. I neither make myself smaller and less valuable (that is false humility) nor bigger and more important than I actually am (that is pride and arrogance).

God gave us gifts and abilities so that we use them to do good. He wants to help us in dealing with this responsibility and avoiding the pitfalls that come with success. But if I believe I don’t need Him and know better myself, I cut myself off from His guidance. God knows what is good for us; He knows our strengths and weaknesses even better than we do. Being humble means listening to Him and to other wise people’s counsel.

Application

God, where do you see arrogance or pride in my heart?

Ask Him for forgiveness for what He showed you. Ask Him now: What should I think and do instead?

Rebellion

God set up a good order for how we can live together as humans. He doesn't want chaos to rule or for people to dominate others through ruthlessness. That's why He gives different roles and capabilities to people so that we use them for the good of others. The strong are supposed to protect the weak, so they also have more responsibility.

For example, God gives parents the mandate to raise (protect, lead, guide in the right way) children until they're old enough to make their own decisions. While we're still children, we must obey our parents, and when we grow up, God asks us to honor them.

Rebellion is going against the order that God set up. It means trying to take control when we have no right to do so, acting according to our own rules: "I can make my own way!"

God wants us to first submit to Him. He also wants us to submit to people in authority (Romans 13:1-7) and pray for them (1 Timothy 2:1-2). That includes our government as well as employers or leaders. They all have the right to speak into our lives according to their mandate. We may dislike that because it costs us: We must pay taxes or need to do things we didn't choose. When we can't do everything as we want, we feel restricted in our freedom. Still, that's part of how God created this world. Jesus didn't come so that we can do whatever we want. He wants us to submit to God – and that's what Jesus modeled.

But what if they're wrong?

God knows that people are imperfect and make mistakes. This doesn't mean that I can simply ignore what they say. I need to ask God how to deal with it.

If people in authority want us to do something directly opposing God's will or they rule outside of their assignment, we're allowed and supposed to disobey them: *We must obey God rather than men* (Acts 5:29). If someone misuses their power, I can address that and set healthy boundaries. I can also appeal to a higher authority and seek help.

God hates injustice and oppression. He doesn't want us to conform to them at all. Still, He doesn't give us the right to fight however we want or to take revenge. Instead He wants to lead us in His way to resist evil: *Don't let evil overcome you. Overcome evil by doing good.* (Romans 12:21)

God is the righteous judge and He will bring justice. He will judge those who misuse their authority and harm us or others around us. He will also judge us wherever we do injustice to others.

Application

Ask: *God, who did I rebel against?*

Go through different relationships: Government (including traffic and tax rules) and officials, parents (also stepparents or guardian), spouse, leaders, teachers, trainers, employers, God

How did that rebellion come into my life?

Forgive: Let a good helper support you in forgiving those who hurt you (see worksheet "Forgiving Step by Step").

Repent: Ask God for forgiveness. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you and change your heart.

How do You want me to move forward and make it right?

Write down your next steps: