

If Not Put Down Quickly, This Sin Can Destroy Families—and Congregations

The senior pastor of a Dallas-area “megachurch” formally resigned his position recently. Having pastored the church for over 20 years, the evangelical leader had temporarily stepped away from his pulpit late last summer due to “the sin of pride,” which had become problematic for the church leadership and staff.

“I’ve been short and irritable. I’m invalidating at times. I’m impatient enough that people were noticing a difference. And worse, I didn’t hear them when they asked me and said things like, ‘Are you OK?’” he explained. He also noted that he was dismissive of others at times.

His final resignation was submitted to and finally accepted by the church’s elder team in April and followed by an emotional announcement to the congregants.

The Sin of Pride

Pride is “an excessive preoccupation with self and one’s own importance.” In the Bible, the books of Psalms and Proverbs often speak about pride and its various forms. Proverbs 16:18 says, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”

In Psalm 138:6 (HCSB), David says, “Though the Lord is exalted, He takes note of the humble; but He knows the haughty from a distance.” Proverbs 11:2 (MEV) explains that pride is followed by shame, “but with the humble is wisdom,” whereas Proverbs 13:10 (ESV) tells us that “nothing but strife” comes by way of pride. We are warned in Proverbs 29:23 (MEV) that “A man’s pride will bring him low, but honor will uphold the

humble in spirit.”

Those who are proud, arrogant and self-absorbed frequently develop a narcissistic sense of their own importance and privileges. Esteemed author C.S. Lewis correctly observed in his book *Mere Christianity*, in a chapter entitled “The Great Sin,” that “It was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice; it is the complete anti-God state of mind.”

Another author warns that “Pride—being full of ourselves, ‘puffed up’ with hot air like a yeast-filled loaf of bread—can ruin us.”

Perhaps we should regularly ask ourselves if we are prideful! In other words, are we “full of ourselves?” Are we motivated by hubris or lacking modesty? Do we arrogate to ourselves certain attitudes or behaviors from others?

You may want to join me in taking the “Pride Quiz.” It consists of just 25 true/false questions drawn from the Word of God about pride and arrogance, but it may prove to be a critical juncture in our God-designed destinies.

Practical Applications from Paul

Romans 12 begins an important section of the apostle Paul’s letter to the “saints” in Rome. Like his other letters, the first half concentrated on doctrinal teachings (what we should believe) and the second half focuses on practical applications (how we should behave).

It is not surprising, therefore, that he teaches humility in this section. Romans 12:3 (NKJV) says, “For I say ... to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.” Further, he writes “Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion” (Rom. 12:16b). Here, “high things” refers to whatever is haughty, snobbish, high-minded,

exclusive (see Rom. 12:16, AMPC) and “humble” suggests those of low social status, position or power.

Having surrendered to those Christ-like qualities, Paul taught believers to honor and bless each other. He writes in Romans 12:10 (NKJV): “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.” In Romans 12:13, he discusses the importance of “distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.” Additionally, Romans 12:17b states, “have regard for good things in the sight of all men.”

We are to be devoted to each other with family-like affection. Remember, we don’t choose our family members, but we can choose to love, honor and accept them. We can seek to outdo others in showing honor and support to our brothers and sisters in Christ who may need our help or hospitality.

Living in the Family of God

The beauty of the “family of God” is that—in Christ Jesus—“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, and there is neither male nor female, for you are all one” (Gal. 3:28a, MEV). According to the Word of God and biblical doctrine, there is now to be no distinction among us. There is only one race—the human race. That is the only “critical race theory” to govern our beliefs and behaviors!

Paul admonished the saints in Rome to seek harmony and peace, especially among our Christian family: “Do not pretend to be wiser than you are. Repay no one evil for evil. Commend what is honest in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as it depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom. 12:16b-18).

Again, we must suppress our tendency to selfishness and aim to do those things that others will acknowledge are honest, proper, noble and above reproach. They should be able to honestly say, “That is a fine, good thing you did.”

Living Peacefully With All People

It is in the context of Christ-like living among the family of God that Paul stressed for us to “live peaceably with all men,” at least to the degree “it is possible” and depends on us. We should make certain that if peace breaks down in our relationships, we are not at fault. We may need to give over the right to avenge ourselves to God—in His time and way.

“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘Vengeance is Mine. I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing so you will heap coals of fire on his head’” (Rom. 12:19-20).

Now, Paul taught the Thessalonians that God’s ultimate justice will include repaying “with tribulation those who trouble you” (2 Thessalonians 1:6b) but the apostle also instructed the Corinthians on how to self-judge persistent problems among themselves (see 1 Corinthians 6:1-11) even as Jesus had guided the early disciples in dealing with a sinning brother (see Matt. 18:15-20). So there are avenues for rectification of issues among believers, but we must first seek harmony, peace and the good of all.

We should make every effort to have love be our guiding principle in Christian relationships with our fellow believers (see Rom. 12:9-13) and also with those who make themselves our enemies (see Rom. 14-21). Paul’s concluding concern was that we “not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21). {eo}

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