

## Transform Practices: Service (Humility)

This week we're looking at how we grow in humility through the practice of service. The pull of position, status and recognition is real for all of us. It's easy to live with our hearts subtly orientated to ourselves and our needs above, or to the neglect of, others. Yet Jesus modelled a different way to live. He said he came 'not be served, but to serve' (Mark 10:45) and revealed that this posture was the pathway to true greatness.

### **PRACTICE – IDENTIFYING PRIDE & PURSUING TRUE GREATNESS<sup>1</sup>**

Pride can be hard to spot! So it's important we take some time to put our hearts under the microscope and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any attitudes or areas in our lives where pride, self-seeking and selfish ambition may be present. Once we have identified those areas, we can set about putting pride to death through the practice of service.

Take some time to look at the five symptoms of pride below, considering if and where they are present in your own heart. Then consider the 'antidote' (a practice of serving) and adopt some actions to help cultivate humility.

1	<p><b>SYMPTOM 1: FAULT-FINDING</b></p> <p>Pride can cause us to filter out the flaws we see in ourselves and focus on the flaws we see in others (See Matt. 7:3-5). Pride is present when we allow our perception of people to be defined by their faults and failures rather than by God's goodness and grace in their lives.</p> <p><i>What it looks like...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A tendency to look down on others and criticise them in my heart (or even to others).</li> <li>• A focus on people's faults and shortcomings rather than the good things about them.</li> </ul> <p><b>ANTIDOTE 1: SERVING THROUGH ENCOURAGEMENT</b></p> <p>Instead of criticising others, make a deliberate choice to encourage and honour people. This will force you to see the good in people rather than the negatives and will 'exalt' them rather than yourself.</p> <p><b>ACTIONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify someone you know you have / have had a critical heart towards and seek to encourage them.</li> <li>• Write a list of positive things about them, giving thanks to God as you do, to help shift your heart attitude them.</li> <li>• Become familiar with your own weaknesses and need for God's grace, to help you become more gracious to others.</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>SYMPTOM 2: A HARSH SPIRIT</b></p> <p>Pride reveals itself in a lack of empathy and compassion for others' weaknesses and struggles. Pride is present when we judge and lack patience with others struggling with things we don't</p> <p><i>What this looks like...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An irritation / exasperation with people who can't just 'get over' their problems.</li> <li>• A reluctance or lack of conviction in praying for people in need.</li> <li>• Sarcasm / Cynicism.</li> </ul> <p><b>ANTIDOTE 2: SERVING THROUGH GENTLENESS AND PRESENCE</b></p> <p>A harsh spirit thrives at a distance. Empathy and compassion are cultivated up close. Jesus modelled this kind of loving service by entering into our messy world and getting up close and personal with our sin and struggles (See Heb. 4:15-16).</p> <p><b>ACTIONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose to get close and stand alongside people in their brokenness, bearing with them in grace and gentleness.</li> <li>• Take time to get to know people and listen to their story in order to understand their struggles.</li> <li>• Commit a daily / weekly time to pray for people you know who are struggling.</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>SYMPTOM 3: SUPERFICIALITY</b></p> <p>When pride lives in our hearts, we're far more concerned with others' perceptions of us than the reality of our hearts. We fight the sins that have an impact on how others view us and make peace with the ones that no one sees. We don't form deep relationships because we only want people to see the best of us.</p> <p><i>What this looks like...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A reluctance to be vulnerable and accountable to people.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from 'Seven subtle symptoms of pride' by Fabienne Harford, Desiring God, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/seven-subtle-symptoms-of-pride>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A disconnect between who we are in public and who we are in private.</li> <li>• An excessive need for people to think well of us that informs our behaviour.</li> </ul> <p><b>ANTIDOTE 3: SERVING THROUGH BEING REAL</b></p> <p>Pride grows in the dark, humility in the light. Pride is easily put to death when you start to allow others to see your weaknesses. Being real serves others because it gives them permission to be vulnerable themselves and give up the temptation to 'perform'.</p> <p><b>ACTIONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Join / start a discipleship group committed to openness and accountability.</li> <li>• Give people honest answers when they ask, 'how are you doing?'</li> <li>• When asked to share spiritual experiences (e.g. in small group), gives answers that speak of your failures and weaknesses rather than your spiritual strengths.</li> </ul>
4	<p><b>SYMPTOM 4: DEFENSIVENESS</b></p> <p>Pride is knocked off balance and thrown into a defensive posture by challenge, rebuke, or even misunderstanding. Pride takes differences of opinion personally and interprets disagreement as attack.</p> <p>What this looks like...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A high view of my importance or abilities that becomes indignant when not recognised.</li> <li>• A strong negative reaction to any criticism or challenge.</li> <li>• An unteachable heart / reluctance to admit I am wrong.</li> </ul> <p><b>ANTIDOTE 4: SERVING THROUGH LISTENING</b></p> <p>We can serve one another, and cultivate humility, by giving our full attention to someone's words, opinions, or challenge, thus honouring them and showing that they are a valued member of the body, not a member we have no need for (see 1 Cor. 12:21-26). We also serve one another by empowering each other to speak life-giving words of correction into one another's lives.</p> <p><b>ACTIONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentionally seek out feedback / input on areas in your life and character you need to grow in.</li> <li>• When someone challenges you on something, rather than pushing back or getting defensive, practice 4 things: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Receive it (with gratitude, not push back)</li> <li>- Repeat it (To make sure you've understood their concern)</li> <li>- Reflect upon it (before the Holy Spirit)</li> <li>- Repent of it (if the challenge is fair and true).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
5	<p><b>SYMPTOM 5: NEGLECTING OTHERS</b></p> <p>Pride prefers our own needs and interests over others. It also gives more attention to helping 'important' people than those we deem not as worthy of our time, efforts, energies. Pride loves the thrill of our help being acknowledged by people with 'power' but is reluctant to help in those areas or with those people where there will be no such acclaim or recognition.</p> <p><i>What this looks like...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A tendency to justify a reluctance to serve because of a sense of 'higher calling'.</li> <li>• A refusal to serve people or areas that you see as 'below' you or demeaning.</li> <li>• A stinginess with your time and money.</li> </ul> <p><b>ANTIDOTE 5: SERVING THROUGH PUTTING OTHERS' NEEDS ABOVE YOUR OWN</b></p> <p>Paul encourages us to have the same attitude as Jesus by not looking only to our own interests, but the interests of others and counting them as more significant than ourselves (see Phil. 2:3-5).</p> <p><b>ACTIONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify needs that you are aware of that you have the means to meet and seek to meet them. (It may require you to change some of your own plans!).</li> <li>• Identify what you consider to be the lowest or most unimpressive serving area in church and choose to joyfully serve on that team.</li> <li>• Reflect upon how you could use what God has given you (your home, finances, car, abilities etc) to serve other people.</li> </ul>