

The Perils of Pride

by C.J. Mahaney

C.J. Mahaney's sermon emphasizes the destructive nature of pride and the essential role of humility in the life of a pastor and believer.

Duration: 1:31:26

Scripture: Psalm 25:9, Proverbs 11:2, Proverbs 16:5, Isaiah 66:2, 1 Corinthians 1:31, Philippians 2:3-4, Colossians 3:12, James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:5-6

Topics: "Humility", "Pride"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God and highlights the struggle with pride as a hindrance to humility. The speaker shares personal experiences and practical steps to weaken pride and cultivate humility, focusing on the need to acknowledge dependence on God, express gratitude, practice spiritual disciplines, and transfer glory to God daily. The sermon concludes with a call to prepare for being replaced, recognize relative unimportance, and play golf as a means to accelerate humility.

Transcript

Well, regardless of your eschatology, I don't think anybody saw this coming. Oh, actually, John, I have bad news for you tonight. Three years ago, when you so kindly and humbly and graciously extended your friendship to me, I became Post Mill.

Because that was the only theological explanation for our friendship I could possibly find. I think in light of what's taking place between us, God's purpose and plan is wrapping up. It is very kind and very humble and very gracious of John to extend this invitation, and I might add very risky as well.

Dangerous. I wasn't 10 steps off of the plane and into the terminal when my cell phone indicated that there was a voicemail. I guess I'm not a particularly effective charismatic.

I certainly did not anticipate that on the other end of the line would be the voice of John MacArthur informing me that he would like me to speak. And I listened to his voice trying to comprehend what was taking place, for I did not come here to work. I came here to play.

And this was not good news, which, if I understand correctly, is why they didn't inform me prior to my getting on the plane. These men know me well. They know me well.

All the way to baggage claim, I formulated my appeal. I thought I had a compelling and convincing appeal. And when I contacted John later that afternoon, I told him I was deeply honored, and I was, and that the invitation was sufficient and there was no need to go through with it.

Invitation alone was good enough for me. I could use that. I can work that.

I can share that with others. And I said to him, I just appealed to him, you have a team of world-class teachers here. Let one of them teach twice.

I think that would be wise and I recommend you do that. And my appeal was immediately denied. And again, I went back to the whole honor thing, which was true.

I deeply moved. And then before the conversation ended, I said to him, John, if, if you have an angelic visitation, or even an impression, and to work with the whole spectrum of possibilities there, to ask one of the other men to speak, rather than myself, I just want you to know, I would be fully and enthusiastically supportive. John laughed and he said to me, that's a problem with you non-cessationists.

And I thought, this isn't going where I wanted it to go right now. So I said, you're breaking up, John. You're breaking up.

You're breaking up. Got to the hotel. Dan Dumas, administrator extraordinaire, comes to inform me that there's a tailor standing by to fit me for a suit.

This is worse than the invitation. So I tried to humbly say, well, is this John's preference? Because I'm here to serve. I want to serve.

I think I want to serve. I'm trying to serve. And if, I certainly not trying to make a statement with clothes.

Obviously, I didn't bring a suit. And what's John's preference? And so Dan informed me that John, he didn't think, cared. And so I said, well, that, well, that's great.

If he, if he doesn't care, I don't think it'd be the best use of church money to buy me a suit. Good possibility. I will never wear it again.

Okay. It could just be wise to add that amount to my honorarium. That'll work.

So as we, as we walk downstairs, I said to John what I've said to him repeatedly, since he issued this invitation. This is indeed a life and ministry highlight to address you men. I told John it's exceeded only by the highlight he already provided me by inviting me to speak to Grace Community Church last year.

Church that he has cared for and pastored for almost 40 years. So I have that highlight in my past and now this highlight in the present. And I am, I'm deeply honored.

And John, I hope it is certainly my desire to serve you. And I hope I don't disappoint you. And if I do, don't tell me.

Just keep that to yourself and don't ever invite me back. And obviously we are all, we are all disappointed that John Piper isn't standing here right now. Um, I wish he was standing here right now.

And John kindly sent me an email this afternoon. And it was very kind of him. Very kind of him to be thinking about me in the midst of his grief.

And it made me to tears. And I would encourage you to read his narration from his journal as he sat beside his father. His narration of his father's death.

It is deeply moving. And I assured him by email that we were all deeply disappointed and deeply cared for him. And I said to John MacArthur that I really appreciate that he cares more about John Piper personally than he does about this conference.

Um, by the way, he communicated to John, you stay there. Uh, that says a lot about this man who was leading this conference. And I know all of us, yes, I'm in all of us appreciate that kind of care and leadership.

And let's pray now. I'm going to pray for John and Noel and then for our time together in God's word. Father, we do pray for John Piper, a man we love so deeply respect and miss in this moment.

And we pray Lord that in this time of grief that you would draw near to him and comfort him Lord by your spirit like only you can. Draw near to John and to Noel. Draw near to the children as they gather.

Lord thank you for the gift of grief. Thank you for the gift of tears. May they experience that gift of grief and tears and of joy as well for they grieve with hope.

And we thank you. How can we thank you enough for the hope they have as a result of your son's sacrifice on the cross for our sins. Thank you for that hope and the difference that hope makes in this moment of most painful grief and separation.

And how we thank you Lord that this separation, it's a temporary one. So Lord may your comfort sustain John. Give him grace to lead his family through this difficult and challenging time.

We pray that he would feel and know our support even this evening. But most important we pray that he would sense your nearness. Now Father thank you for this privilege and this joy.

You know how I feel and you have heard me articulate in private my inadequacy, my dependence, and Lord my confidence that you desire to bless these men. Lord you know of my deep respect for these men that these men seated before me are doing the most important and difficult work as they care for your people, the church that has been purchased by your son's blood. So I call upon you now to assist me in this sacred task in this place.

I call upon you now to grant me the sacred anointing so that I might serve these men. I call upon you now to grant all of us the gift of illumination so that as we give attention to your word we sense you drawing near to us in and through the preaching of your word. And I pray Lord that there would be the appropriate transforming effect from the preaching and application of your word.

I pray for this session. I pray for every session. I pray for every main session and every seminar.

Lord may there be an abundance of fruit from this conference. Immediate fruit and enduring fruit Lord. I pray your blessing on this church Lord.

Thank you for grace community church Lord. Thank you for the way this church serves. Thank you for the way this church serves not only faithfully but joyfully.

We pray Lord that as they have so unselfishly served us, pour out your blessing in every form and every way on John, the pastoral team, the elders, and this church. We pray Lord. We pray.

Bless this church. Advance the gospel in this community like never before through this church. May in the coming years they know the greatest prosperity they have known in their life as the gospel is proclaimed from this church.

We pray and we thank you in Jesus name. Amen. Please turn in your bibles to Isaiah chapter 66.

Isaiah chapter 66. And I'm going to read verses one and two and our attention will be confined to these verses. John asked me to share something personal and something pastoral and something practical.

Something of the values that we have sought to transfer to the pastors in Sovereign Grace that we have the privilege to care for, serve, and lead. So this is my attempt to fulfill his request. Isaiah chapter 66 verse 1 where we read, thus says the Lord, Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool.

What is the house that you would build for me and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made and so all these things came to be declares the Lord. But this, this is the one to whom I will look. He who is humble and humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

Just prior to my home church, Covenant Life Church, celebrating our 25th anniversary as a church, Gary Ricucci, a close friend and one of the founding fathers of Covenant Life Church, addressed a gathering of the parents and youth of the church providing them with an historic overview of the origins of the church. Gary mentioned that evening that though much has changed over the past 25 years and particularly the appearance of certain pastors, certain values, certain values present at the inception of Covenant Life Church by God's grace remain unchanged. And listening, listening intently that evening was a new member to Covenant Life Church, a recent member of Covenant Life Church named Jim.

And prior to his involvement with Covenant Life, Jim participated in a church, a church he loved and regretfully a church where a serious division took place, ultimately resulting in a church split. And that evening, as Gary listed the passions and the priorities of Covenant Life from our inception, as Jim listened, he compared his former church with Covenant Life Church, seeking to discover what the differences were, what the differences were and why his experience at Covenant Life was different. That evening, as Gary reminisced, he said that we had a love for God's Word.

As he thought back and characterized our initial immature beginning, he drew attention to the love for holy scripture that was present in Covenant Life Church. And as he made this point, Jim said to himself, yep, we had that. Gary continued and he drew attention to the gratefulness for the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ that was present in passionate form at the inception of Covenant Life Church.

And Jim thought, yep, we had that too. Gary accented the emphasis on grace and Jim thought, yep, had that. Gary went on to talk about the importance and priority of relationships, and once again Jim thought to himself and responded, yep, had that.

And then Gary said the following. Gary said, and there was an emphasis on humility, especially among the leaders, and Jim thought, nope, that we did not have. That humility we did not have.

Neither, it appears, did the Israelites being addressed by God in Isaiah 66. They had a unique identity and nationality. They had the law of God.

They had divinely prescribed religious activity. They had the covenant. They had the temple, but they lacked humility, or as Jim would say, nope, that they did not have.

And so as an expression of God's mercy, God draws their attention away from their assumption of privilege as Israelites and away from their preoccupation with and confidence in the temple and ritual and describes for them the one, the one to whom I will look. And this passage, like all of scripture, was written not only for the original recipients but with a future audience in mind as well, with us in mind, with us this evening in mind as well. It is possible for us to gather at this conference primarily or exclusively preoccupied with matters that are in themselves legitimate and important and critical for ministry.

Sound doctrine, our role and responsibility as pastors, expository preaching, evangelism, church planting, I mean this conference is effectively designed to equip us in all these areas, perhaps like no other conference I am aware of. And for that I am grateful and indebted to those who serve and lead us in this conference. But tonight, tonight I believe, I believe the Savior would draw our attention away from the necessary pursuit of excellence and effectiveness in these areas, in these ministry skills, and direct our attention to that which is fundamental, fundamental to all of ministry, our hearts, our hearts, and specifically draw our attention to the subtle and deadly effect of pride in our hearts and the divine requirement for humility in our hearts.

Brothers, these matters of the heart are most important and most serious for all Christians, but they are particularly important and serious for all who are called to pastoral ministry. So this evening I would like to address you about, number one, the perils of pride, number two, the promise of humility, and then I would like to conclude with purposeful application, a section devoted to purposeful application. And I want you to know from the outset I address you tonight with a certain and definite reluctance.

I address you with a certain and definite reluctance as a replacement for John Piper. No one can replace John Piper. And I address you with a certain and definite reluctance as relates to this topic.

Some of you might be aware I wrote a book on humility. It's titled Humility, True Greatness, and it was a humbling experience writing a book on humility in countless ways. As I would write in any public context, I would be sitting in Starbucks and well-meaning people from the church would come and see me and inquire as to what I was doing, and I was tempted to evasive language.

How do you say to somebody, I'm writing a book about humility? How do you break that news to somebody? What are you doing? I'm writing. What are you writing? I'm writing a book. What's it on? Stuff.

Please go away, you know. And eventually I had to divulge what I was doing, and every time I think, each and every time, it's almost like it inspired people to assume they had comedic gifts. It did.

So I was subject to all kinds of material as individuals were inspired to try to say something humorous about how incredible it was for somebody to write a book on humility. It was a humbling experience. I can tell you that the one recurring, inspiring thought I had through the whole writing process was this, you idiot.

You idiot. Why did you agree to write a book on humility? Because it wasn't my idea. As a matter of fact, my close friends, Mark Deversy down in the front row, had played a significant role in this, and I still hold him responsible for this idea.

So this, I did not initiate this. This was not my idea. And throughout the whole process, I had to explain to people why I was writing the book, and here's why I'm reluctant to address you tonight.

It's real simple. To my shame, I'm not humble. When Churchill said of his political rival, Clement Attlee, that he was a humble little man with much to be humble about, the second part of that would be very true of me, and the sad harsh reality is the first part isn't true.

I have much to be humble about, that I would not consider myself a humble man. I'm a proud man who is pursuing humility by the grace of God. So please understand, in drawing your attention to this subject, I don't do it as someone who is some model, an example of humility, and these verses have been having their fresh effect on my soul as I have had the privilege to interact with them this afternoon, and so I come to you with reluctance, and I hope you hear that reluctant tone throughout this message this evening.

Point one, the perils of pride. The perils of pride. Pride has quite the history.

It would appear that the history of pride precedes Adam and Eve. Pride would appear to be the very first sin. In Isaiah chapter 14, we are informed of Lucifer's motivation.

Led by Lucifer, powerful angelic creatures possessing beauty and glory far beyond our comprehension, arrogantly desired recognition and status equal to God himself, and God swiftly and severely judged them. If I understand correctly, pride not only appears to be the first sin, but appears to be the essence of all sin. And as I study my Bible, it appears that pride is the most serious sin.

There appears to be no sin God hates more than pride. And as I'm sure is obvious to you, biblical support for this position just abounds. The proud man heads up the seven abominations in Proverbs chapter 6, verse 17.

Consider this verse. Don't turn there, just listen and be freshly affected by this perspective. Consider the divine perspective of pride that's revealed in Proverbs 16, verse 5. Everyone, everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord.

I mean, stronger language for sin just cannot be found in Holy Scripture. And in Proverbs chapter 8, verse 13, we read the following, the fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance I hate.

Pride and arrogance I hate. Let me ask you, what do you hate? What do you hate? Typically we confine the word hate to the trivial, or at least I do. Here's a sampling of what I hate.

I hate meatloaf. I do, I just hate it. I hate, even more, I hate cottage cheese.

I hate cottage cheese. I hate looking at cottage cheese, even the appearance of cottage cheese. And I particularly hate it when someone who eats cottage cheese opens their mouth while they're eating cottage cheese.

These are things I hate. More importantly, I hate the Dallas Cowboys. Oh man, I knew you were discerning.

Okay, I do hate the Dallas Cowboys. I hate Duke basketball. Well, we're just getting started.

I hate all professional sports teams from New York. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And you should too, okay? You should too.

Now, don't misunderstand me, okay? I don't hate people. This is a well-thought-out hatred. I do not hate people, okay? I have a certain respect for Krzyzewski, a certain respect for Joe Torre.

This is not directed at people. I hate institutions. I hate uniforms.

And I hate the media bias that is so evident in relation to the Dallas Cowboys and Duke basketball or any professional team from New York. And I, in particular, hate the Dallas Cowboys because they have appointed and anointed themselves America's team. Therefore, you should join me in despising that kind of blatant arrogance, all right? Those are a few of the things I hate.

Here's what I've discovered as I study Scripture. Scripture never trivializes God's holy hatred of sin, never. And in our more reflective moments, we to some degree appropriately share God's hatred of certain sins.

So, I, like you, hate abortion. I, like you, hate child abuse. I, like you, hate racism.

Listen, regardless of what you hate, you and I hate nothing like God hates pride. We hate nothing like God hates pride. Why? Why does God hate pride so passionately? Why does God hate pride so intensely? Well, here's why.

Pride is when sinful creatures aspire to the status and position of God, refusing to acknowledge their dependence upon God. I like Charles Bridges' definition for pride found in his fine commentary on Proverbs. He writes, Pride lifts up the heart against God.

And I love this phrase. It affects me. It contends for supremacy with Him.

That is the essence of pride, contending for the supremacy with Him. Bridges continues to write, How unseemly, moreover, is this sin, a creature so utterly dependent, so fearfully guilty, yet proud in heart. Proud person seeks to glorify himself and not God.

Proud person attempts to rob God of the glory only He is worthy to receive. Pride has many forms. Pride has countless forms, it would appear, but only one end, one end, that being self-glorification.

And in and throughout Scripture, God reveals Himself as actively opposed to the proud. God, it says in 1 Peter chapter 5, God opposes the proud. Present tense continuous.

God opposes the proud. And it's very clear that the proud will not go indefinitely unpunished or lacking discipline. John Calvin stated that God cannot bear with seeing His glory appropriated by the creature in even the smallest degree.

So intolerable to Him is the sacrilegious arrogance of those who by praising themselves obscure His glory as far as they can. And the fruit of pride, well, the fruit of pride is sobering and it's frightening. Pride is potent.

It appears pride can stop a revival, at least that would be Edwards' observation. Edwards would attribute the premature end of the Great Awakening to, quote, undiscerned spiritual pride. And he concluded with regret that the single greatest cause of the miscarriage of revival was pride.

Pride undermines the unity of the Spirit. Pride ultimately can divide a church. Pride breeds quarrels and strife.

We read in Proverbs chapter 13, pride brings down leaders. We read in Proverbs 16 that pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Oh, be sobered by that verse.

Be frightened by that verse. Be warned by that verse. Be protected by that verse.

And be informed the next time you hear of a leader who falls, well, the next public figure to fall, there is the root issue revealed. Oh, the circumstances might appear to be complex, but at root it's simple and it's simply explained in Proverbs. Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

An excellent article for Table Talk magazine, Mike Renahan wrote the following, pride ruins pastors and churches more than any other thing. Pride ruins pastors and churches more than any other thing. It is more insidious in the church than radon in the home.

Well, if this quote is accurate, and I think it is, we as pastors should be sobered. We should be sobered about the potential effect of pride, and we should be diligent in our mortification of pride. Brothers, let's not flatter ourselves this evening to differing degrees and in different forms.

We are all proud. We're all proud, and we're all vulnerable to pride. And we're all normally more perceptive of pride in others than we are in ourselves.

I know I am. I see your pride. It's all too obvious to me at times.

It's my pride that I am all too blind to so often. So it's not if pride exists in your heart. It's where it exists and how it's expressed.

So I want you to be convinced from the outset of your own tendency to pride, because you have the same tendency. You have as much tendency to pride as anyone, as everyone else. And so we all gather here this evening in need of illumination.

We all gather here in need of illumination and discernment and conviction as relates to the presence and the power of pride in our hearts, because this radon resides in our soul. And we need discernment in order to perceive where and how. And the good news tonight is I, the Lord, search the heart.

And Lord, we welcome your search this evening. We need you to search our hearts. We ask you to search our hearts.

And we ask you to reveal the presence of pride so that we might be protected, Lord, from the perils of pride. Point two, the promise of humility. The promise of humility found in verse two.

This is the one to whom I will look, he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. This is amazing. This verse two is amazing.

It is an astonishing, astounding statement by God Himself. The eyes of the Lord are a theme throughout Scripture. Obviously, the most familiar verse being found in 2 Chronicles chapter 16, for the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth.

Now, obviously, God doesn't have eyes, but He uses this metaphor in order to obtain our attention and draw our attention to this rare quality that He singles out as capturing His attention. Humility captures His attention. Nothing escapes His notice, but one thing captures His gaze.

He is aware of all things, but He is searching for one thing. To this one, I will look, he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. And note here in verse two of Isaiah 66, we don't find a command.

This is not a command to humble ourselves. Humility is not commanded in this particular text, but it is held out to us as divinely attractive. God is not only passionately opposed to pride, He is decisively drawn to humility.

The one who is omniscient, the one who is omni-aware, is specifically attentive to the humble. Specifically attentive to the humble, personally attentive to the humble, personally supportive of the humble. He is particularly and personally supportive of the humble.

That same mighty hand, if you will, that crushes the proud, supports and exalts. He opposes the proud. Warning gives grace to the humble.

So, perceiving the perils of pride isn't sufficient. We must also discern the promise of humility. But be aware that momentary inspiration is not sufficient.

So, near education, and I'm sure you are familiar with all I've brought to your attention so far, but near education about the perils of pride or the promise of humility is not sufficient. Momentary inspiration this evening is not sufficient. There must be specific application of truth to our lives for there to be transformation.

So, it isn't sufficient tonight to merely preach about humility. It isn't sufficient for us to merely admire humility or even to desire humility because it is possible, it is possible to admire humility while remaining proud. It is possible for me this evening to preach on humility while neglecting pride in my own heart and fail to cultivate humility.

So, there must be purposeful application. There must be purposeful application of truth to our hearts and lives if there is ever going to be genuine transformation and the genuine cultivation of humility. So, mere attendance at this conference does not ensure the creation and the cultivation of humility.

Now, I commend you for attending. We need to attend conferences like this so that we can be taught and equipped by world-class teachers seated here in the front row, but you shouldn't assume that merely attending this conference ensures the creation and cultivation of humility in your life. It does not.

Actually, mere attendance at this conference could add to the you came with. Biblical knowledge comes with this on the outside of the package, handle with care, and listen, apply to your life. So, there must be very specific, purposeful application for there to be the mortification of pride and the cultivation of humility.

John Stott has written, in fact, at every stage of our Christian development and in every sphere of our Christian discipleship, listen, pride is the greatest enemy and humility our greatest friend. Every stage, every sphere, pride is the greatest enemy and humility our greatest friend. Now, I'm convinced of that.

I believe you are convinced of that. Pride is my greatest enemy. Humility is my greatest friend at every stage and in every sphere of Christian discipleship.

So, convinced of this, I must consider how for the rest of my life I can deliberately, listen, for the rest of my life in the shadow of the cross, motivated by grace, how can I deliberately and diligently mortify pride on a daily basis, my greatest enemy, and how can I deliberately and diligently cultivate humility, my greatest friend. And so, the following would be, well, would be, I hope, in effect, ways to tremble at His Word, purposeful application, ways to tremble at His Word, ways to apply His Word to our lives and experiencing the sweet transforming effect of His Word. These are lifetime practices I commend to you for your

consideration in the process of mortifying your greatest enemy and cultivating your greatest friend.

Number one, number one, study the attributes of God. Study the attributes of God. Study the character of God.

And I recommend that you have a consistent diet of studying the incommunicable attributes in particular, the attributes of God for which there is no human reflection or no human illustration can be found, the attributes of God that God does not share with others, the attributes of God that are normally the object of questions by younger children. I think back to Chad as he grew up and the number of times we would be out fishing, and he would, he just assumes, Chad just assumed, Chad just assumed that whatever the question, I had an answer. Now, Chad was met so often with the following answer, I don't, I don't, here's the following answer, often, that's a good question, son, I don't know.

Chad heard that and has heard that so much that I think Chad is convinced, you know, my dad, he means well, but he doesn't know a whole lot. He doesn't know a whole lot. And if other options don't work out in my career, I think I'm going to go into pastoring because I hear I don't know a lot from my dad.

Well, the reason I often said I don't know to Chad was he was asking about, he was asking questions related to mystery that I didn't know. He thought they were simple questions, so as he cast, he would ask me a question about how God began, when God began, or another one, hey, dad, explain the Trinity to me. Or the most difficult one, what is a concubine? Okay, these are, these are difficult questions.

These are, these are mysteries. And please note in verse 1, God, God is revealing His greatness. God is revealing incommunicable attributes.

He is infinite, and He is independent. One can hear the words of 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 17, now to the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be glory and honor forever and ever. Amen.

God is infinite. God is independent. I mean, at this point, we are definitely swimming in the deep end of the pool theologically.

New Bible dictionary says when we say that God is infinite spirit, we pass completely out of the reach of our experience. You might have missed that. We just passed completely out of the reach of our experience.

He's infinite, not bound by a body, not confined. He's free from all limitations, space, and distance, omnipresent. R.C. Sproul says He's everywhere equally present.

Ha ha ha. Let's think about that for a second. He's everywhere equally present.

There is no place God isn't fully present. Listen, I can only be one place, and even there, I'm not always present. Check out God.

He is everywhere equally present. He is infinite, and He's independent. He's self-existent.

He's self-sufficient. Again, to quote Dr. Sproul, the grand difference between a human being and a supreme being is precisely this. Apart from God, I cannot exist.

Apart from me, God does exist. God does not need me in order for Him to be. I do need God in order for me to be.

This is the difference between what we call self-existent being and dependent being. We are dependent. We are fragile.

We cannot live without air, without water, without food. No human being has the power of being within himself. Life is lived between two hospitals.

We need a support system from birth to death to sustain life. We are like flowers that bloom and then wither and fade. This is how we differ from God.

God does not wither. God does not fade. God is not fragile.

Matthew Henry said, the greatest and best man in the world must say, by the grace of God, I am what I am. But God says, absolutely, I am that I am. Now listen, what is the effect of even this brief contemplation of these incommunicable attributes? I think the effect is humility.

That's the effect. When you contemplate the character of God, the attributes of God, how God is so different from us, the effect of that contemplation is humility. Edward says that the saints in glory are so much employed in praise because number one, they are perfect in humility, and number two, they have so great a sense of the infinite distance between them and God.

Now listen, the more we are aware of this distance and the difference between us and God, the more humility we will experience and express. So, I recommend that as part of your diet, part of your spiritual diet, you study the attributes of God. Number two, each day survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died.

Don Carson relates an interview that took place that he conducted and led with Carl Henry, one of the foremost evangelical theologians of the latter half of the twentieth century. At the time, Mr. Henry was in his seventies, and Don Carson asked Mr. Henry how he had remained humble for so many decades, and this is how Mr. Henry responded. He said, how can anyone be arrogant when he stands beside the cross? How can anyone be arrogant when he stands beside the cross? Oh, what I desire to do, I'm sure you as well, I desire each day to stand as close to the cross as I possibly can.

Why? Because it's harder for me to be arrogant when I stand close to the cross. Therefore, I want to stand as close as I can on a daily basis so that my greatest enemy, pride, can be weakened, and my greatest friend, humility, can be cultivated. Number three, study the doctrines of grace.

Study the doctrines of grace. Consistently study the doctrines of grace, not primarily or not first and foremost for their presentation in the context of your church, but for the sake of your soul, because the doctrines of grace are intended to have a humbling effect on our soul. To be theologically Reformed and personally arrogant is a profound contradiction, a profound one.

Therefore, we who espouse the doctrines of grace, we who love the doctrines of grace, should be different because of the doctrines of grace. And that difference should be discernible even in casual conversations. There should be a discernible humility because we have been humbled by the doctrines of grace.

Next, study the doctrine of sin. I'm going to go quickly through a number of these. I have some hope I'm going to get to some practices for a given day, although looking at the clock, it's not looking good right now.

But we were going to at least make the attempt, and we are well-meaning. Study the doctrine of sin. I turned to John before I went up and said, how long am I supposed to preach? Preach as long as you want.

I just said, you should never, ever say that to me. That is so kind of you and very unhelpful. And here's the problem.

You are so attentive and responsive that one feels like one could preach on and on, and you would still be attentive and responsive. Well, that's very kind of you. I'm not sure that's representative of everybody in here, okay? Yeah.

Although, I was told earlier that both John and Steve clocked in at an hour and 20, so I'm working with that time frame. That's nice to know. I can get this in at an hour and 20.

Study the doctrine of sin. John Owen wrote, two things are needed to humble us. First, let us consider God in His greatness, glory, holiness, power, majesty, and authority.

Then, let us consider ourselves in our mean, abject, and sinful condition. Yes, let us, and no one will assist you more effectively in the study of the doctrine of sin in my reading experience than John Owen himself. Following sign appeared on a department store dressing room mirror.

It read, objects in the mirror may appear bigger than they actually are. Let me just assure you, that will not be your experience with the doctrine of sin. You will not appear bigger than you are.

So, let me recommend, if you have not familiarized yourself with volume six, Temptation and Sin, or even the abridged version, so it comes in decaf as well, to familiarize yourself with the writings of Owen and study the doctrine of sin and experiencing the humble, humbling effect of that doctrine upon your soul. But don't just study it, apply it. Next would be apply the doctrine of sin.

Apply the doctrine of sin, because it's not difficult to acknowledge. I don't find it difficult to acknowledge pervasive depravity. What I find difficult is to specifically confess an area of pervasive depravity.

That's what I find difficult. Specificity in confessing, but acknowledging an area of specific depravity I find difficult, and so it's not sufficient for us to study the doctrine of sin. We must apply the doctrine of sin, and so let me ask you, are you applying the doctrine of sin? Are you specifically confessing sin to the appropriate individuals? Are you specifically confessing your sin to the appropriate individuals, and are you specifically confessing temptations to the appropriate individuals, or are you presenting a carefully edited version of yourself? Is your confession specific and full, or is it selective and partial and ultimately misleading? We must not only study the doctrine of sin, we must apply the doctrine of sin.

Next, these are all practices over a lifetime for the purpose of weakening our greatest enemy pride and cultivating our greatest friend humility. Next, invite and pursue correction. It's not sufficient just to say this evening, hey, I'm open.

Now, a humble individual invites it. A humble individual recognizes that others are reluctant to provide correction. A humble individual recognizes that there's a relationship in Proverbs between wisdom and correction, that if you want to be wise, the means of receiving wisdom is correction.

Therefore, you must invite correction. You must pursue correction. Are you consistently aggressive in pursuing and inviting correction? Let me ask you this, would your wife, would your children, would

members of your pastoral team, would the elders say, you are easy to entreat? If I interviewed them, would they say, you are easy to entreat, or would they say, you are very difficult to entreat, and that they avoid correcting you or bringing any corrective observation to you because of the stubbornness they encounter in you? I mean, let me just encourage you to give your wife this gift in particular when you return home from this conference.

But let me just do an exercise. Let's just pause for a moment. Let's pause for a moment and contrast what our wives experienced today with what we experienced today.

Okay? For most of us, our wives served and sacrificed today. They cared for the children. They trained the children, and they probably fell into bed at some point exhausted.

Now, pastoral ministry involves many sacrifices, but coming to this conference would not qualify as a sacrifice. Eighty degrees, world-class teachers, hotel, world-class food, great bookstore, buying many books, being with friends, fellowship, laughing, eating large volumes of food, buying more books, listening to another world-class teacher, going to another seminar. Now, when you get home, and your wife, who no doubt has been praying for you and is excited about what you're experiencing here, will inevitably ask you, how was the conference? If all you say is, it was good, it was real good, she's not going to say, oh, thank you.

I feel like I was there. No need for me to go with that detailed description. Can I encourage you, take this gift home to your wife, because she's been serving you while you're here, making it possible for you to be here.

So, take this gift home to her. Start to arrange it even this evening or tomorrow, before you get home. Arrange for a time, as soon as possible, after you arrive home, to arrange for someone to care for the children.

Take her to some context where you can talk for multiple hours, unhurried, undistracted, and give her the specifics and the details, and thank her for making it possible for you to come, and for being so supportive about you coming to this conference. And then, before you're done, give her two gifts. Ask her two questions.

Ask her this, love, where do I need to grow in serving and leading you? Love, if you knew I wouldn't react with sinful anger, how would you answer the following question? Okay, mister, I've been to a conference, transformed, totally, is home now. Where? Where do I need to grow in serving and leading the children? And secondly, or leading you, number one, and then secondly, where do I need to grow in serving and leading the children? Where do I need to grow, love? Where do I need to grow in serving and leading you? And secondly, where do I need to grow in serving and leading the children? And I tell you, she will respond, okay? She'll most likely say something like, is there another one of these conferences? How regular are these conferences? Because I'm, I want you there. I want you at these conferences.

I'm loving the Shepherds Conference. If this is the fruit of the Shepherds Conference, I want you at the Shepherds Conference. Well, if you're really serious about mortifying pride and cultivating humility, you will take advantage of this practice and invite and pursue correction from the one who knows you the best and loves you the most, and that obviously would be your wife.

Now, I want to conclude with just a few that are even more specific for pastors. Seize the humbling potential of the preaching task. Seize the humbling potential of the preaching task, and this easily could be a whole message in and of itself.

Be careful to examine your heart after you preach and recognize the difference between being dissatisfied with a sermon and discouraged about a sermon. There's a difference, at least in my experience. There's a difference between being dissatisfied with a sermon and discouraged about a sermon.

I think we should be, to some degree, consistently and always dissatisfied with sermons because we can always improve our preaching, and therefore, we should have a group who we invite into a critiquing process. There isn't, to my knowledge, there isn't a sermon I preach where I don't have a group of individuals, and with this sermon, I have world-class teachers who I will be inviting into a critiquing process because I benefit immeasurably from what they're hearing and thinking while they listen because they're the best, so help me because I'm not, and points of adjustment can make all the difference, and I, at times, have to beg people, say, look, other people are going to hear this sermon. Have mercy on them and help me by providing me with a critique, so I don't think I've ever been satisfied with a sermon.

I'm always pursuing critique of sermons and learning how to grow in this craft and task, but there's a difference between being dissatisfied and being discouraged, and I'm all too familiar with being discouraged. Now, discouraged is normally a word we use, and we think of it as kind of a morally neutral word, a morally neutral category. Well, I don't think that's accurate.

I think if we apply the doctrine of sin to discouragement as we experience it in our soul, I think we might find that underneath discouragement, at times, if not often, if not always, is pride, and I know I have preached many a sermon where, after the sermon, I'm not dissatisfied with the sermon, or I'm not just dissatisfied with the sermon. I am discouraged about the sermon. My wife would say, no, you are depressed about the sermon, not just discouraged about the sermon, and I've discovered over the years that when I'm discouraged about the sermon, that normally means that I was more desirous of impressing people than serving people when I preach that sermon, and I've realized that the whole preparation and preaching task, preparation for preaching and proclamation, is a means of sanctification where all too often pride is revealed.

So, seize the humbling potential of the preaching task and be careful to examine your heart after you preach. Next, use unflattering illustrations of yourself in your sermons. Now, please don't misunderstand.

I'm not advocating using the pulpit as a way to draw attention to yourself, but I do believe we can serve our people effectively by strategically using unflattering illustrations of ourselves in our sermons. This is a simple process. No sermon I prepare is prepared until I've gone back through the sermon to see if there's some way I can use a personal unflattering illustration in a sermon, because I have found that the people I serve through preaching assume I'm different if I don't inform them I'm not, and they find incredible hope when I inform them of my sin.

They do. So, I don't just make general references to conflict with my wife. I describe for them in detail where and how I sinned against my wife, where and how I was convicted, where and how I confessed to her, and it is incredible the hope that imparts to the entire church, because they tend to view us as different.

You're up there. You're way up there, and you're powerful, and you're preaching and raising your voice, and it's just something to behold. No, I'm familiar with sin, and I want you to be familiar with my sin appropriately as well.

So, where can I strategically include an appropriate confession, an unflattering personal illustration? I've just found the response to that to be immediate and individuals to have hope, and it cultivates trust in preaching when individuals experience humility from the one preaching. Next, as a pastor, recognize your theological limitations. Recognize your theological limitations.

I've heard Dr. Sproul say that it was the meticulous Calvin who warned that even the best theologians are probably right 80 percent of the time. So, Calvin was right 80 percent of the time. So, okay, let's work the math here.

In relation to Calvin, in comparison with Calvin, what's your percentage? Think about it now. On your best day, on your most anointed moment, what is your percentage of theological accuracy? So, if on his best day he was right 80 percent of the time, well, what would my percentage be? I think it's helpful. Awareness of our percentage should have a humbling effect on our attitude, and our instruction, and our tone of voice, and our conversation.

And for me, if you add to this the fact that I've never had an original thought, never, never had an original thought. Don't anticipate ever having an original thought. God could never trust me with an original thought.

So, whenever I'm teaching, I'm really, I'm just, I'm always standing on the shoulders of another person. Whatever view I have that's helped you tonight, at any point in time, you could raise your hand and say, who told you that? Where'd you read that? Who said that? And I could just say, I could stop at any point and say, well, this guy said that, and I read that here. There's nothing original here.

Never had an original thought. Just telling you what I read, just standing on somebody else's shoulders, that has a humbling effect to be reminded of that. And let me tell you, I should never leave a different impression when I teach.

I should never leave the impression that, well, I'm just, there's just original thoughts, thoughts that are originating within me on a consistent basis, because how does one humbly say this? I am a theological phenom, okay? That would be... I'm not. I don't have any formal education. I'm really an idiot in many ways.

I am. I'm a great athlete, but I'm an idiot in terms of all things academic. I'm an average person.

Average person, average pastor, here to represent average pastors and persons everywhere. That's what I am. Therefore, it's unacceptable for me to be arrogant about anything I know, because I learned everything I know from someone else.

It doesn't originate with me. Next, prepare to be replaced. Prepare to be replaced.

Now, listen, I'm not assuming that the timing for you to be replaced is imminent. I'm not assuming that, but the timing is irrelevant. You will be replaced, okay? Being replaced is inevitable, and if you don't prepare now for the inevitable, you probably won't be prepared when the inevitable arrives.

Therefore, I'm trying to care for you and remind you that the inevitable is one day closer than it was yesterday. Are you prepared to be replaced? I mean, I don't have time to go into detail, and it is a pronounced expression of God's mercy in my life, but my conversion was most unexpected and dramatic. I wandered into a small Bible study during the Jesus movement that was actually--the Bible study was in decline.

The adults who were in leadership there somehow observed something in my life and asked me to speak. I had no category for speaking, no training in speaking, and they said, we'd like you to speak, and we'd like you to speak on joy. I was thrown out of speech class in high school appropriately, so I sat in the hall for the entire year because I was so disruptive in the midst of speech class.

That's where I should have been, and they asked me to speak on joy. All I had was a King James Bible with one of those pathetic concordances in the back that never has the verse that you want. It's like the person who put it together said, don't put all the verses they might be looking for.

Leave those out. I found my way to Nehemiah 8.10, the joy of the Lord is your strength, and that was my first sermon, which I think God was not recording. That began numerous invitations to speak and ended up in a very short period of time without any formal training speaking in front of large conferences and Jesus festivals, and in the midst of that I'm seeking a father in the faith.

I mean, I am aware I have no training. I need help. I had a voracious appetite to read now, but I had no direction.

I needed a father in the faith. I was searching for a father in the faith. In the mystery of God's will at the time, and it was a mystery to me big time, I didn't find a father in the faith, even though I looked, and this small Bible study of about 75 people grew within two years to more than 2,000 people on Tuesday night, and it was also unexpected, and as close as I've come to revival, and in the midst of it, I am in my early 20s.

I am searching for a father in the faith. I'm not successful in finding a father in the faith. At 23, we start Covenant Life Church, and very soon after starting the church, I am already praying.

I'm praying prayers like this. I'm saying, Lord, if you will allow me to live long enough, I would love when I'm older to be a father in the faith to younger men who are having a similar experience that I have had, so have mercy on me and allow me to live to an older age so that I can provide some form of fathering for young men like myself, and that really, I think, is the origin of our pastor's college, is that experience, so it was obviously part of God's mysterious divine purpose for my life and for sovereign grace, and then secondly, I began to pray for whoever would take my place. I was somehow just aware this is temporary, and so I began to pray for that.

I had no idea that individual was, but I began to pray for that individual and to prepare, even at 23 years old, to be replaced, and I look back, and I don't know who encouraged me to do that. I don't remember receiving any counsel to do that or reading any book to do that, but I was doing that. If you were interacting with me at 23 and 24, it wasn't like I thought it was imminent, but I was already praying for the person who would take my place, even though it would be 27 years before anyone took my place, but I was already praying, and I would encourage you to at least begin now praying somebody is going to take your place.

I mean, I would sit in the desk in Covenant Life, and I would say, this isn't my desk, really. These aren't my books. This isn't my chair.

I'm keeping it warm for somebody else. Somebody else is going to sit in this desk and use these books and care for this church, and how can I prepare for them? How can I identify them? How can I train them? Because as I read about my historical hero, it didn't seem that Charles Spurgeon, and one would be hesitant to critique Charles Spurgeon, but it didn't seem that he did prepare for his death or prepare his church for the transition, and I studied his life, and I thought, I love this church with all my heart. Therefore, I want to give as a gift to this church that I love with all my heart this transition.

I want to initiate it. I want to train the individual. I want to lead them through it, and I prayed, Lord, by your grace, please allow me to live long enough so that I can be a part of the church on the other side of it and support and make that senior pastor a success, and by the grace of God, Joshua Harris appeared on the scene in over a seven-year period.

I was able to identify and train, and this is a man who I would argue, and I think it's unarguable, is more gifted than I am, and three years ago, I was able to set him in as the senior pastor of Covenant Life Church, and now I live on the other side of that, and I would just think of myself as the richest former senior pastor in the world as I sit on the front row and cheer him on as I meet with him each Tuesday when we are both in town, and I want you to have a similar experience. I believe God intends for many of you to have a similar experience. Are you prepared? Have you even started praying about it? Are you looking around? Do you realize how much your church needs you to lead that can't be delegated to someone else, shouldn't be delegated to someone else? You should do it.

It's a joy. It's a joy. Prepare to be replaced.

Next, recognize your relative unimportance. Listen, it is not my intention to in any way minimize the invaluable means of grace any pastor is present to their church and will continue to be to their church. You are vital, not optional.

You are a vital means of grace, not optional to your church, but no one here, no one here is indispensable. De Gaulle said graveyards are filled with indispensable men. It's true.

Listen, I mean, just walk through this. Imagine you died at this conference. You died here.

Well, there would be appropriate mourning for you, no doubt. Probably go on about six months. Those who love you would mourn for a period of time, but probably in six months, you're a warm and distant memory.

And God, in his mercy, because he loves the church, will replace you, and he'll probably replace you with someone hopefully more gifted than you, and you within a year or two will be quickly forgotten, or if you are remembered, they will assess your replacement as better than you and more gifted than you, more effective than you were. You won't care. You'll be in heaven, okay? Won't be a problem for you.

It's just helpful to live in light of that reality today because it's humbling, because there's no one here who's indispensable. No, you're not. No, you're not.

Reconcile yourself to this. You are not indispensable. And then finally, I recommend this for pastors, for the accelerated development of humility, play golf as much as possible.

Play golf as much as possible because there is no more humiliating sport than golf. I think I can establish it was a product of the fall, okay? And I sure feel the effects of the every time I go out and play. There is no more humiliating sport than golf.

I mean, if you pay attention to professional sports, golf is the only sport. Golfers are the only professional athletes who use the word humility. They use it regularly.

They understand that. They understand that. They use the word humiliation and humility.

I'm not aware of any other professional athlete that uses that in any other professional sport, but golfers use that word, humility, humiliation, and you'll notice that golfers don't trash talk. Golfers don't trash talk. Golfers don't walk down.

Golfers don't hit a good shot and say, uh-huh, uh-huh. There's none of that. There's no dancing going on.

There's no trash talking because golfers just know that if they hit a good one, that is a miracle, and to some degree, they know a bad one's coming. A bad one is coming. Keep your head down.

Just walk down the fairway. Be nice to everyone, and maybe another good one will follow. Every time you play golf, even Tiger Woods, every time, you'll just be at some point humiliated.

You will. Friends will laugh, and if you don't laugh, why aren't you laughing? So, I recommend for...actually, two things in Sovereign Grace. These are the secrets of Sovereign Grace.

Read Spurgeon's sermons on your text Saturday night before you preach Sunday morning. That's what I do. If he's preaching on the text I'm preaching on Sunday, I read his sermon on Saturday night just to say, wow, that's how you're supposed to do it.

And my great fear is that my church is reading the same thing, and then Sunday saying, you are no prince, okay? We read the man last night. So, I just love to read Spurgeon on Saturday night. It just helps me to fall asleep humbled, humbled by the Prince of Preachers.

So, that's one recommendation for the acceleration of humility in Sovereign Grace ministries. The second one would be play golf. Play golf as much as possible for the accelerated development of humility.

I'm not kidding. I am not kidding about golf. Some of you are saying, I'm not coordinated.

You think golfers are? Have you been out to a public course? Are you aware most people stink? Honestly, I want to call to all the uncoordinated people who have not been very athletic or even laughed at as you've attempted athleticism, there is a sport for you, and it's called golf, okay? There are people playing every day who aren't any good, who imagine that they are just that close. And so, you may play this sport, and it will serve you, okay? And let me just say, I know when I talk to my good friend, my very good friend, Mark Dever, that this part of the sermon is definitely going to be critiqued. Actually, different parts of the sermon, I can hear Mark.

He's been communicating with me, loves me very much, and has been an immeasurable help in critiquing my sermons. I could go warp speed through the daily stuff. Would it be better just to bring it to an end? What's that? You would encourage me to do warp speed for the daily thing, for sure.

John, do you? Thank you very much. That's very encouraging, although there was only four of you, and there didn't seem to be any momentum whatsoever. What I love to hear about what just happened is how comfortable my very good friend, Mark Dever, felt just taking authority and saying, yes, warp speed, daily task.

That is why I call him often my captain. We're going to just go warp speed through. This is what I try to do each day.

So, those were lifetime practices. This is going to be very brief, but I hope helpful. Here's what I try to do.

Here's how I think. Inveiling sin remains. Most serious sin, essence of sin, is pride.

Pride is active. It is present and active. It is waiting to express itself as soon as I awaken in the morning.

Therefore, as soon as I awaken in the morning, I want to begin the day by acknowledging my dependence upon God. I normally do this aloud because I know that I am vulnerable to pride, and pride particularly in the form of self-sufficiency. Therefore, at the outset of the day, I want to declare war on my pride.

The way I declare war on my pride is by acknowledging my dependence upon God. Acknowledging it out loud, regardless of how I feel. I don't do an evaluation of my emotional state.

I just acknowledge from the outset, in effect, I am dependent upon you, Lord, and it is a means, it is in effect, a battle cry that I will be warring against pride today by your grace, and I will be cultivating humility, and we're going to do it by the grace of God from the outset. So, that's where I begin. Second, I try to incorporate in my devotions, expressing very specific gratefulness to God, and I want to carry that over throughout the day, because I have read in John Stott's excellent book, *The Cross of Christ*, that thankfulness is a soil in which pride does not easily grow.

So, I want that practice to be employed, deployed at the outset of the day, and I want it to continue throughout the day. I want to be very perceptive as to God's grace throughout the day, and I want to be responsive in expressing my gratefulness to God throughout the day, because if I understand it, all around me are evidences of grace, and they appear, in effect, like post-it notes, and they are reminding me of his grace, and I want to be perceptive of his grace, and I want to be responsive to his grace by expressing my gratefulness to God. As I understand it from Scripture, an ungrateful person is a proud person.

So, if I am ungrateful, I am arrogant, and God is opposed to the proud. Therefore, I want to be grateful. I want to acknowledge from the outset and throughout the day that whatever grace I receive from God is far more than I deserve, and whatever pain and suffering I experience in a given day is far less than I deserve, and each day I want to express my gratefulness to God.

Third, each day I want to begin by practicing the spiritual disciplines, and if possible, at the outset of the day. I want to practice the spiritual disciplines of prayer, study of God's Word, and worship. I think practicing spiritual disciplines is a daily declaration and demonstration of my need for him, my dependence upon him.

Charles Hummel has written that when we fail to wait prayerfully for God's guidance and strength, we are saying with our action, if not our lips, that we do not need him. If I understand right, the primary reason someone isn't consistent in their practice of the spiritual disciplines is not the absence of discipline, but in fact the presence of self-sufficiency. So practicing the spiritual disciplines is a daily statement of my

dependence upon God.

It's really a daily means of weakening pride and cultivating humility, so that I know regardless of what I seem to experience or don't experience on a given day, if I have, by grace, practiced the spiritual disciplines, not as a means of in any way adding to justification, but as a means of experiencing God's sanctifying grace for that day, I understand that the practice of the spiritual disciplines is a statement. It is a demonstration that I am dependent upon God. It is a means of weakening pride and cultivating humility in my life.

Number four, seize your commute as an opportunity for meditation and memorization of Scripture. I think each of us throughout the day have these mundane moments that can be transformed into a means of grace if we will both, if we will be perceptive and devote ourselves to biblical practices in the moment. So your commute or time driving in a car can be an ideal time for meditation and memorization of Scripture.

Fifth, throughout the day cast your cares upon him, for he cares for you. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time he may exalt you. How do you humble yourself? Casting all your anxieties on him because he cares for you.

One of the ways we humble ourselves before God throughout the day is to cast our cares upon God, and if one is truly humble, then one is genuinely carefree. So where there's worry in my life, where there's anxiety present, where there is in some way anxiousness, I know, no, there's pride. There's pride.

The root of that is pride. The root of worry and anxiety is pride. The root of worry is self-sufficiency in my life.

I'm not a cordless drill. So throughout the day, I can't function through the day on a single charge. Throughout the day I must cast cares onto the Lord.

These are moments that there's nothing dramatic about them. Often I'm doing it without anybody in the room even knowing. I'm not praying aloud necessarily, but I'm humbling myself throughout the day because if I don't, I accumulate those cares throughout the day, and I end up weighed down with worry, and I believe the root of worry and anxiety is often pride and self-sufficiency.

Number six, at the end of the day, transfer glory to God. At the end of the day, transfer all glory to God. Thomas Watson wrote that when we have done anything praiseworthy, we must hide ourselves under the veil of humility and transfer the glory of all we have done to God.

I try to end each day walking back through the day and transferring the glory to God for all that has taken place that day, because if I'm not intentionally transferring the glory to God, then I'm vulnerable to reserving glory for myself. Therefore, I want to transfer all glory to God, because as I understand it, pride is in effect cosmic plagiarism. I'm claiming to be the author of that which is a gift, and let's be clear, brothers, let's be clear in acknowledging the obvious.

Our churches are testimonies to the greatness and the graciousness of God. They are not monuments to our leadership and to our preaching. Spurgeon said to his pastor scout students one day, your ministry is poor enough.

Love, Spurgeon. Your ministry is poor enough. Everybody knows that, and you ought to know it most of all.

He went on to say, your ministry and preaching is effective only because God keeps His promise, my word shall not return unto me void. What wonderful, humbling reminder. He says in Isaiah 26 verse 12, you have done for us all our works.

You have done for us all our works, or all that we have achieved you have accomplished for us. Expositor's Bible Dictionary just says it's a profound truth, blessedly destructive of spiritual pride. Yes, it is.

So at the end of the day, transfer glory to God for the day. And then finally, before I fall asleep, what I seek to do is I seek to receive the gift of sleep and acknowledge the purpose of sleep. Sleep is a gift, and sleep is a reminder.

Sleep is a daily reminder that you are not self-sufficient. Only God neither slumbers nor sleeps. So don't just fall asleep tonight.

Recognize that in that moment, seize that moment, take advantage of that moment this night and for the rest of your life. Thanking God for this gift He gives us on a daily basis, but not only thank Him for this gift, humble yourself and be reminded that you are creature and not creator. That sleep is both a gift from God and a means of mortifying pride and cultivating humility.

And so those are practices that I seek to implement on a daily basis so that I can weaken my greatest enemy pride and cultivate my greatest friend humility. I seek to do all of this in the shadow of the cross. I seek to do all of this motivated by the grace of God.

I seek to do all this recognizing that only one has perfectly fulfilled Isaiah 66 verse 2, the Savior Himself. Only He has fulfilled this verse. Only He has fulfilled this verse perfectly, and He has fulfilled this verse as my representative.

And He has fulfilled this verse as my representative, and not only my representative, He has fulfilled this verse as my substitutionary sacrifice for my sin. Therefore, let us cultivate humility. Let us cultivate humility so that we might please and glorify God.

Let us cultivate humility so that our children and our church can say of us, yep, he had that. He had humility. Thus says the Lord, to this one I will look.

Let's pray. Lord, I pray that each pastor present tonight would receive all conviction and correction from you as a gift from you. I pray that no pastor present tonight would experience condemnation, but I pray that every pastor present tonight would experience specific conviction of where pride is present in our hearts and in our lives.

Father, have mercy on us and protect us from pride. And Lord, I pray that the promise of humility would motivate everyone this evening, by your grace, to humble themselves because it is to this one you will look. Oh Lord, to obtain the attention and the gaze, the support of the omniscient one.

May that be the desire of all men present. May we walk humbly before you, Lord, all by your grace, all because of the cross, and all for your glory, I pray, Father. In Jesus' name, amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/cj-mahaney/the-perils-of-pride/>

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