

If My People Humble Themselves

by Shane Idleman

The sermon explores the critical need for humility in overcoming pride and fostering healthy relationships with God and others.

Duration: 32:14

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Proverbs 11:2, Proverbs 13:10, Proverbs 16:18, Proverbs 18:12, Isaiah 59:2, Obadiah 1:3, 1 Corinthians 13:4, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:6

Topics: "Humility", "Pride"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the critical need for humility in the Christian life, warning that pride is deceptive and can lead to personal and relational destruction. He reflects on his own struggles with pride and how it has affected his relationships, particularly with family and in the church. Idleman highlights that true humility opens the door to genuine repentance and a closer relationship with God, while pride creates barriers to prayer and spiritual growth. He encourages the congregation to examine their hearts and seek God's grace to overcome pride, as humility is essential for healing and restoration. The sermon serves as a call to action for believers to humble themselves before God to experience His forgiveness and healing.

Transcript

Amen. You guys can be seated. This is definitely encouraging for me to see this many people come out on a Monday night.

It's almost like a normal service on a Monday. And that's good. But on this topic tonight, the whole goal of the Monday night study is to really have a smaller version of what we do on Saturdays and to hit some of these key topics.

And it was hard preparing this sermon because, as I often say, I'm a prideful man. I'm a prideful man working on humility on a daily basis. And these types of sermons cut to the heart because they begin to reveal what we are and who we are.

And just during the worship tonight, I was really taken back into my younger years. And it's funny, the time I thought I was the most humble, I was actually the most prideful. Between the ages of 17 to 28.

You know, you just think you're God's gift to mankind and God's gift to your spouse. Man, it's so deceptive though, isn't it? And now looking back, just saying, Lord, how did I get through those times? Because pride and arrogance was the dominating attitudes I had. Not to mean it's not a struggle now, but just looking

back, the foolish decisions because of pride and arrogance.

And, you know, the sad thing about this topic is how it affects our spouse and our kids. You know, some sins aren't as apparent, but this type of sin, humbling ourselves, the first thing we're talking about from 2 Chronicles, when we don't do that, the ramifications, it's like the ripple effect. You know, it's one thing to be proud and arrogant, but to do that at home, we actually hurt our spouse, we hurt our children.

It's a sin that there are ramifications. It doesn't go unnoticed. We can take it into the workplace and we can hurt employees.

We can hurt people in the church. And so it's a very deceptive sin. I think that, as I said before, all sin grows in the soil of pride.

And I believe it was Martin Luther who said, you can't break the other nine commandments without breaking this one first. And being proud and arrogant and putting certain things ahead of others. So what I want to springboard off of tonight is, of course, 2 Chronicles, if my people humble themselves.

But a Scripture that really spoke to my heart this week was, the pride of your heart has deceived you. From Obadiah, one of the prophets, it was called by God to call His people back. The pride of your heart has deceived you.

And I think we need to realize that, because we don't realize how much pride deceives us. And I want to kind of impact that. But pride is so deceptive, that those who need humility the most are often those who think they don't.

Isn't it interesting? Those who need humility the most are often those who think they don't. And pride is the only disease known to mankind that makes everybody sick, except the person who has it. And what I came here to do tonight is to try to pull some of that out of us.

And first, by confessing that I'm a prideful man. I feel it rising up. Do you ever feel it rising up? And just, you know, that self-protection mode, or that I want to be right mode, or yeah, but mode, or blame-shifting mode.

I mean, these are all indicators of pride. Pride, basically, in a nutshell, is thinking more highly of ourselves than we should, and putting ourself first. And it's all about us.

It's the spirit of self-exaltation. And that's really why Satan fell from heaven. Saying, I will be like the Most High God.

Pride is why he fell. And then the Bible talks about all that's in the world is the lust of the flesh, what the flesh craves, the lust of the eye, what the eye wants, and the boastful pride of life. That's all the enemy will ever use against you.

If you ever wonder, well, is he coming after this? Is he coming after that? Just protect those three areas, and you'll be good. But it's hard, isn't it? All that's in the world, the lust of the flesh, whatever the flesh wants, it wants too much, it wants to eat too much, drink too much, it wants to satisfy too much, the flesh is always trying to pull you away from God. And then the lust of the eyes, covetousness, what the eyes see, what the eyes want, and then the boastful pride of life.

That's what he uses. That's what he used against Eve. When she saw that the tree was good for food, desires to make one wise, she took of it and ate of that fruit.

He hit her with all three of those, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. And pride is the defense attorney within. We're all born with a defense attorney.

I was, you were. What the defense attorney is, he defends us. No matter what, he'll defend us.

Regardless of if we're right or wrong. And we are born actually into the self-preservation mode. So just think of that.

You and I were born into this type of self-preservation mode that the defense attorney within is already there. You don't have to do anything. You know how I often talk about by default, we'll do certain things.

If you don't do anything, you'll go into the certain mode and you'll be in that self-preservation mode. The defense attorney within is always there, ready to rear his ugly head against us and pride is your greatest liability because of the deception. That's why pride is your greatest liability and humility will be your greatest asset.

Just remember that. And as it deceives, it's kind of like, I thought of a few weeks back, my son, I heard a big noise in our living room. I ran out there and we just cleaned the door really good with Windex and he thought it was open and guess what happened? Bam! Crying.

And that's what happens with pride though. It's deceptive. You think.

That's why humility is so important because humility and a teachable spirit means you take it to God and you're open for that constructive criticism of the Holy Spirit. Without that, we live in deception. We think we're great.

We think there's nothing wrong. We think my spouse thinks I walk on water and everybody loves me. It deceives.

And then from that deception, we begin to make decisions based on it. I know what's best. I'll treat them a certain way.

And it begins to deceive in all areas of life. That's the end goal of it is to deceive. Let me talk about three signs of that deception.

And you know what? This was hard because I know it's going to hurt. I know all of this stuff. People are going to be sitting there going, Oh man, I don't want to see spouses doing this either.

Because more are going to be doing that to me. For sure. But sometimes it has to hurt before it heals, right? These things have to hurt because how else is God going to get our attention? Because often we think, well, we don't nearly need that until the knife comes in of the surgeon and cuts out that cancer.

And here's three signs of deception or three signs of really pride is excuses. Excuses. Spurgeon rightly noted, we are never, never so much in danger of being proud as when we think we are humble.

Here's the interesting thing I noticed. When you actually humble yourself and you become a humble, broken person, you see your pride. It's evident.

But the person who is prideful doesn't see it. So you see how that works? So one sign of humility is as we're humbling ourselves. And that's why I promote times with God in the morning.

Times in His Word. Times in prayer. Because that's like the flashlight into the soul.

And a prideful person will not like to do that very often. Or they'll think they got it down and they'll tell God what's going on. And devotional time will become a legalistic type of thing where, see, I read the Bible today for an hour.

Why didn't you? See, I've done this. I know this. I've studied the Greek.

And it can turn into a real issue of pride as well. So we have to be careful there. I often ask people this.

Are you genuinely sorry and repentant? Or are you just sorry that your reputation and life are on the verge of being ruined? Here's why. The difference between sorrow and repentance is vital because many confuse the two. It's possible to be sorry about the consequences, but not truly repentant.

A repentant person turns from their sin. Anger, for example, subsides. It doesn't remain.

They take full responsibility for their actions without blame, resentment, or bitterness. Boy, that's a hard pill to swallow. Take full responsibility for our actions.

But that's a truly humble person. When repentance is genuine, we want to be reconciled with those we've injured. So when I truly repent, I want to be reconciled with you.

I don't want to keep fighting. I don't want to keep saying I'm right. I don't want to keep blaming you.

I want to be reconciled. That's a fruit of repentance. We seek forgiveness without conditions and without stipulations when it's genuine.

And I often see this a lot of times, not recently, but in the past, a lot of times in marriage counseling. You know, the person will say, you know, yeah, I'll forgive them, but they need to do this and that and this. Or, yeah, I did this, but they did this.

And there's always conditions. When you want to put conditions on it, now those things come later, right? We can work through problems and issues, but the conditions can't be attached to the repentance because then the repentance isn't genuine. We take full responsibility, not partial, for our actions.

We don't say but this and that. There can be no buts when repentance is genuine. I'm sorry.

I was wrong. Please forgive me. Are often, although not always, the healing words and sign of repentance.

And humbling ourselves. Excuses need to stop before change and restoration can take place. Now, this is interesting.

Once humility takes place, there are also signs. When somebody repents and they humble themselves, there are signs of that repentance. There are signs of that humility.

For example, liars will stop lying as much. Right? I'd like to see it completely stop, but sometimes it's a struggle because they've been conditioned to lie, lie, lie. But if they're truly sorry, listen, I've been lying.

I've got to work on this. And you bring things to the light. You say, help me in this area.

I don't want to exaggerate. So you see them working through it. They don't just say, I'm sorry.

I was wrong. How many times have we heard that without really anybody changing? So there's going to be fruit accompanying that profession. Liars stop lying.

Drug abuse, alcohol, pills, whatever it is. They begin to seek help. So they say, I'm sorry.

I was wrong. Can you help me? And they begin to make those changes. They begin to seek those steps of reconciliation.

What about those struggling with lust? Pornography is a huge issue now. How do you rebuild trust? How do you rebuild trust in that area? You know how many husbands say, I was sorry. I was wrong.

Oh my God. And they're crying and inside their hearts they're saying, I got caught. Right? There's not real repentance there.

They'll hide it until the next time. And the next time. So real repentance, real humility seeks to fix that.

Rebuild the trust by accountability software or letting your spouse know, Hey, I'm struggling with this. Can you help me? And they're open. Life should be an open book.

If you can't leave your cell phone on the sink and say, whatever. Use my email. Use my text.

Whatever you want. It's yours. Check the history.

Whatever you want to do. You might want to think about why. Now, I'm not saying in all cases.

Maybe, I don't know, there might be an exception to the rule. Because I've learned preaching, anytime you say, you've got to always do this, somebody has an interesting excuse. But for the most part, you should be able to have an open book life in your marriage.

And I would encourage that. Because that fosters trust. That builds trust.

That's humbling, isn't it? You know how I have every website I visit goes to Morgan's email on Monday. Every website I visit that's even controversial. This, laptop, the pet, anything.

She gets an email. You think that helps build trust or hurts trust? Absolutely. You think it's humbling? Absolutely.

What, I've got to do this? No, you don't have to. But you should want to. Hey, I'm being attacked just like everybody else.

You want to have precautions in place. And I want those precautions so strong that the enemy is going to have to work really hard to get around those. Because He blesses those who diligently seek Him.

He blesses those that want that accountability and that transparency. What about those struggling with anger? I was raised in, many of you know, an angry home with my dad from the farms of Oklahoma. And it was a character trait.

The boys obviously picked up. That's how you handle things. And my mom reminded me, many of you know she broke her hip, so we visited her yesterday.

And my dad playing football and different things would always say, son, if you want to accomplish anything in life, you want to win, you want to get through, you've got to get angry. That's how I grew up. But that was true about football.

You know, they'd spit in their face and they would knock them down and they would just get angry. But in life, that's a bad plan. Because you'll steamroll people.

And that actually was my nickname in my 20s. Steamroller. Because you know the old saying, you're either the steamroller or you're the pavement in life.

And those qualities came, you know, those things. I mean, that's how you got through life. A lot of the anger, though, was because of fear.

Coming out of that type of home where there's a lot of anger, is you're really, the kids are in fear mode. And they don't know how to express it, so they take out anger. So what would anger look like? If that's an issue in my past that I've worked through, and obviously, it's always going to be there for most of us, right? You can feel that little anger twitch rising up and rising up.

Do you throw gasoline on it or do you throw water? You know. Somebody who's genuinely repentant and humbling themselves, they work on that anger. They say, help me.

Show me in these areas. And when you start to get angry, if you're truly humble and repentant, you say, listen, I'm getting upset here. Lord, I need to take it to God instead of justifying it.

Saying, yeah, but you, but you, but you did this, but this, but this, but this. So just keep that in mind. There should be genuine fruit with the signs of repentance and humility.

And I would just encourage you tonight, one of the reasons, also I encourage you to be at the next few messages because they're just going to get, God's put so much stuff on my heart about prayer and seeking Him and turning from our wicked ways. But this, it has to start, the process has to start with humility. Don't you see that? This whole process, everything starts with humility.

And I would say the most frustrating thing, one of the most frustrating things about pastoring is you see people want to skip this step and go to the other things. And really the humbling starts, I mean, when you see a person truly humble themselves and even weep, and even be sorry over the sin, sorry over what they've done, sorry over how they've destroyed their family, sorry over, I mean the tears flow, and that's good. It's called humility.

And then it brings your heart into a state of now I can receive from God. Now I'm emptied of myself. Now God, You rebuild me.

Now I admit my mistakes. Now God, You begin to heal me and restore me. And it's very healthy to do these things.

But if we hold on to them, we are fighting against God. The Bible says that He resists the proud. How long are you going to resist God? I don't know about you, but I don't want to fight God.

I'm not winning that battle. And neither are you. It's pointless.

We'll go through our whole life fighting against God because of pride and how things make us look and wanting to be right and wanting to do this and wanting to do that. So here's what basically needs to happen. We need to ask the defense attorney within to leave and allow the Holy Spirit to reign and rule in our hearts and humble ourselves through that feeling of the Holy Spirit.

Do you not want to defend yourself? Or is that just me? The defense attorney within. He just wants to continually, continually try to protect us. It's all about self-preservation.

I came across a quote this week. I was reading a book by John Owen. He's a famous Puritan author.

I like to kind of skim those books and read over highlights that I did many years ago. And this is a good book. It's on Sin and Temptation.

Sin and Temptation by John Owen. And talk about killing that. He exhaustively kills every argument, every temptation.

I mean, it's like a thick book. There's no more to say on this. But he made a great point.

Hopefully I can share some of those with you. But he said that grace... Think about this. Grace changes the nature of man.

Right? God's grace. It changes our nature. But nothing changes the nature of sin.

I think we sometimes forget that. Grace changes the nature of man. My nature has been changed by Christ.

But the nature of sin hasn't. It's still there. So although grace changes me and my nature, that nature of sin, that Adamic nature is still there and operating if we allow it.

You can just look in Romans 5, 6, and 7. Paul talks about the flesh and the war of the flesh and the war of the spirit. And it's always there to come up. Pride weakens spiritual strength.

If you are dying spiritually, pride is often an issue. Because pride will weaken your spiritual strength. As my pride increases, my spirituality decreases.

It's like... You see those scales? Those old scales? Where they'd weigh things? As pride increases, spirituality and humility and walking with God's Spirit and being filled with the Spirit actually decrease. You can't have... One or the other is going to prevail in your life. And as I begin to look at all this, I'm thinking, how important is this topic? I mean, this is really... Pride and humility is really the main battle, the main struggle for many people.

It's that important. It's destroying marriages. Humility is not.

What? Humility is not destroying young adults' lives. Overdoses on this and getting hooked to this and destroying their lives is humility? No. Pride is destroying.

Because it's deceptive and it deceives us. Humility opens the door to prayer, to seeking and to turning to God where pride closes that door. Galatians 5.26 I love the King James Version of this.

Let us not be desirous of vain glory. Do you know what vain glory is? It's disgusting. I know.

I suffer with it. Like everybody else. Let me read the definition.

It's an elevation or pride over one's own achievements, abilities and knowledge. Boastful vanity. It's a sin of self-promotion and self-exaltation.

Don't we, when we're talking, kind of want people to know how much I know? That's one of the things I worry about seminary students. They come out and they are just, man, the pride is just coming out of their nostrils. Let me tell this congregation about everything I know.

And it's vain glory. It's self-exaltation over one's achievements and abilities. Oh yeah, I did this and I did this and I did this and I went to Australia and I sailed here and I did some hang gliding and I climbed Mount Everest last year.

It's that something in us wants that self-exaltation. Look at me. When you think of me, look at me.

I lift myself up. God says, no, put yourself down. Vain glory is not good.

But it's interesting. It says, let us not be desirous of vain glory, which tells me I can be desirous of vain glory. Any time Paul says, let not this mind be in you, or let this mind be in you which is in Christ Jesus, put on the whole armor of God.

Do not let the flesh dominate. Make no provision for the flesh. These are fighting words against our natural inclination.

So let us not be desirous of vain glory. And let's just look at a few Scriptures. And this to me brought me to just my knees this week saying, Lord, keep this out of me.

Keep the pride. It starts with confession, right? To you, to my family. Keep this out of me because this is destructive.

This will begin to grow and it will begin to dominate. Then you want to please people. So everything revolves around pride.

Leviticus 26:19, I will break down your stubborn pride, God says. And again, we're fighting against God. When pride is a problem, we're fighting against God.

2 Chronicles 26:16, his pride led to his downfall. Proverbs 11, when pride comes, then comes disgrace. But with humility comes wisdom.

You know what? Are you going through a disgraceful situation right now? Maybe pride was leading you into that. Guess what it's going to take to get out of that? Humility. And humility brings wisdom.

And on an encouraging note, before I tackle a few more of these, it's okay to feel bad about this issue and feel conviction because then when you bring it to God, bring it to Christ during the closing worship, you're cleansed. God says, that's all I wanted. Was that so hard? That's all I wanted, to get the heart and right relationship with me again.

So this isn't about, oh, gosh, man, oh, Lord, I really blew it. He's really hitting me. Boy, Shane's really got my number tonight.

No, pride's got your number. Not me. But the whole point is to get that heart and right relationship again with God.

This one is so true. Proverbs 13, 10. Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.

And sometimes I wonder, it begs the question, are you quarreling a lot? Are you quarreling in your marriage a lot? What about in your workplace? I know I'm stepping on toes, but it's supposed to. Are we just quarreling a lot? Well, it might be the pride's at the forefront because the scripture says pride only breeds quarrels. Do you want to know why? It's hard to fight with a humble person, isn't it? Because they'll say, oh, you're right.

Okay, I see. Okay, yeah. No problem.

No problem. They'll answer your words with grace. You get mad, they just season everything with grace, or they'll just a gentle word.

One thing to really upset people is as they get louder, you get a little quieter. Just, hey, I'll understand, just settle down. What? And pride breeds quarrels.

We want to be right. We want to be heard. Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

So any time before somebody falls, before something is destroyed, pride was there at the beginning taking them through. And a scripture that I memorized a long time ago in Proverbs is God says, I hate a proud look. And there were six other things.

I hate a lying tongue and hands that shed innocent blood and the whole list there. But He says, I hate the look of pride. I hate a proud look.

If God says He hates something and we continue to hold on to it, you fill in the blank. That's a dangerous spot to be. Before His downfall, Proverbs 18, before His downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honor.

I think a lot of times God warns us. He says, listen, your heart is proud, your heart is lifted up. There's a downfall coming.

You need to repent. You need to get back and listen, it's coming. And He warns us with that.

It's interesting, the scripture before that, His pride led to His downfall, but this one says before His downfall a man's heart is proud. So not only does it lead to a downfall, it comes first. I often say pride is the first step away from God.

Pride is the first step away from God. And that step, we keep stepping further and further away unless repentance takes place and we turn back to Him. And then the famous scripture in 1 Corinthians 13, that love is patient, love is kind.

It's not proud. It doesn't boast. So genuine true love, the next time we say I love you to our spouse, well then ask this question, am I boastful, am I proud? Fill in the blank there.

Shane is not patient, I mean Shane is patient, Shane is kind, Shane is not proud. If you put your name in 1 Corinthians 13, we can see real quick how we're doing. Love is not proud.

It doesn't envy. It doesn't think more highly of itself than it should. And of course the scripture a lot of us are familiar with where God says, I will resist the proud.

I will resist the proud but give grace to the humble. So this whole thing you can see that pride is deceptive. Pride is leading us astray.

Pride leads to downfall. Pride distances us from God. We think we're good with God because of pride.

So many people come to church, I'm good with God, and they're proud and they're arrogant. They don't realize that there's spiritual malnutrition taking place because of pride. And the sad fact is often it takes humility to produce humility.

You know what I mean by that? It often takes humility to produce humility. God often humbles us in order for us to become humble. Because not too many people do it on your own.

It takes a humbling situation to humble you. Because it's not until I see the filth pour out from my consequences that I begin to say, Oh Lord, I'm sorry. That's why God says, Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God.

In due time, I will exalt you. But if you exalt yourself, you leave me no choice but to abase you. To humble you.

I don't know about you, but I would prefer humbling myself ten times more than God humbling me. Because when God humbles us, it's embarrassing. And it gets out of the big spiritual's paddle and you get a spank in.

And humility takes place. And I'll just close with this. Do you need God to hear? Do you need God to hear your prayers? I think a lot of people, you know, I talk to people, God's just not hearing my prayers.

I feel that way a lot. And of course we can't say that it's all tied to this. But many times, I believe that pride will block that connection with God sometimes from getting our prayers answered.

Sometimes we have to wait. Sometimes God says no. Sometimes it's just not His will.

I know. But sometimes, pride is blocking that. Remember the scripture in the Old Testament where God says, My ear is not heavy, my hand is not short that I cannot save, but your sins, your iniquities have hid my face from you that I cannot even hear you.

I can't hear you because of that iniquity. And it's not a secret that God says humble, then pray, then seek, then turn. And the scripture says, then I'll hear, then I'll forgive, and then I'll heal your land.

So I would encourage you, if you're convicted about any area, that God might be not hearing prayers of whatever it is, from healing to God getting me out of this situation to repairing this, whatever it is. He might be using that waiting time to chip out that pride. Because I know sometimes when prayers aren't being answered and the circumstances are getting difficult, it causes me to do heart examination.

I say, Lord, is there anything in me that's not pleasing to you? Is there anything that might be stopping this? And very often, He'll show it. Because you know, we know, right? We've been convicted. We know these areas we need to work.

Come on, this isn't some mystery that we'll never find out. God brings the conviction of the Holy Spirit along with His Word, along with preaching. We leave here going, I've got to work on that.

I know exactly what He's talking about. But then it begs the question, how long are we going to work on it? How long are we going to stay in that state of denial? So I would just encourage you, if you need God to hear you, take it to Him. Find out if there's anything stopping that.

It's like a water hose, you know, a kink in the water hose. Anything stopping that flow from the water hose. But on the flip side, I don't want to forget about God's grace and His mercy and His forgiveness.

And we come to Him as imperfect children. Sometimes I think of my little daughter, you know, barely walking. Daddy, Daddy, she wants this.

And you know how she asks for what she wants. It's just not perfect whatsoever. Falling, stumbling, breaking things.

You know, but I want to grant her that. And I know God wants to hear our prayers. It's not like He's sitting up there going, you've got to do this perfectly.

You've got to get this. Well, no, no, I'm going to, you know. Then we have this wrong perception of God.

But I think it's important to have that balance where, Lord, if there's anything in me that's hindering my prayer life, if there's anything that's hindering these prayers from being answered, Lord, would you show me? Would you show me this area? Because I want you to hear my prayers. And then it says, I will heal and I will forgive if you humble yourself. If you humble yourself.

And that's much easier and painless than God humbling you.

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