

Talk It Over

What Would Jesus Undo?

(Week 4)

Spiritual Pride

SMALL TALK

1. What life accomplishments, relationships, and things are you most proud of?
2. What is your external response when someone gives you a compliment? What happens internally?

VIEWPOINT

3. There are two kinds of uses of the word pride, one is good and positive (“Good job, I’m proud of you”) and the other is the negative kind. In the Bible, the bad for you kind of pride is discussed far more frequently than the positive kind. How would you define the term “spiritual pride”? What is its opposite?
4. **READ Luke 18:9-12.** What’s wrong with the Pharisee’s logic and approach? What was right with the tax-collector’s approach?

GETTING PERSONAL

5. Do you ever find yourself thinking or sounding too much like the Pharisee? How and under what circumstances?
6. How do you struggle with pride?
7. How do you see God peeling back pride in your life?

MAKING PROGRESS

8. Here are our 6 core statements: Everybody has a next step. Don’t do life alone. Do first things first. Saved people serve people. Followers say, ‘follow me’. Live with eternal significance. Each of these statements can be approached with pride, or with humility. Can you describe how pride ruins it, and humility makes it work for its intended purpose? Describe how God is helping you in one of these.

June 16, 2019

Series: WHAT WOULD JESUS UNDO?

Spiritual Pride

BALLOON LESSON

Balloons illustrate who we are pretty well. Balloons are like humans. Like us, balloons can be objects of for celebration, or objects for irritation. (squeeze for irritating screechy sound). By themselves, they are just skin bags.

Balloon 1:

“Sometimes this is me.” Hold up a balloon. Then blow up a balloon, to nearly full. “I’m full of myself.” Being full of yourself is a dangerous thing, how full of yourself can you get? [blow up till it pops]

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

Balloon 2:

“Sometimes this is me.” First, poke a hole in the balloon with a pencil, then try to blow it up. Sometimes you can’t figure out what is going wrong. Other times it is easy to put your finger on the problem.

A balloon with a hole cannot fulfill its designed function. We are designed for more than we are experiencing.

Jesus told a story about two people, much like these two balloons. Jesus told a story about 2 guys who go to the same place for the same purpose but only one gets results. They both go to the temple to pray, but only one is heard by God. Jesus surprises the crowd with his story. It goes like this.

Luke 18:9 (NIV) {9} To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable:

This story is directed at a particular set of ears. The story Jesus is about to tell is aimed at a particular kind of someone. It is up to the listeners to decide who they are more like in the story.

Luke 18:10 (NIV) “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.”

The story is set up like a good guy, bad guy story. 1 a Pharisee. The religious elite of Jesus day. In their culture, the people would say Yay! Good guy. He had a lot going for him.

Another, a Tax Collector, Boo! Deviant, bad guy traitor to the Jews type guy, greedy money making guy collecting for the Enemy Romans and himself! Boo!

Both go to the Temple, God’s visible place of presence to pray. Jesus says one of the guys leaves the temple having been made “right before God”, and one of them doesn’t.

The Pharisee had a lot of good things going for him. He was an expert in all 613 commandments of the Old Covenant. He didn’t just know them. These were his daily guide. He lived by them. They were his code. In fact, just to be sure, there were many other codes lines drawn up to put as guardrails so that he could not come close to stepping across the guardrails of those laws.

By the age of 12 he had memorized the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. He didn’t memorize the names in the right order, no, he memorized every word in every book, and could recite the entire thing! He had a lot of good things going for him.

Luke 18:11-12 (NIV) The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. {12} I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

There is something not right about this prayer.

Instead of seeing all of the good things in his life as a gift FROM God, he somehow began to think of all the good things in his life as a gift TO God.

That’s seeing things through a filter of spiritual pride. It affects how you see yourself and how you see God, and how you see others.

The Pharisee began to see himself as a gift to God. This is a problem. It is the problem of spiritual pride. It is what will burst the balloon of self.

Before we look down at this guy, we need to look in the mirror.

- CHURCH: Rather than seeing church as a gift from God, do you ever slip into, *Your Welcome God, aren't you glad I came today?*
- CHILDREN: Rather than seeing your children as a gift from God, Do you ever slip into, *Your welcome God, aren't you glad I brought them to church today?*
- PROVISION: Rather than seeing God’s awesome provision do you ever slip into *“Your welcome God, aren't you glad I gave so much today?”* Then we expect that because GOD is so grateful, of course he is going to bless us even more.

All of this is because instead of seeing good things in life as a gift FROM God, WE somehow see ourselves as giving our “great gifts” TO God.

Pride aims for:

- **Self-Sufficiency:** I've got this! I can handle it!
- **Self-Importance:** I have value because I own, wear, or do this!
- **Self-Exaltation:** Look at me!

COMPARING

- **Comparing your parenting.** *“I know we weren't perfect parents...but man, did you see how their kids acted up?! Wow, they were so out of control. If they don't do something now, that kid is are going to end up in prison some day!”*
Now. Did you say this to make yourself feel better? Was it because you really think you are doing such an awesome job, or did you say it because you feel inadequate, and it is good to see someone else struggling maybe a little more than you!?
- **Comparing Your Life:** Or maybe you have heard this one. *“You know what, I don't really need God in my life. I'm a good person. I have a great family, and a great marriage. In fact, I know a lot of Christians, and my life and kids and marriage is a whole lot better than theirs is, so I don't need God in my life.”*

FAULT FINDING

- Or maybe it shows up as fault finding. You can't help it. You are really good at it. You are quick to find in other organizations, systems, or people.
- It is a whole lot easier to poke holes than it is to actually build a great system.
- It is a whole lot easier to focus on someone else's faults than working on our own.

ATTENTION SEEKING

Hey, everybody. Look at me. Aren't I great? ...comes in many forms.

A VARIETY OF KINDS OF SPIRITUAL PRIDE

There is more than one kind of spiritual pride. There is the overt (obvious) variety. There is the covert (hidden, or disguised) variety, and there is even the reverse variety, that is a self-focus that sounds like self-pity, woe is me, or I deserve better than this. What all the types have in common is a self-centered focus.

A common variety is the covert variety. It's not that we really think we are better than others. **We are busy trying to convince ourselves, and others, and even God that we are ok.** So, we enter into the same behaviors of comparison, fault finding, or attention seeking, to convince ourselves we are ok, because we don't feel like we are ok.

What all the types have in common is a self-centered focus.

I. **When we are full of OURSELVES, there is no room for GOD.**

But Jesus offers us a better way. Let's pick back up with the second half of Jesus' story.

***Luke 18:13 (NIV)** "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'*

The tax collector understood that unless God intervened in his story, he was hopelessly lost. Have you ever been there in your story? If not, whether you know it or not, you are struggling with spiritual pride. Because the reality of our story is that without God we ARE hopelessly lost.

The role of God's law is and has always been primarily as a tutor teaching us this truth: Without God we are hopelessly lost.

The Pharisee missed this, and saw the Law as something he could achieve. Only by the self-deceit and comparison could he ever think that.

Luke 18:14 (NIV) "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Balloon 3: Fill up the helium balloon and let it go.

Acts 11:24 (NIV) He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith...

It is God's job to exalt you.
Your job is to humble yourself.
If you try to do God's job,
God will do yours.

--June Hunt

II. When we EMPTY ourselves, we are in the perfect position to be FILLED by God's grace.

This is good news. Maybe you have already been humbled. You are here and you are feeling hopeless. The good news is you are in the perfect position to be filled by God's grace.

When you don't know how to fix it, God can now do something to show his grace and mercy. The tax-collector made the correct assessment. He didn't know how to fix it. He could not fix it. We need to come to the correct assessment, we need a savior.

III. When we EMPTY ourselves, we are in the perfect

position to be USED by God.

How do we do our job? How do we empty ourselves? How do we humble ourselves?

God taught us a number of disciplines to use to help us. Let me just name a few of the many disciplines he encourages us to utilize. **Confession** is a great way. Another great way is by **Serving!** **Worshiping** God is a great way; it is the opposite of worshipping self. But remember, even these disciplines are gifts of grace, and means of receiving grace, not a means of achieving grace (which is a contradiction, of grace).

Dear God,

I declare that I can't "fix it" by myself. I need you. Sometimes I'm too full of myself. I don't want to be puffed up; I want to be lifted up by you. I want to stop living like life is all about me; its all about you! Please fill me with your Spirit and Your grace. Help me to live for you, your glory, and your honor. I worship you. In Jesus Name, Amen!