

How To Overcome Ego

In society “image” is everything; how we look to other people seems to be given a very high priority.

We are constantly hearing or reading such statements as:-

“You have got to look out for number one.”

“You have got to learn to blow your own horn.”

“Sometimes you have got to beat your own drum.”

“I’ve got to do what is best for me.”

“My taste is simple: I simply want the best.”

“It is expensive but I am worth it.”

If people have not actually said the above statements they are living them in their approach to life.

Most people are obsessed by the concern of how they look to other people.

The theme in society seems to be *“if you have got it flaunt it, if you don’t have it fake it.”*

Advertising teaches us to flaunt or boast through symbols.

Designer clothes, make of car, names we drop, the vacation spots we choose, the clubs we join, etc.

All of these things are an attempt to improve our image.

Where has all this interest in self-promotion led to?

Fragmented relationships.

We cannot promote ourselves and develop strong relationships at the same time.

At the root of most relationship problems are two attitudes, pride and selfishness.

1 Corinthians 13:4 [NIV] *“Love does not boast, it is not proud...”*

What does pride do to relationships?

Proverbs 13:10 [Good News Bible] *“Arrogance causes nothing but trouble.”*

Most of the time we are unaware of how destructive pride is, because we think that the problem in the relationship is something other than pride.

Very often we are too proud to admit we have the problem of pride!

a) Pride produces misunderstanding

When I think I know it all I don’t need to listen to what you are saying.

I don't need to listen because I have already worked out what the answer should be.

Matthew 7:4-5 [NIV] *"How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."*

When we don't stop to listen to what the other person has to say we jump to conclusions, make wrong judgements and cause misunderstandings.

Proverbs 18:13 [NIV] *"He who answers before listening, that is his folly and his shame."*

The "plank" in our eye is thinking we know the answer before we have allowed the other person to fully explain the question.

We know that very often as we begin to express our real need, the words we use and the way we express our need may change, as we ponder on the question ourselves.

We always need then to allow the other person all the time necessary to express their feelings. Our only response at first should be indications in words but more often in body language that we are really listening. Eye to eye contact, soft single words of approval and the gentle touch of the hand or comforting arm around the shoulders.

If we are asked to perform some task and we are not sure of what is exactly needed pride can stop us from asking for clarification and we end up doing the wrong thing.

The expressing *"love is blind"* is wrong.

The true saying is *"pride is blind"*.

Pride blinds us to our own faults.

When I have pride in my own life I can't even see my own faults so how can I ever help other people with theirs?

b) Pride provokes arguments

When ego bumps up against ego they're in conflict.

When I am full of pride I resent nothing more than pride in you.

One day a famous boxer was taking a flight on a jet plane and just before take off the stewardess asked him to buckle his seat belt. His reply was *"superman doesn't need to buckle his seat belt"*, to which the stewardess replied *"superman doesn't need a jet plane to fly."* The famous boxer did up his seat belt.

Galatians 5:26 [Phillips Translation] *"Let us not be ambitious for our own reputations, for that only means making each other jealous."*

Bragging doesn't impress other people, it only makes other people jealous of what we say we possess or what we have done.

The person who has the right to boast doesn't need to do so, for greatness is its own advertisement.

The actor Gregory Peck went to one of the exclusive restaurants in Hollywood for a meal with a friend. He was told he would have to wait as there were no tables available at that time. His friend

said “*Why don’t you tell them who you are.*” The reply was classic “*If you have to tell people who you are, you ain’t.*”

If we have to promote ourselves we are really trying to promote something we are not.

I have found that in business the best and cheapest advertising is recommendation from satisfied customers, rather than boasting how big and good we are.

Romans 12:16 [Living Bible] “*Don’t try to act big ... and don’t think you know it all.*”

When we tell people about our great accomplishments we think it is going to impress them, but the opposite is the outcome. Instead of them saying “*wow!*” they think “*what an insecure person.*”

The son of a well-known pastor used to go around saying “*I am your pastor’s son.*” Well, his mother thought this was rather cocky so she told him not to tell people that you are the pastor’s son. The next time he was asked “*are you the pastor’s son?*” his reply was “*well, I thought I was but my mother tells me I’m not.*”

Bragging always gets us into trouble!

Proverbs 13:10 [NIV] “*Pride only breeds quarrels...*”

Think back over the last week of any disagreement you had, what triggered it off? If we are honest we will have to admit pride was involved.

c) Pride prevents intimacy

You cannot get close to people full of pride, they build walls around themselves, to prevent us from getting to know their real personality.

Proud people put up a façade; an outward appearance, an image for others to see, we can never come to know how such people feel or think.

The root of all pride is the fear of rejection, “*if you really knew what I was like you would not love me, and I am all I’ve got.*”

So we hide our faults, weaknesses, fears and feelings behind a big public relationships programme. We spin a web of superficial lies to hide our real self, and hold people off at a distance.

This can even happen in a marriage, husbands and wives can live a life busy with their own interests to avoid opening up to their partner for fear of rejection if they were too revealing of their real self.

1 John 1:7-8 [Living Bible] “*If we are living in the light, then we have wonderful fellowship and joy with each other, if we say we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves.*”

These verses directly apply to our relationship with Jesus Christ but equally apply to any intimate relationship.

If we have ever had a spotlight on us we know it is not flattering, all our warts, hair or lack of hair shows.

When we are totally honest with someone, then we have fellowship. If we put up a wall and do not admit we have personal problems we cut ourselves off from others.

You cannot love someone without being vulnerable.

Humility creates intimacy – pride destroys intimacy.

d) Pride postpones reconciliation.

Proverbs 28:13 [Living Bible] *“A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful. But if he confesses and forsakes them, he gets another chance.”*

Temper gets us into trouble but pride keeps us in trouble.

Stupidity gets us into trouble and pride keeps us there.

We all know how difficult it is to admit we have made a foolish mistake, what makes it difficult is pride.

Parents need to say sorry to children when they make a mistake because parents should be modelling reconciliation for their children to learn how to reconcile future differences with others in their lives.

So many families are living under the cloud of unresolved conflict for year after year simply because of pride.

The theme of the very popular film made in the late 1960s *“Love Story”* was *“love means never having to say you are sorry.”* **This was a lie.** Pride means never saying you’re sorry.

So often in this society we accept lies when they are dressed up in attractive wrapping like an emotional romantic theme.

Love says we are sorry; that film was not a love story, it was a lust story.

Swallowing your pride may be distasteful but it is non-fattening!

Humble pie may not taste too good but it is healthy food, very nutritious for our character.

What is the antidote to egotism?

a) Accept our humanity

Romans 12:3 [Phillips Translation] *“Don’t cherish exaggerated ideas of yourself or your importance, but try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities...”*

We need to see ourselves as God sees us, a bundle of strengths and weaknesses. We all have weaknesses, faults, make mistakes and sin.

Romans 3:10 [NIV] *“As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one;”*

Romans 3:23 [NIV] *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”*

1 John 1:8 [NIV] *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”*

Many scriptures remind us that we are all sinners and only deceive ourselves if we think we are sin-free. No-one is perfectly sin-free.

Humility is being realistic about our strengths and honest about our weaknesses at the same time.

Proverbs 20:9 [NIV] *“Who can say, “I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin”?”*

We have all made big mistakes; none of us have lived pure, unstained lives.

b) Don't try to be something we are not!

One man in a company had just been made a director and was sitting at his desk in his new office for the first time. When he saw an unknown man coming towards his office he thought he had better look busy and important to give the right image to his new status. He picked up the telephone and started an imagined conversation with the chairman of the company. *"Yes, Mr. Chairman, it was nice of you to call me to congratulate me on my directorship. I'm sure we will be able to have such a close working relationship as you have just suggested."*

He put down the telephone and turned to the man who had just entered the office.

"Yes young man, what can I do for you?"

"Well, nothing much really," came the reply.

"I'm just here to install your telephone!"

When we recognise our humanity we will recognise our need for humility, for life is one long lesson in humility.

If we are willing to recognise when we are wrong it makes us right.

c) Recognise God's Grace

1 Corinthians 4:7 [Living Bible] *"What are you so puffed up about? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God, why act as though you are so great, and as though you have accomplished something on your own?"*

We would have nothing and no hope for any future if it were not for God.

"I'm a self-made man!!" Well, self-made people generally worship their maker, not God.

"I earned that money!!" No you didn't. Who gave you your mind and body that enabled you to profit from using them? God did!

Did we choose where we were born? No!

Did we choose who were our parents? No!

Did we choose our natural gifts and abilities? No!

Did we choose to be born in Britain and not the slums of Calcutta? No!

Every thing and opportunity we have we have received from God.

James 1:17 [NIV] *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."*

Every good gift comes from God, but how we use what we have been given is up to us, whether to serve ourselves or others.

What is of real value is what God is doing in us and through us.

We are often like the ant who got a lift on the back of an elephant across a wooden bridge. On getting to the other side the ant remarked *"wow, didn't we shake that bridge!!"*

God is telling us to get the big picture then we won't boast about being "a big fish in a small pond"!! When we are really a speck on a speck in this great universe that God controls.

d) Experience God's unconditional love

Ephesians 3:17-19 [Living Bible] *"I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts, living within you as you trust Him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvellous love. May you be able to feel and understand, as all of God's children should, how long, how wide, how deep and how high His love really is. To experience this love for yourselves, though it is so great that you will never see the end of it or fully know or understand it. So at last you will be filled up with God Himself."*

It seems that Paul is inviting us to look at the universe, to the limitless sky above us as it extends without measure in all directions. The love of God is that extensive.

Romans 5:8 [Phillips Translation] *"The proof of God's amazing love for us is this, that while we were still sinning, Christ died for us."*

Christ on the cross is symbolic of God's unconditional love. His arms stretched out to embrace all mankind. His head bowed down sees us from His Throne in Heaven to intercede for us here below on earth.

Where are we to experience the boundless love?

Ephesians 3:20-21 [NIV] *"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."*

We experience this love in fellowship with all God's consecrated people.

John Wesley said *"God knows nothing of solitary religion, no man will ever enter the Kingdom of God alone."*

The Church may have its faults, the members may be very far from being the kind of people they ought to be. But it is in the fellowship of the Church that we experience the Love of God.

This society torn apart with opposing forces, by bitterness, hatred and strife needs to experience the Love of God.

The Church is the Body of Christ, His hands, His feet and His voice to perform His work of love.

The Church cannot do the work it was called to do until its individual members joined together in fellowship known and experience the limitless love of Christ.

No person can teach another what he does not know or give to another what He does not possess.

Before we can give this love to others we must first find it ourselves within the worldwide Church of God.

Why is the love of God a great antidote to egotism?

We all know that an empty truck makes the most noise.

A drum only makes the noise it does because it is empty on the inside, fill it with water and it doesn't make the same noise when hit.

Egotism is an indication that a person is empty of love on the inside.

A vain person is empty at the core of their lives, having no concern for others.

Such people feel there is a need to make a lot of noise, so they boast and brag about themselves, and all they have accomplished, trying to be something they are not.

The greater the void in their lives the greater the boast.

What causes us to boast or brag?

Boasting is the attempt to look good when on the inside we don't feel good at all. Why?

Because we suspect that people won't really care about us or see our worth unless we tell them, how great I am.

The antidote is to be so filled with God's Love that the void in our life is totally full to overflowing.

John 14:15-17, 20 [NIV] *"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." ... "On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you."*

God's Love in us is Christ in us by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

John 7:37-39 [NIV] *"On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. **Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.**" By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified."*

The Love of God in us, the Holy Spirit in us, cannot be static; He must flow through us and satisfy the thirst, the void, in the lives of others.

Only through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit can we experience the unconditional Love of God that brings us peace of mind that this world can never give us.

We can understand the Love of God intellectually as the Holy Spirit *"lives with us"* but we only experience God's unconditional Love when we submit to the Holy Spirit coming *"in us"* by allowing Him to be the Director of lives.

Allowing our will to be crucified and God's Will to be the driving force in our lives.

John 14:12-17 [NIV] *"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."*

This is how we can be so filled with God's Love that there is no place in us for pride or egotism.

We have no desire or reason to strive to validate our worth in the eyes of others because we feel, we experience being unconditionally, totally, loved by God.

We are loved by God just as we are with all our faults, weaknesses and sins, but that love is so great He doesn't want us to stay that way and experience all the heartache it brings.

God desires to live in us, so that in the intimate fellowship some of His characteristics will “*rub off*” on us, and we become then His children.

The only “*image*” we need to have will be given to us by God when the fruits of the Holy Spirit in us flow out from us as God loves others through us.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God -- this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

God has today given us this challenge that we too may experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The Holy Spirit comes by invitation to those who surrender their lives to Him [God] as a living sacrifice.

The Holy Spirit then presents to this world the only lasting image of the eternal living God, in us, and through us.

Genesis 1:26 [NIV] *“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness’ ...”*

Before God even created mankind, His desire was for us to become like Him to reflect His image.

Philippians 2:5-8 [NIV] *“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross!”*

God's image we see clearly in Jesus Christ, an image of love and humility. Let us make that our goal in life.