



MAKING PRIDE AN IDOL

RMPP EVENT 34

SCHEDULE

Welcome and Zoom Etiquette

Opening Prayer

Speaker Introduction

Message: *Making Pride an Idol*

Q&A and Discussion

Breakout Rooms

Closing Prayer

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MAKING PRIDE AN IDOL

SYNOPSIS

Pride - we all have it, deal with it, and have been affected by it. And yet, we may not know just how much it plays a part in our relationship with God and others. Are you willing to walk away from its destructive wake?

| **Message Link:** <https://youtu.be/prf-sjok3R0>

| **Scripture Reflection**

And then he added, “It is what comes from inside that defiles you. For from within, out of a person’s heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you.” - *Mark 7:20-23*

All who fear the Lord will hate evil. Therefore, I hate pride and arrogance, corruption and perverse speech. - *Proverbs 8:13*

EVENT

34

| *Personal Reflection*

1. How does pride most display itself in your relationship with God and others?

2. What keeps you holding on to prideful attitudes, which, in turn, affect your relationships? Is it unforgiveness, stubbornness, or something else? How much longer will you hold on to it/them?

| *Personal Application*

1. Today, what might the Holy Spirit be asking you to do about your pride?

2. How can a Christian community and Biblical brotherhood help you walk in humility?

| *Recommended Reading*

The Power of Humility: *by R.T. Kendall*

The Blessing of Humility: *by Jerry Bridges*

A WORD FROM...

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

You can find many teachings on pride on the internet, so what makes this event and this devotional booklet different? I believe it is because we aren't trying to provide another teaching on what pride is but rather point out its destructiveness when left unchecked and allowed to run rampant.

Pride is such an obvious sin to recognize in others, isn't it? But when it comes to my life, even if I realize I have it, I would rather ignore it because I don't want to admit that I struggle with it. But truth be told, pride impacts my relationship with God and others more than is comfortable to admit. That's why this event is such a personal one for me because as I have prepared the message and looked over all of the devotionals, I feel like there is a large mirror in front of me, and what I see isn't necessarily pretty. Yes, I love God and people (*or at least most of them!*), but pride still finds a way into my heart, attitude, words, and actions. And when it does, it wants to plant itself firmly. The question is, will I allow it or do something about it?

If you are like me, you will agree that this event is a perfect launching pad to do something about the corrosiveness of pride in our hearts and amid our relationships. As you go through these six devotionals over the next few months, I pray that you will ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you about any areas of your life where pride has taken root. And when those areas are revealed to you, I pray that you will ask the Holy Spirit to help you remove the pride like a weed that is no longer welcome. And this is my prayer for myself too.

As men of God, we may focus on other sins deemed more serious such as anger, greed, immorality, etc. But as a subtle sin, identifying and dealing with pride needs just as much focus and attention. Today, and over the next few months, let's shine the light of God's Word on our attitudes, words, and actions so that our hearts can be clean and clear for the Master's use.

Christian Lent

PRIDE... WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

DEVOTIONAL 1

The Bible is not silent about the issue of pride. In fact, God's Word talks about it a lot! What can you learn about pride, so you can stand firm against its sinful pull?

King Nebuchadnezzar of the Neo-Babylonian Empire (605-562 BC), was one of the most powerful rulers in the world. Unfortunately, he didn't realize that God is the one who "removes kings and sets others on their thrones" (Daniel 2:21). In Nebuchadnezzar's case, God was specifically using him to discipline the Israelites for their disobedience. One evening, as Nebuchadnezzar was walking on the roof of his royal palace, he reflected upon his success:

"Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" - Daniel 4:29-30

Have you noticed how kings seem to get into trouble when

they have the time to leisurely walk on the roof of their palaces? Remember King David? In Nebuchadnezzar's case, he didn't realize that "pride goes before destruction, and arrogance before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). God chose to get Nebuchadnezzar's attention in a very unique and drastic way when He turned him into a wild animal (please read Daniel chapter 4). God was successful and seven years later, Nebuchadnezzar came to his senses and praised the King of Heaven "for all that He does is true and just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride" (Daniel 4:37).

What about you and me - do we struggle with pride? In some ways, I think Christians have a special challenge in dealing with pride because God blesses us so much! God has uniquely created each of us with special skills and abilities, and then He blesses us with opportunities to use those gifts. On top of this, the Holy Spirit gives each of us spiritual gifts to bring glory to God and benefit the body of believers. Consequently, we need to carefully observe our behavior and attitudes as we contemplate on the success and blessings God brings into our lives.

One of my greatest struggles with pride had to do with career accomplishments. I don't think it's wrong to take pride in what you do. God saw that His creation was "very good" (Genesis

1:31), and we are created in God's image. But it's wrong for us to forget that God is the one who gives us our abilities and blesses our careers. When we fail to acknowledge God in this area of our lives, we are withholding praise and honor that is rightly due Him. We become like Nebuchadnezzar!

Now that I'm retired, you'd think I'd have less of a struggle with pride - it's actually the opposite. Most of what I do now are ministry opportunities God gives me to serve Him and His church and I have to be constantly reminding myself and everyone of this fact. To be effective and useful in ministry, we must be reliant upon God's power - and then give all the glory to Him! Jesus said "apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). This is especially true in Christian ministry. "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord Almighty" (Zechariah 4:6).

Our greatest example of how to deal with the temptation of pride is Jesus. Though rightly God and King, Jesus "emptied Himself" of His kingly rights and privileges, taking the form of a servant and becoming obedient even to the point of death (Philippians 2:7-8). If anyone had the right to be proud, it was Jesus - healing multitudes, calming the sea, walking on water, and even raising the dead! But in everything Jesus did, He sought only to bring glory and honor to His Heavenly Father.

Even when facing the horror of the cross, Jesus cried “Father, the time has come. Glorify Your Son, so that the Son may glorify You” (John 17:1). Of all men, Jesus overcame personal pride and demonstrated humility.

If we are going to boast, let’s boast in the Lord!

“Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, nor a mighty man boast of his might, nor a rich man boast of his riches. Let him boast in this alone: that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth. For I delight in these things!” declares the Lord. - Jeremiah 9:23-24

My soul will make its boast in the Lord! The discouraged will hear this and rejoice! O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together!” - Psalm 34:2-3

After several careers, Roger is now retired and living in Bangkok, Thailand with his wife. He continues to learn about following Jesus, and welcomes others to join him in this adventure.

| ***Think About It***

1. In what area of your life do you struggle the most with pride?
2. How can you be proud of your accomplishments and still honor God?
3. Is there a way to proactively deal with pride?

| ***Read***

Proverbs 29:23

| ***Reflect on This***

“Sin came through the pride of Lucifer and salvation came through the humility of Jesus.” - *Zac Poonen*

PRIDE... THE FIRST SIN

DEVOTIONAL 2

Pride has been around for thousands of years. In fact, it is what caused Lucifer's downfall and, if you're not careful, it can cause yours too. Pride always comes before a fall.

“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”

- Proverbs 16:18

Pride separates. Lucifer is attributed with being the first to demonstrate this sin. Ezekiel 28:1 is believed to be a description of Lucifer when it says, “Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.” As a result of Lucifer’s pride, he was separated from God and the heavenly hosts by being cast down to earth. Pride does the same in us. It separates us from God and our community. It leads us to believe that not only CAN we do life alone, but we SHOULD do life alone. It makes us think that we are so great, we can handle everything by ourselves and that if we seek help, support, or encouragement

in our struggles or the tasks set before us, then we are weak or something about us is less than. C.S. Lewis calls pride the “great sin” in his book, *Mere Christianity*. He asserts that it is rooted in competition. While other sins can unite us with others, albeit through negative activities, pride puts us at odds with those around us. It sets us against our brothers in Christ and even against God. Pride tells us that we don’t need or shouldn’t need God and should instead go it alone. It spurs us to continue struggling under our own power. But in actuality, nothing worthwhile can be accomplished without God. As John Wesley said, “Without God, man cannot. Without man, God will not.” It seems God would like to accomplish His great plan through us, but He will not unless we choose to relinquish our will to Him. For that to happen, we have to stop believing in our own greatness. The devil knows this sin all too well and has experienced the devastation of losing community himself. It is only fitting that he would try to trap us in the same snare. As it says in 1 Peter 5:8, “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” The way a lion hunts is to separate one of the prey from the herd. I can only imagine that the devil would like to do the same to us by using our pride to separate us from the strength of our fellowship with other brothers in Christ.

This separation from true community is an area that I have struggled with myself quite a bit. It feels like I have a default inclination to isolate and do life alone. It is a continual struggle for me to choose to get in community and be vulnerable when in those settings. I don't always hit the mark. Sometimes I "check the box" by joining a small group, but I allow my pride to keep me from opening up and inviting others into my life. The cost of this is steep. Without authentic community we are more vulnerable to the voices of doubt and self-loathing that can enter our minds and convince us that we're the only ones struggling, so there must be something wrong with us. This also shows up in my relationship with God. Too many times, I've allowed my pride to keep me from laying my struggles and stressors at my Father's feet, and instead chose to accept the anxiety and resign myself to bearing them alone. In those times, what my actions are showing is that I either don't believe God will help or that I don't believe He can help. I know that neither is true, but that's what makes pride so insidious - its ability to quietly grow lies within our hearts under the guise of being tough.

C.S. Lewis says that the Christian quality opposite pride is humility. It takes humility to sit down with others and share the messy parts of your life. It takes humility to admit to others that no, you actually can't do this on your own. It takes humility to go to God and admit that you need help; that

you need Him. Pride says, “I’m strong enough; I got this.”
Humility says, “I don’t have to be strong enough; my God is,
and my brothers have my back.”

So, I invite you to join me in humbly seeking relationship
with God and fellow Christians, to do life together and
embrace authentic community.

*Nick lives in Maryland, U.S.A., and is a husband and father of two
boys. He works as an analyst in the state correctional system and
has a heart for walking with men so that together they can pursue
God and the vision He sets out for purity in their lives.*

| ***Think About It***

1. How have you experienced the separating powers of pride in your relationships?
2. Where are you allowing your pride to keep you from being honest with those around you, and with God?
3. 1 Corinthians says, “I boast about my weakness because in my weakness his strength is made perfect.” What weakness has pride been causing you to hide, and what practical step do you need to take today to allow God to use that weakness for his glory?

| ***Read***

James 4:6

| ***Reflect on This***

“Pride is a barrier to all spiritual progress.” - *Harry Ironside*

PRIDE... IT BLINDS YOU

DEVOTIONAL 3

Pride can't be all that bad, can it? After all, it's perfectly normal to feel a sense of pride for some things. However, if we aren't careful, we can find ourselves blinded by the false comfort and promises of pride.

The great theologian Saint Augustine once said, “it was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels.” If you ask anyone, “do you want to be a devil or an angel,” nobody in his or her right mind would say, “a devil.” Yet ever since the fall, human beings haven't been able to conquer this evil trait of pride that causes downfall in our lives.

Essentially, it was pride that caused our original ancestors to fall from God's grace resulting in death and separation from fellowship with God. The root of sin is pride, which is the desire to be self-reliant, self-governing and independent from submission to God. In other words, pride is attempting to be one's own god without having to listen to or be accountable to God. More than anything, listening to Satan's temptation, “...

if you eat of it (forbidden fruit) your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,” was the underlying reason why Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit that caused them to sin against God. The same pride that caused Satan’s fall had caused Adam and Eve’s fall and consequently, that pride is in all of us now.

When I reflect upon the process of my sin, the root of it is always pride. I want to choose what I think will bring me happiness or pleasure. I want to control my own destiny. I want to decide what is good and right for me. Had I cared about submitting to God’s will, law and rule over my life, I would not have disobeyed and sinned against Him. It is when I care less about submitting to God’s will and in pride care more about what I felt like doing that I end up sinning. Because pride is the root of all sin and the cause of all downfall, it is of primary importance that we deal with it if we want to be in a position of humility before God. Pride and humility are its direct opposites. Where there is pride, there is no humility but when there is humility, there can’t be pride.

Augustine is right, it is humility that “makes men as angels.” It was because of Jesus’ humility on the cross that led him to rise again from the dead to gain the greatest honor in Heaven (Phil. 2:5-11). And it will be humility that will lead us to salvation, fellowship and honor in the eyes of God (Is. 57:15, James 4:10).

Suffice it to say that almost every religion in the world teaches humility as a virtue. However, whether through fasting, meditation, spiritual discipline or rituals of various kinds, a person cannot achieve true humility on his or her own effort, and neither can one manage it through counseling or therapy. Why? Because pride is part of our fleshly nature that we have inherited from our ancestors, Adam and Eve. There is no true humility outside of the full surrender to God. No one can claim to have humility outside of a right relationship with God.

The only way to deal with pride is to slaughter it, kill it and annihilate it. That's exactly what our Lord Jesus Christ has come into this world to do: to kill and destroy pride and every other sinful trait that belongs to our fleshly and fallen nature by offering Himself to die on the cross on our behalf. He has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. Though holy, perfect and righteousness without sin, Jesus so identified himself with humans in all their sinful and fallen nature that the scripture says, "He who had no sin became sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). And having so embraced our sin (though he Himself was sinless), Jesus willingly died on the cross, thus eliminating our sin's existence. The Apostle Paul explains that Jesus came to be our Second Adam. While the first Adam rebelled and sinned against God leading us to death and separation from God, the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, in humility obeyed God, leading us

to justification, reconciliation and right relationship with God (Rom. 5:15-19).

For that reason, through the gospel of Jesus Christ, there is an answer to the problem of our sinful nature; there is hope for our predicament of pride. And that answer is in identifying ourselves with Jesus' death on the cross through faith. Jesus, as our representative, died on the cross to kill our fleshly nature. Through identifying with Him in His death by faith, our pride and all the other sinful traits in us can also die with Him. The Apostle Paul explains, "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him." (Rom. 6:5-8) This is the good news. Through identifying ourselves with Jesus' death and resurrection by faith, we can overcome our old nature to live a new life of fellowship and right standing before God with Christ.

We can all agree, pride is in all of us – the desire to think, feel and choose what we want, when we want and how we want without having to be accountable to God. We also live in a world where humans try to create a society, culture and reality independent of God. However, for believers in Christ, although pride may lurk its ugly head in us, we can subdue it. Legally, in Christ, pride is already dead and eliminated. It has no power over us as believers. We have been set free from sin. Christ has done everything for us. What’s left for us is to consider ourselves to be free from sin and not allow pride to influence our thoughts, feelings and choices, but instead focus on walking with God (Rom. 6:11-14). In other words, we need to daily choose to live in the reality that Paul lived in. He said, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Because we have been crucified already with Christ, we can put to death the attitudes and deeds of the flesh and enjoy our walk with God, as we are being led by the Holy Spirit and bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Colossians 3:1-14).

Choosing to crucify our pride by faith and walking with God daily is a choice that may not be easy. However, it is our goal and path to maturity. The more we surrender to God’s will the more we will be like Christ in His character.

Scott, a missionary to Thailand, plants churches in Bangkok. He is married to his beautiful wife Christine and is a father of 4 awesome kids. He likes motorcycles and loves to eat durian.

| ***Think About It***

1. What kind of pride is prone to lurk in you when you're tempted to sin?
2. How can you deal with the pride that can potentially lead you to sin?
3. Memorize 2 Corinthians 2:20.

| ***Read***

Proverbs 18:12

| ***Reflect on This***

“Let us watch against pride in every shape - pride of intellect, pride of wealth, pride in our own goodness, pride in our own deserts. Nothing is so likely to keep a man out of heaven, and prevent him seeing Christ, as pride. So long as we think we are something, we shall never be saved.” - *J.C. Ryle*

PRIDE... IT HURTS EVERYONE

DEVOTIONAL 4

Pride is not a passive sin that is content with hovering in the background unnoticed. Rather, it is brash, loud, and seeks to hurt you and others, time and time again. Are you tired of hurting others and being hurt yourself because of pride?

One day, I was driving the car with my 4-year-old son riding in the backseat, I activated Google Maps and gave the voice command for our destination. Since I don't speak English with a clear accent, sometimes Google cannot "understand" where I want to go. As I kept trying, my son tried to say the name of the destination to help me. At that moment, I became frustrated, and I told him to be quiet in a harsh voice which then led to him crying because my tone hurt him. Because I was upset, I parked the car to calm myself down. I allowed the Father to work on my heart, and He showed me that my son my was only trying to help. I repented of my frustration and anger towards my son, and admitted to him that because he was born and raised in the United States, he has a better accent than me and

that's why it's easy for Google to understand him. So, I let him give the destination, and of course, Google Maps understood him and we were back on the road.

That evening as I reflected on my day, I realized that I was acting arrogant and prideful at that moment because I believed that I knew more and could do more than my 4-year-old, and that my anger came from the embarrassment I felt in having to allow him to help. My son did not see helping me as making him better than me; he was just helping us achieve our goal. But in the moment, I could not see that. All I could see was that he was going to do better than me.

According to the Christian dictionary, pride is sinful because it is excessively self-focused and self-elevating. So many individuals in the Bible exhibited this same pride which led to hurt people. This is the point of Paul's warning in Romans 12:3, "For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Instead, think sensibly, as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one."

As husbands, fathers, friends, bosses, etc., whenever we are prideful and think we are better than we really are, that is when we hurt the people around us. Pride prevents us from listening

to and thinking about the feelings, thoughts, wisdom, and knowledge of others. It makes us think of ourselves as better than those around us. In fact, through the Lord, we actually might have a better idea or be empowered to do better, but that shouldn't make us prideful.

We should humble ourselves and acknowledge that we all have one thing in common: that we are all sinners and we all need a Savior. By the grace of God, we are all equal, but He also has different roles for us. However, the difference in roles shouldn't make us think that we are higher than others or that we should not care about how the people around us feel.

So, what can we do to get rid of that prideful thought? The Biblical answer is that we should not consider ourselves superior to others. That is humility, which is one of the attributes of followers of Christ. Humility is an acceptance of our own limitations and opens space for others to enter. As believers, when we humbly admit that we are sinners and cannot deliver ourselves from the power of sin on our own and allow Jesus to help, we are set free in Him. The same goes for arrogance, when we humble ourselves, we become open to the participation and help of others which actually makes each of us stronger. We must abandon the idea of being better by ourselves, and open up space in our lives for people around us and listen to their ideas and receive their help no matter

the age/role/gender of that person. I believe this is the key to improving our relationships with those around us.

Back to my story: nowadays, when I activate Google Maps and give a voice command, I ask my son to help me put in our destination. I realize now that he understands my accent better than the system because he knows me intimately. Through our relationship he understands my meaning and intent. He knows my heart, just like God knows us when we draw near to Him.

Taweesak (also known by his nickname “Noom”) is learning to live like a missionary sent from Thailand to America (Tennessee). He has learned to live cross-culturally from his wonderful wife, and spends his days with his awesome son who inspires him to be a good earthly father who reflects our Father in Heaven.

| ***Think About It***

1. Have you ever had a situation where you thought you were better than another person? In the moment, did you think of yourself as prideful? How about now?
2. Have you ever seen the results of your pride? How has your pride hurt the people around you?
3. What are some ways in which you can help yourself live a humble life?

| ***Read***

Philippians 2:3

| ***Reflect on This***

“None are more unjust in their judgments of others than those who have a high opinion of themselves.” - *Charles Spurgeon*

PRIDE... A CONTINUAL STRUGGLE

DEVOTIONAL 5

A prideful attitude is within each of us, and prideful actions are all around us. So what is one to do with this constant struggle? Instead of giving in to pride, what would Jesus ask us to do?

Pride has an insidious nature. It tends to sneak in, slowly and unnoticed. I think that is why we are warned against a prideful attitude throughout Scripture and given examples to follow in its opposite, humility. Proverbs 11:2 captures this perfectly:

“When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.”

Or, as observed by C.S. Lewis:

“The Christians are right: it is Pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began.” *

I would hasten to add that in my own life, and most likely in

yours as well, a prideful heart has been the root cause of much of our misery and suffering. I write to you from my experiences in the “front lines.” At least, during 2020 and 2021, that’s what we were called. As a paramedic, we were called upon to serve when everyone else was told to stay inside and isolate. The accolades for this service came quick. Within a week, the title of “front-liner” became synonymous with hero. Before I could fully comprehend what was happening, a flood of glorification came to me. I was told I was brave, I was revered by my church, my friends and my family. I would get free food at restaurants and ushered to the front of grocery store line-ups. All this was done as a show of solidarity to support the front-line workers during the global pandemic. However, much like the virus itself, sinful pride steadily found its way into my heart and multiplied. My ego swelled and I suddenly found that nothing was too good for me, the “essential” one. If I found myself in a long line at a check-out, I would be impatient. If I wasn’t given a discounted rate for my burger, I would feel angry. I became overly critical of others, or as I began to refer to them, the “non-essentials”. These people just didn’t seem to understand the heavy burden I had to bear as a frontline hero. I expected to be acknowledged for my intrinsic goodness, celebrated for my selflessness and also get 50% off all take-out meals. This attitude was the terminal end of a prideful heart and it was a miserable experience.

Jesus wouldn't have been a fan of my attitude. He would have wanted me to practice humility. We are admonished to be humble in Scripture, to crucify the part of us that says "me first, I'm important" or as 1 Peter 5:6 says:

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."

As with many things in Scripture this direction against pride is given to us for our self-preservation. During my most pride-filled times of the pandemic I often found myself angry and frustrated. I had no patience, no grace with anyone I deemed below me and I became pre-occupied with defending my own self-aggrandizement. It was a heavy burden to bear, frankly. The correct approach to all of this would have been one of humility. Humility releases us from the insatiable needs of pride. Humility allows one to live in peace, both with ourselves and others. Best of all, God wants to ultimately exalt us, to bless us, if we would just stop trying to exalt ourselves. It should go without saying, but an exaltation received from Almighty God is far richer and more satisfying than anything we can scrape together through our pridefulness.

**C.S. Lewis Mere Christianity New York: Harper Collins (1952)*
105

Rob is an average Canadian guy, but makes up for it by being a world traveler. A resident of Toronto, Rob is on the journey to a deeper relationship with Christ along with his brothers in RMPP.

| ***Think About It***

1. Pride causes us to have an elevated view of ourselves; the opposite is humility. How should humility function in our daily lives?
2. What are some of the consequences you have personally experienced when you have been possessed by pridefulness?
3. What does “humbling yourself” mean and how can you exercise it in your life?

| ***Read***

Proverbs 27:2

| ***Reflect on This***

“You can have no greater sign of confirmed pride than when you think you are humble enough.” - *William Law*

PRIDE... JESUS OFFERS HELP

DEVOTIONAL 6

There is hope for all of us who struggle with pride. And even though Jesus sees it all, He offers help, hope, and healing to each of us. Are you willing to let go of pride and, instead, reach out to Jesus?

Examining personal pride can be a painful process. When the Spirit brings the surgeon's scalpel of the Bible to us, our human nature tends toward extremes. We run the gamut from self-loathing (which is another form of pride) to self-confidence (different form of pride). UGH - Seems we can't escape this insidious bent to sin!

Years ago, I wrote this on my desk: "God exposes my inadequacies to create my dependency." Recognizing my own pride is an act of God; defeating it is too. I can struggle daily to attack this sin, or I can depend on Jesus to conquer it.

Come to Jesus. Jesus invites us to come to Him. In Matthew 11:

28-30, Jesus tells us not just to come and sit at his feet, but to “take my yoke . . . and learn of me.” Coming to Jesus means we willingly surrender our life-plan to embrace his life of dedicated discipline under God the Father’s loving care. The instruction is simple, but the very act of obedience will expose and curb our pride. Getting under the yoke of someone else’s choosing mandates the surrender of our will.

In 1984, I suffered at the hands of some church members which led me to a faulty view of how to walk out my faith. I learned to live a life focused on self-effort and over achievement. In 1992, I suddenly came to the crashing realization that all my efforts were for naught. Professionally, I was accelerating towards huge success. I was making lots of money and building a platform for excessive pride. Spiritually, though, I was drowning.

Through a series of God’s clear discipline, I was brought low. My Christ encounter was simple: come to me and receive rest. The peace I found in receiving and not striving was amazing. Jesus met every need that pride destroyed. But it took humility to get there.

Now humility is not to be confused with humiliation. When we humble ourselves before a loving Jesus, he lifts us up as

fellow companions. He labors in life on our behalf. He leads the way in the “yoke” or the direction our journey will take in walking with him.

Gaze on Jesus – the opening of Colossians spends a great number of words talking about the magnificence of Jesus and the reality of His salvation. Before Paul confronts the reader with particular sins, he provides the appropriate focus for our lives. “Setting our minds” means we must deliberately choose to think on Christ, his perfection in the eternal kingdom, and how a citizen of the kingdom responds to the glorious King. One writer said long ago, “You can’t focus on two objects at the same time.” I have discovered in my life that pride is easily discovered and discarded when I keep my focus on Jesus.

Remain in Jesus - “Walk in the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” (Gal. 5:16). Since pride is a desire of the flesh, the greatest remedy Jesus offers is continual fellowship with him. “Walk” means to live each moment in harmony. This was taught as far back as Deuteronomy 5, and Jesus demonstrated it throughout the gospel of John when he says he does nothing of his own. “In the Spirit” means we must know who the Spirit is, how he walks, his ways, mannerisms, pace, and flow. We must get intimate with

him. Notice the outcome of relationship: YOU WILL NOT GRATIFY. It does not say you won't be tempted. However, being relationally close means that the temptation is quickly exposed and the invitation to get back in step is at hand.

Meditating on this verse has created in me a heightened awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit who Jesus sent in his place. This awareness, in turn, creates a genuine longing for spiritual intimacy that exposes and eliminates pride and replaces it with his fruits. This active relationship lets me experience a greater joy of him working in me, a gift that self-effort could never produce.

Pride simply topples when a believer regularly submits to Jesus, becomes enamored with Jesus, and walks intimately with Jesus. Over these many years, I have grown in amazement at how Christ has changed this very self-willed man to a simple dependent servant.

Chris and his wife Alicia reside in Florida. Chris has pastored churches across the southeastern United States for over 25 years and has also actively engaged in international missions during that time. Currently, he is the principal director of Reaching Romania, a ministry dedicated to orphans.

| ***Think About It***

1. Do you come to Jesus expecting Him to submit to your yoke?
2. Have you lost your sense of awe and reverence of Jesus?
- 3 Are you fixated on trying to make yourself more Christlike instead of depending on Him to change you?

| ***Read***

James 4:10

| ***Reflect on This***

“A proud faith is as much a contradiction as a humble devil.” -
Stephen Charnock

LOOKING BACK...

DEVOTIONALS 1-6

During this connect group cycle, we pray that you have been challenged, encouraged, and inspired as you pursue greater sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity in your life. We want to encourage you to now take some time to reflect on the last six devotionals and see how you can consistently apply the many truths that have been shared and that you have learned in your life.

Devotional 1

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 2

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 3

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 4

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 5

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 6

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

A soft-focus photograph of a man with a beard kissing a woman on the cheek. The man is in the foreground, slightly out of focus, wearing a dark t-shirt. The woman is in the background, smiling and looking towards the man. The lighting is warm and golden, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is intimate and affectionate.

FAST AND PRAY FOR YOUR WIFE

Each month, we encourage you to set aside a time to fast and pray for your wife (or future wife) for one or all of the following points. As husbands (or future husbands) commit to praying and fasting for their wives, we will see a significant spiritual breakthrough and a spiritual legacy created.



Serve Her

My wife is not a project I need to work on or change; instead, I want to serve her better as her husband, lover, and friend.

Love Her

I want to love and support my wife better so that our marriage reflects Christ's love for the Church.

Honor Her

I want to honor my wife's emotions better by being a safe place where she can freely share her feelings without my trying to solve every problem.

Respect Her

I want to respect my wife better by learning to appreciate the unique talents, gifts, and perspectives she has. Couples should complement one another and not compete with each other.

Listen to Her

I want to be a better listener. I want to listen to my wife with my heart and not just my ears.

INTRODUCING RMPP

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

| *What Is RMPP?*

Real Men Pursuing Purity (RMPP) is a community of men who are committed to growing in integrity, purity and wholeness through relevant teachings, accountability, mentoring and honest dialogue. You might not be sure that you really need to be part of a community like this because you don't struggle with compulsive addictions or sexual sin. While it is very important for many men to focus primarily on resisting sexual temptation and sin, we want to inspire and challenge you to pursue more. Although growing in purity is a big part of the vision for RMPP, it's much more than that. It's also learning about deep-rooted insecurities, developing proper work boundaries, embracing our identity in Christ, confronting fears and anxiety, expressing ourselves emotionally in a healthy way, and pursuing holiness in a safe environment with like-minded brothers. We believe that when we invite Him into these areas, He will extend His healing hand and bring about wholeness. Max Lucado says this very well.

EST. 2014

“Our Savior kneels down and gazes upon the darkest acts of our lives. But rather than recoil in horror, he reaches out in kindness and says, “I can clean that if you want.”

We are men who are not willing to settle for a life of spiritual mediocrity. We choose to relentlessly pursue greater depths of purity and wholeness for ourselves and for our families. Welcome to the RMPP community.

| How does RMPP support the local church?

RMPP does not intend to replace or represent a church; it only creates a safe place for men who want to stay active in their own church community. When a man joins the RMPP community he joins other like-minded men who desire to pursue greater spiritual growth and Christ-likeness. He is choosing to walk out in greater honesty and vulnerability. He is choosing to pursue purity in all aspects of his life. Aspects such as deep-rooted insecurities, developing proper work

boundaries, embracing our identity in Christ, confronting fears and anxiety, expressing ourselves emotionally in a healthy way, and pursuing holiness in a safe environment.

We then pray that as these men grow in greater maturity that they would influence their families. That they would impact their communities and their work places, and that they would be an example for other men in their home church. We believe that as men take hold of the awesome and holy call to live lives that reflect Christ, that the church will be inspired and the world will take notice.

| *What happens next?*

If you have ever attended a men's retreat, you probably remember being deeply impacted by worship, challenged by teaching, and being in community with many men who shared your excitement and enthusiasm for growth and change. A few weeks or months down the road, the gathering became a distant memory as you settled back into the routines of daily life. We don't want to create just another mountain top experience. We are committed to creating a long-term mentoring relationship for everyone who attends an event. That is why you are holding this devotional book in your hands. As you flip through these pages you will see that there devotionals with corresponding

questions. Each devotional is meant to solidify the teaching of the event by encouraging and challenging you, as well as helping to stimulate discussion through thought provoking questions, verses and quotes.

| *Who writes the devotionals?*

Christian men from around the world have written these devotionals and have overcome real issues in their life through God's grace, goodness, mercy and love. We hope and pray that their testimonies and stories inspire, challenge and point you to Christ.

| *What are RMPP connect groups?*

RMPP connect groups are a safe place for men to pursue both purity and wholeness within an environment of peer support and encouragement. The journey to greater purity and wholeness is a journey that involves inviting other men to walk alongside of you. It is a place where you can share your prayer requests, victories, and struggles and where you can be heard, prayed for and challenged to grow in all areas of life. A connect group is designed to be a support system for you for as long as you want.

During your time in a connect group you will be:

Challenged: You will be challenged to grow in your love for Biblical truth. The men in your group will challenge you to grow in your knowledge and application of God's Word thereby enabling you to stand firm in the midst of life's trials.

Encouraged: You will be encouraged to persevere when life, work, and numerous responsibilities may seem overwhelming. The men in your group will support you through prayer, encouragement and a listening ear.

Inspired: You will be inspired to pursue greater spiritual growth and Christ-likeness. While pursuing Christ-likeness may not always be easy, it will also be worth it. The men in your group will be there to inspire you on that journey.

Accountable: The men in your group, as well as your group leader, will support you and hold you accountable as you pursue greater freedom and victory. Be assured that whatever you share in your group will be strictly confidential.

| *When are the events held?*

RMPP events are held online 4x a year in February, May, August, and November.

| *Who can attend?*

RMPP events are open to all men worldwide.

| *What about privacy?*

Because of the sensitive nature of RMPP events, video or audio recording by participants is not allowed. Also, details of personal testimonies are not to be published via email, social media, or in any other form. Thank you for contributing to a safe and secure environment that helps build honesty and vulnerability.

| *Who started RMPP?*

Real Men Pursuing Purity was founded in 2014. RMPP is a joint initiative of The MST Project and New Counseling Service.

MEET THE TEAM

THE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

Christian Lenty is the founder and director of The MST Project, a ministry that seeks to mentor men into a pursuit of sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity. Christian has lived in Thailand for over 21 years and resides in Bangkok with his wife.

Rex DeKoning is the 60-year old husband and father of a large family. A former nurse and pastor, he now works in Thailand with New Counseling Service as a counselor. Rex has experienced great healing of addictive behaviors after he confessed everything and began to live an accountable life. Rex is highly motivated to inspire other men to seek out a mentor, as it has helped him to walk freely, build honesty and vulnerability.

Nick Chilver is married and is part of a blended family containing 6 children. He is grateful for the people God has brought into his life and across his path. And as he continues to learn to better reflect Him, it is his prayer that God will grant

him the privilege of helping others on the path to freedom and into the Light. He resides in Thailand with his wife.

Roger Mitiska and his wife are retired and living in Thailand. They are members of Evangelical Church of Bangkok. Greatly blessed by God, Roger desires to be used by Him to assist others in walking with Jesus. Roger's passion is Christian discipleship through understanding God's Word and applying it to everyday living.

Mike B. Wood is married to his wonderful wife of 28 years. He is a Pastoral Counselor in the area of sexual recovery therapy. He is a man in process, passionate about bringing men together to share life together. This is where we study God's Word together and share the challenges we face. This inspires us to accept what God has freely given us: His love, mercy, grace and acceptance. He and his wife have lived in Thailand for 18 years.

RESOURCES

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

| *New Counseling Service*

New Counseling Service provides counseling and therapy for individuals and families in Bangkok. NCS provides services for expatriates as well as for locals.

W: ncsbkk.com

E: newcounselingservice@gmail.com

| *Pathway To Purity*

The book, Pathway to Purity, is meant to transform your way of thinking about purity, taking you through an initial 16 sessions of encouraging, challenging and application of the material. Pathway to Purity will transform the way you think and live, putting you on a lifetime path of purity and wholeness leading to consistent victory.

W: mstproject.com/p2p

E: hello@themstproject.com

THANK YOU

| *With Gratitude*

We would like say thank you to the following for their contribution to RMPP events.

Financial Donors

Thank you for generously providing the funding for this event.

Devotional Authors

Thank you for writing devotionals that inspire, encourage and challenge each of us to pursue greater sexual purity, spiritual wholeness and Christlike maturity.

| *Scriptural Oversight Team*

RMPP has a Scriptural Oversight Team consisting of several pastors from local churches that review all devotionals for theological integrity.

CONNECT GROUPS

RMPP connect groups are a safe place for men to pursue sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity within an environment of peer support, encouragement, and accountability.

Connect groups are held worldwide on a weekly basis. To inquire about joining a group or to find out more information please email hello@themstproject.com.

If you are interested in starting an RMPP connect group at your church, men's ministry, Bible study, college group, etc., please contact us. We'd love to support you and have the resources to help you.

**JOIN ONE
TODAY!**



AUGUST 2022