

Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People
Chapter 6: Humility – Putting Off Pride
Pastor (Megan's) Notes/Review

Jose Cubero, was one of Spain's most brilliant matadors. Only 21 years old, he had been enjoying a spectacular career. However, in a 1958 bullfight, Jose made a tragic mistake. He thrust his sword a final time into a bleeding, delirious bull, which then collapsed. Considering the struggle finished, Jose turned to the crowd to acknowledge the applause. The bull, however, was not dead. It rose and lunged at the unsuspecting matador, its horn piercing his back and puncturing his heart. "Pali, this bull has killed me." said Jose before he lost consciousness and died.

Just when we think we've finished off pride, just when we turn to accept the congratulations of the crowd, pride stabs us in the back. We should never consider pride dead before we are.

When there is pride in my life as a Christian, I always focus on the failures of other Christians. When there is pride in my life, I've got a very self-righteous spirit, I've got a critical spirit, I have a fault finding spirit, and I look at everyone else's faults through the microscope, but I always look at my own faults through the telescope and I always look down upon the lives of other people. When there is pride in my life, I have an independent and a self-sufficient spirit. I'm protective of my time. I try to protect my reputation and my rights as a Christian, and I focus on the deficiencies of other Christians. When there is pride in my life, I want to be served by other Christians. I've got a desire to be successful. I want to advance the self-life. I've got this drive, I want to be appreciated, I want to be recognized. I'm offended and I'm wounded when other Christians are promoted, and I have been overlooked, because of what I have done. I always keep people at a distance. When there is pride in my life, I want to blame other people. I'm unapproachable.

God wants to change us, He starts by getting our attention, by putting us in a frustrating situation that is totally beyond our control. He breaks that prideful attitude that says we can do whatever we want. We cannot win, and we just keep getting more and more fired. God uses experiences and problems and crises to get our attention. If we're experiencing a crisis right now, it's because God is getting ready to change us for the better. We never change until we get fed up with our current situation, with the status quo. We never change until we get uncomfortable and discontented and start feeling miserable. When we get miserable and uncomfortable and dissatisfied enough, we finally get motivated to let God do something in our lives.

What other affects are there in pride? When there is the sin of pride in my life, I'm so concerned to be respectable, I'm concerned about what other people think of me, and I try to protect my image and my reputation. I find it very difficult to share my spiritual needs. When I am prideful, I wanna be sure that no one else finds out that I have sinned. And I have this instinct to try not to reveal it and I try to cover it up. And I find it very, very difficult to say, "You know, I'm wrong, will you please forgive me?" When there is pride in my life, I'm concerned about the consequences of my sin, I'm remorseful over my sin, simply because I've been caught, that I have sinned before God and sinned before man is not the biggest issue. When there is pride in my life, I always wait for others to come and ask for forgiveness, when there is a misunderstanding or a conflict, in my relationship with God. I begin to compare myself with other Christians, and other believers. And I always think that I'm better than them. When there is pride in my life, I'm blind. I become blind to my own heart condition. I don't think that there is anything in my life that I need to repent of. I don't think that I need revival. Oh but I'm so sure that everyone else needs revival in their relationship with God.

So what do we do? Do we follow Jacob's example and wrestle all night long (Genesis 32:22-32), and not give up? Try to bargain a blessing? "God I will stop fighting in return for a blessing?"

Samuel Chadwick said, "The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray."

We pray. We may walk away with a limp. We may have that wound in our lives as a reminder forever, but would that be so bad? How can having a constant reminder of God's presence in our lives be a bad thing?

This is an important process in God changing us because we never change until we honestly face and admit our faults and sins and weaknesses and mistakes. God will not go to work on our problem until we first admit that we've got a problem. We need to say, "Lord, I'm in a mess. I've got a problem and I admit I made it" Then God can go to work. Have you ever noticed how easy it is to make excuses for our problems? We become experts at blaming other people: "It's not really my fault, you know. It's the environment I was brought up in my parents caused it." Or "The situation I'm in right now is caused by my boss at work." Why should we confess our faults to God? To let Him know what's going on? No. When we tell God we've sinned, it's no big surprise to Him, because He knows what our problems are all along. We confess to Him because He wants us to say, "You're right, God, I've got a problem. There's my error or weakness." It's humbling to admit our mistakes, but once we do, God gives us all His resources and all His power to help us change for the better. At that point we can start becoming the persons we've always wanted to be. This event in Jacob's life was much more than just a wrestling match. It was an example of how God works in our own lives. First He brings a frustrating crisis, like the wrestling match, in which we really struggle with the situation. Finally we acknowledge, "It's obvious that I'm not going to win. I can't get this situation under control in my own power I'm just going to keep on blowing it."

C. S. Lewis put it so beautifully in his book, *The Problem of Pain* "...We may wish indeed, that we were of so little account to God that He left us alone to follow our natural impulses and give up trying to train us into something so unlike our natural selves... But that is asking not for more love from God but for less."

When you are wrestling with God, and you want Him to leave you alone—He won't! He refuses to leave us alone. Because He loves us too much!

In fact, He is much more anxious to bless you than you are even to receive that blessing. But He cannot and will not bless us, if we are people who are pretending to be God through our pride in ourselves and our accomplishments. Today, don't forget this enormously important statement: "God loves you just the way you are, but He refuses to let you stay that way." If you understand that, then you'll understand that God will always be in the business of molding us, of shaping us, and at times breaking us, in order to transform us into the humble character of His Son, Jesus Christ.