

## Love Does Not Boast By Wendy Wood



**Love does not boast.** Like envy, boasting is about self. Someone who boasts not only desires to have the attention and approval of others but also wants to be better than others. Boasting and bragging are used interchangeably. Boasting says “I’m so good and I’m better than you.” The Greek word is *perpereuomai* which means “to extol oneself excessively”. Someone who boasts is seeking glory for themselves. When we consider that we are created for God’s glory, the boaster is in direct opposition to his created purpose. Isaiah 43:7 says, “everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.” We are created to make much of God, not ourselves. Isaiah 42: 8 says, “I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.” A person who boasts is attempting to steal glory

from God. Rather than displaying and talking about God's greatness a bragger desires to make a name for himself.

The desire to be the best is seen in the story of the Tower of Babel. In Genesis 11 the people who settled in the land of Shinar are wanting to distinguish themselves from others. "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth" (verse 4). This group of people is eager to be known for their ingenuity, their hard work, and their power in being able to build the highest building. This building would put on display just how great they were so that others would see it and be amazed by their skills and ability. Rather than worshipping God, they were worshipping themselves and wrongly thinking that they were responsible for their talents and abilities. They wanted to be the best nation on earth. God's response shows His greatness. "And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built" (verse 5). God had to "come down". We know God is omnipresent so this description makes it clear that God is greater, more powerful, all-knowing, and truly the One whose Name is awesome. God is the highest and best of everything. God paints the picture that He is enthroned in heaven and must descend to partake in human activity. Isaiah 45:5 tells us that besides God there is no other being worthy of worship. Daniel 4:35 says, "all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?" Isaiah 40:22 is similar; "It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers". When we rightly consider who God is and who we are compared to God, we see how absurd it is to boast and try to make a name for ourselves.

Saul (Paul) gives us a New Testament example in showing how he used to boast about himself prior to being a believer. (Saul)Paul says "If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of

Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, blameless” (Philippians 3:4-6). Saul (Paul) starts by boasting in his family heritage. He was from a family who had good values and fulfilled the law by circumcising him on the prescribed day. He was of the tribe of Benjamin, who his name sake King Saul, the first king of Israel, was also a member. As a Hebrew of Hebrews Saul (Paul) is saying he is the most learned and respectable of Jews and they should be impressed. He then moves onto his performance. “Blameless!” That’s bold! Saul (Paul) is extolling his zealousness for the law and his devotion to keeping the law. He was so zealous for the law that he persecuted and arrested those who followed Jesus rather than uphold the law. Saul (Paul) is saying that if anyone can boast about where he came from and what he did, he can. However, Paul, now a believer and follower of Christ, calls all that pedigree and performance rubbish (or manure!). “But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.” (Philippians 3:7-9) All that Paul is as a person, all his gifts and talents, and all that he accomplishes, is only because of Christ. Without Christ, Paul says everything is loss. Rather than needing to find worth in accomplishments, successes, achievements or anything else, Paul rests in what Christ has accomplished!

The people of the Tower of Babel wanted to impress others with their skill and power and wealth. Paul could boast of his family and having the right education, the right connections, and being accomplished in the law. How do you try to impress others?

\*Power

\*Knowledge

\*Education

- \*Material possessions
- \*Beauty
- \*Skills
- \*Importance
- \*Position
- \*Background
- \*Family accomplishments
- \*Friends or connections<sup>11</sup>

Maybe you like to boast about your kids to make yourself look like a great parent.

Maybe you can't wait to tell a friend about the great deal you got on a new outfit so she'll know that you are a good steward of your money.

Maybe you dress in clothing that shows off that you have a great figure or have lost weight.

Maybe you post pictures on social media of your perfectly decorated home or the five course meal you whipped up last night.

Maybe you live beyond your means so that others will think you make more money and are important.

Maybe you like to tell stories about yourself with all the parts that make you sound good and leave out the less flattering parts.

Maybe you like to drop names of influential people that you are friends with so others will think you have good connections.

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<sup>11</sup> Maximum Impact by Wayne Mack (List taken from chapter

Maybe you like to make people aware of how much you have suffered and sacrificed so they think you are a super Christian.

As we grow up, we typically become “better” at boasting without seeming like we are boasting. The “humble brag” is so common it even has a name. The “humble brag” is when something that we really want to boast about is couched in self-deprecating humor in an attempt to make it seem like we are not really boasting. For example, someone might post a picture of their newly perfectly decorated living room and say “I wish I was talented at decorating” with a crying laughing face emoji. This comes from a desire to have others comment publicly on how amazing the room looks and how talented you are. Or someone might say, “I can’t believe I ran the marathon in under 2 hours - I had a stomach ache all night.” We want others to know about what we’ve accomplished but know that boasting is rude so we throw in an excuse for why we said what we said. We know bragging is sinful, and we even don’t like to be around other people who brag, yet the desire to make a name for ourselves is great. I can remember someone telling me “I know God doesn’t give us more than we can handle, but I have suffered so much. God must know I can handle it.” This person mistakenly thought God thought highly of her! The one who boasts has a heart that desires to be worshipped and so extols self either outright or subtly. Either way, rather than making God’s name great and giving Him glory, we are trying to steal that glory for ourselves.

Rather than loving God and loving others, the boaster loves self. Wayne Mack says, “Having a love that does not brag will mean that when we do share positive experiences, we do it for an unselfish reason: for the purpose of encouragement or instruction or for the purpose of exalting God and making Him glorious in the eyes of others.”<sup>12</sup> We are commanded to build others up, not ourselves. Our talk should be about making much of God and encouraging others to glorify God. Do you speak well of

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<sup>12</sup> Maximum Impact by Wayne Mack

others and congratulate others on their successes, accomplishments and good qualities? Are you quick to look for ways to help others see the blessings God has given them? We should seek to affirm others when we see godly traits in them or when we see how they are using talents and skills God has given them. We can make much of God by helping others to see Him at work in their lives.

Galatians 6:14 says, "Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world". Through Christ we are redeemed and forgiven. We are adopted by God into His family and given access to God. We can approach the throne of grace with confidence! We are given an inheritance that is undefiled, imperishable, and unfading that is kept for us in heaven. Christ's perfect record of holiness and righteousness, of perfectly doing the will of His Father, is credited to us. It is only in Christ that we have life. What else could we possibly boast about?

Application:

1. What stood out to you about boasting?
2. As you think about how you draw attention to yourself, how do you rate yourself on boasting on a scale of 1-10? Why?
3. Look up the following verses and say what you learn about boasting in yourself and in God.

Luke 18:11-12

Matthew 6:1, 16

Matthew 23:5-7

1 Corinthians 1:31

Psalm 34:2

Psalm 20:7

Jeremiah 9:23

4. How does your boasting display itself? How do you try to draw attention to yourself through either words or actions?
  
5. In which areas of life do you want others to think highly of you? Look back over the lists and examples from the writing. Maybe you can think of some additional ones that apply to you?
  
6. Make a list of your family members and close friends. What Christlike qualities in them do you see that you could point out and encourage them with? How are they using talents God has given them and how could you help them see God behind it and give praise to Him?
  
7. This week, when someone compliments you or praises you, quietly thank God for His good gifts to you and if possible, give God the credit verbally too.