

## Love is Not Arrogant By Wendy Wood



**Love is not arrogant.** Arrogant in the Greek is *physioō* which means to inflate, blow up, puff up, or make proud. These descriptions give the idea of someone who thinks way too highly of himself. An arrogant person has a very high opinion of himself and thinks others should treat him accordingly. The opposite of arrogance is humility. Humility is *tapeinophrosynē* in the Greek and means having a lowly or cast down understanding of oneself. A humble person has sober judgement of who they are as a sinner before God and considers himself a sinner along with all other people.

Pride is feeling good about an accomplishment. Pride sees self as the reason why something good happened. For example, someone who is prideful would say, “I got the best test score because I worked really hard.” Someone who is prideful measures who

they are in comparison to others and feels good about what they accomplish. Arrogance comes from on-going pride. As someone focuses on their great accomplishments the attitude of “I’m better than everyone else” is developed. So pride and arrogance are very closely related.

First Corinthians 4:7 shows the problem with pride and arrogance. Paul, the author of Corinthians, poses three questions.

*For who sees anything different in you?*

Paul is essentially saying, ‘what makes you so special?’ An arrogant person looks at others around him and feels superior. An arrogant or prideful person takes credit for their gifts and talents and disregards that God has made each person uniquely and has “knitted them together in their mother’s womb” (Psalm 139:13). Paul wants the Corinthians to understand that they are not wise or strong or good looking because they made themselves that way. It was God, their Creator and the Giver of every gift, that made them. They can only be thankful, not arrogant.

*What do you have that you did not receive?*

This is a rhetorical question. We receive life and breath and everything from God (Acts 17:25). James 1:17 tells us that every good gift is from God. We have nothing that we have not received. Meaning, we have nothing to be arrogant or proud about. If you have performed well in business or athletics, it is because God gifted you with those acumens and determined that would be who you are. If you are beautiful or intelligent it is because God made you that way. Rather than arrogance, we are to be thankful!

*Why do you boast as if you did not receive it?*

The question is, "Why are you taking credit for God's work?" Just as with boasting, arrogance wants glory for self rather than God. Arrogance wants to remove God from His throne and place self on the throne. The progression of sin in Romans 1 ends with "and since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind". Arrogance does not acknowledge God. Arrogance says "I'm great and I deserve praise and honor". God alone is worthy of that praise and honor. Revelations 7:12 says, "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!".

Later in 1 Corinthians, Paul tells us that "knowledge puffs up but love builds up". One area where Christians tend to be "puffed up" or arrogant is in bible knowledge. In 1 Corinthians 8:1 Paul is warning the believers in Corinth that just knowing scripture is not enough. The Pharisees are a great example of people who scripture well and were proud. They knew the laws and carried them around on their foreheads in phylacteries to show their knowledge to others. They tried to trap Jesus by quoting the law and questioning His obedience to it. Yet the Pharisees did not have love. Just like the person who has amazing gifts of prophecy and faith without love, an arrogant person is like a clanging cymbal or noisy gong. The arrogant person is annoying to be around. Rather than loving others and sharing Christ and His love, the arrogant person loves himself.

Love seeks what is best for other people. First and foremost, what is best for all people is making much of God. Everyone is made in God's image and needs to know a holy God who sent Christ to die on the cross to be the substitute atonement for the sins of all who believe in Christ, repent, and follow Him. Love always looks for opportunities to speak these truths. Love also looks to the interest of others. Love desires to honor and encourage others, not self. An arrogant and proud person is focused on self. This is the opposite of love.

Some people are quick to say, "I don't think too highly of myself. I'm not gifted. I'm not talented. I'm not as good as other people." As Stuart Scott points out in his booklet "From Pride to Humility, this is still pride, just the flip side of it. Since pride is focused on self, and how self measures up compared to others, it is just as prideful to have a self-pitying attitude as it is to have an inflated view of self. Feeling sorry for yourself keeps your eyes on you. Rather than being thankful to God, the self-pitying person disregards God, too.

Paul might ask them questions like:

*"Why do you accuse God of not making you well?"*

*"Why do you accuse God of not being fair?"*

*"Why pretend you have no talents rather than being thankful?"*

God is love. God demonstrated that love by sending Christ to die while we were sinners and enemies of Him. Love looks to the needs of others and then seeks to meet those needs. A prideful and arrogant person is too caught up with self to think of others.

Application:

1. What concepts or ideas about arrogance and pride stood out to you?
2. Do you tend to think too highly of yourself or too self-pitying of yourself? In what areas of your life do you have these thoughts?
3. Read the following scripture and write out what you learn about pride and arrogance.

Proverbs 8:13

Isaiah 13:11

Luke 18:9-14

Proverbs 16:18

Philippians 2:3-4

4. What do you need to thank God for about how He made you?

5. Read Psalm 139:13-16. Charles Spurgeon says this about Psalm 139:13-16 "*For thou hast possessed my reins.*" Thou art the owner of my inmost parts and passions: not the indweller and observer only, but the acknowledged lord and possessor of my most secret self. The word "reins" signifies the kidneys, which by the Hebrews were supposed to be the seat of the desires and longings; but perhaps it indicates here the most hidden and vital portion of the man; this God doth not only inspect, and visit, but it is his own; he is as much at home there as a landlord on his own estate, or a proprietor in his own house. "*Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.*" There I lay hidden—covered by thee. Before I could know thee, or aught else, thou hadst a care for me, and didst hide me away as a treasure till thou shouldst see fit to bring me to the light. Thus the Psalmist describes the intimacy which God had with him. In his most secret part—his reins, and in his most secret condition—yet unborn, he was under the control and guardianship of God.

"*I will praise thee:*" a good resolve, and one which he was even now carrying out. Those who are praising God are the very men who *will* praise him. Those who wish to praise have subjects for adoration ready to hand. We too seldom remember our creation, and all the skill and kindness bestowed upon our frame: but the sweet singer of Israel was better instructed, and therefore he prepares for the chief musician a song concerning our nativity and all the fashioning which precedes it. We cannot begin too soon to bless our Maker, who began so soon to bless us: even in the act of creation he created reasons for our praising his name, "*For I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*" Who can gaze even upon a model of our anatomy without wonder and awe? Who could dissect a portion of the human frame without marvelling at its delicacy, and trembling at its frailty?

The Psalmist had scarcely peered within the veil which hides the nerves, sinews, and blood vessels from common inspection; the science of anatomy was quite unknown to him; and yet he had seen enough to arouse his admiration of the work and his reverence for the Worker. "*Marvellous are thy works.*" These parts of my frame are all *thy works*; and though they be home works, close under my own eye, yet are they wonderful to the last degree. They are works within my own self, yet are they beyond my understanding, and appear to me as so many miracles of skill and power. We need not go to the ends of the earth for marvels, nor even across our own threshold; they abound in our own bodies.

"*And that my soul knoweth right well.*" He was no agnostic—he knew; he was no doubter—his soul knew; he was no dupe—his soul knew right well. Those know indeed and of a truth who first know the Lord, and then know all things in him. He was made to know the marvellous nature of God's work with assurance and accuracy, for he had found by experience that the Lord is a master worker, performing inimitable wonders when accomplishing his kind designs. If we are marvellously wrought upon even before we are born, what shall we say of the Lord's dealings with us after we quit his secret workshop, and he directs our pathway through the pilgrimage of life? What shall we not say of that new birth which is even more mysterious than the first, and exhibits even more the love and wisdom of the Lord.

"*My substance was not hid from thee.*" The substantial part of my being was before thine all-seeing eye; the bones which make my frame were put together by thine hand. The essential materials of my being before they were arranged were all within the range of thine eye. I was hidden from all human knowledge, but not from thee: thou hast ever been intimately acquainted with me. "*When I was made in secret.*" Most chastely and beautifully is here described the formation of our being before the time of our birth. A great artist will often labour alone in his studio, and not suffer his work to be seen until it is finished; even so did the Lord fashion us where no eye beheld as, and the veil was not lifted till every member was complete. Much of the formation of our inner man still proceeds in secret: hence the more of solitude the better for us. The true church also is being fashioned in secret, so that none may cry, "Lo, here!" or "Lo, there!" as if that which is visible could ever be identical with the invisibly growing body of Christ. "*And curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.*" "Embroidered with great skill," is an accurate poetical description of the creation of veins, sinews, muscles, nerves, etc. What tapestry can equal the human fabric? This work is wrought as much in private as if it had been accomplished in the grave, or in the darkness of the abyss. The expressions are poetical, beautifully veiling, though not absolutely concealing, the real meaning. God's intimate knowledge of us from our beginning, and even before it, is here most

charmingly set forth. Cannot he who made us thus wondrously when we were not, still carry on his work of power till he has perfected us, though we feel unable to aid in the process, and are lying in great sorrow and self loathing, as though cast into the lowest parts of the earth?

*"Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect."* While as yet the vessel was upon the wheel the Potter saw it all. The Lord knows not only our shape, but our substance: this is substantial knowledge indeed. The Lord's observation of us is intent and intentional,—

"Thine eyes did see." Moreover, the divine mind discerns all things as clearly and certainly as men perceive by actual eye-sight. His is not hearsay acquaintance, but the knowledge which comes of sight.

*"And in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."* An architect draws his plans, and makes out his specifications; even so did the great Maker of our frame write down all our members in the book of his purposes. That we have eyes, and ears, and hands, and feet, is all due to the wise and gracious purpose of heaven: it was so ordered in the secret decree by which all things are as they are. God's purposes concern our limbs and faculties. Their form, and shape, and everything about them were appointed of God long before they had any existence. God saw us when we could not be seen, and he wrote about us when there was nothing of us to write about. When as yet there were none of our members in existence, all those members were before the eye of God in the sketch-book of his foreknowledge and predestination.

The great truth expressed in these lines has by many been referred to the formation of the mystical body of our Lord Jesus. Of course, what is true of man, as man, is emphatically true of Him who is the representative man. The great Lord knows who belong to Christ; his eye perceives the chosen members who shall yet be made one with the living person of the mystical Christ. Those of the elect who are as yet unborn, or unrenewed, are nevertheless written in the Lord's book. As the form of Eve grew up in silence and secrecy under the fashioning hand of the Maker, so at this hour is the Bride being fashioned for the Lord Jesus; or, to change the figure,—a body is being prepared in which the life and glory of the indwelling Lord shall for ever be displayed. The Lord knoweth them that are his: he has a specially familiar acquaintance with the members of the body of Christ; he sees their substance, unperfect though they be.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> BlueLetterBible.com commentary of Psalm 139, Charles Spurgeon



6. As you read the details of all God worked in creating you, what is your response?

7. What needs to change in the way you think about yourself?