

Beyond Addictions

Free to live a new life in Christ Jesus



Addressing the Problems of Pride and Anger

Lesson 9

A man's pride will bring him low,
but the humble in spirit will retain honor.

Proverbs 29:23

In chapters 9 & 10 we will look at four issues that need to be addressed Biblically in order for you to remain free from addiction. No one is immune from these problems and it would be good for all Christians to look Biblically at the issues of pride, anger, self-discipline and personal relationships.

In this chapter we will see what the Bible says about pride and anger.

How should you deal with pride?

Pride is presented by many non-Christians as a good thing. It is considered to be the opposite of shame and it is used to motivate people to work harder, study more, improve their grades, clean up their home, wash their car and fix most anything else that needs improving. Many Christians also consider pride to be a godly motivator and a good character trait. As you will see, the Bible has some surprising things to say about the issue of pride and it provides a deeper motivation for improvement and it.

The book of Proverbs tells us that pride is an abomination to God.

Augustine called pride the “love of one’s own excellence” which is not necessarily a good thing.. Various dictionary definitions call it “the proper sense of one’s self worth”, “an inordinate view of one’s own worth”, “the feeling of happiness one enjoys after an accomplishment”. No wonder people are confused about this issue. What does the Bible say?

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These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren. Proverbs 6:16-19

Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; though they join forces, none will go unpunished. Proverbs 16:5

The Hebrew word translated “pride” in Proverbs 6:17 means “to rise, to exalt self, to promote”. The word translates as “pride” in Proverbs 16:5 is similar; it means “a lofty look”. When either word is applied to a person, the Bible treats it as a negative character trait. The passage in Proverbs 6:16-19 addresses “a proud look” while the one in Proverbs 16:5 addresses those who are “proud in heart”. It appears that God hates pride inside out!

Read Isaiah 14:12-15 and you will see that pride led to Lucifer’s downfall.

How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit. Isaiah 14:12-15

Lucifer thought that he was equal with God; he even fancied that he was above God and his pride sent him to the lowest depths. If left unchecked, our pride will mislead us and lead to our downfall as well.

A man's pride (arrogance) will bring him low, but the humble in spirit will retain honor. Proverbs 29:23

The message of modern psychology is that pride will lift you up. The Bible says that it will bring you low. According to the scriptures, it is the humble in spirit who retain their honor. Another translation says that the humble in spirit obtain honor. True honor is not rooted in pride; true honor is rooted in true humility.

What else does the Bible say about pride?

The LORD will destroy the house of the proud (arrogant) but He will establish the boundary of the widow. Proverbs 15:25

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Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, and before honor is humility.

Proverbs 18:12

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Proverbs 16:18

Pride is very misleading. We thought that it would exalt us to the highest heights but the Bible says that it will bring us low, lead to our destruction and cause us to fall.

You can see the effects of pride and humility in the lives of professional athletes and other celebrities. Living in the public eye they have the opportunity to boost their own reputation or to live honorably in genuine humility. Listening to some post game interviews you will often hear a player take credit for the team's victory or for his own abilities. Puffed up in pride, he has forgotten that all of the coaches and players had a role in the team's performance. After all, this is only one game in a long season and fooled by his pride, this player is setting himself up for a fall in future contests. All it takes is a slight injury or a lack of concentration for him to become an average player, or one mistake to be the goat rather than the hero.

There are two lines from Rudyard Kipling's famous poem *If* that summarize the correct attitude toward life's victories and defeats:

“If you can meet with triumph and disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same.

If you can walk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings – nor lose the common touch.”

Triumph and disaster can be deceiving. God enables us to continue walking in humility and in honor before Him. In success, it is important to remember that it was God who gave you the talent in the first place and He provided the opportunity for you to use it. In defeat, it helps to recall that God is still on the throne and that life's defeats can teach us some of the greatest lessons. In either case, humility will bring honor, and pride will lead to downfall.

Pride also interferes with your ability to learn and to grow.

Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. Proverbs 3:7

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The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But he who heeds counsel is wise.

Proverbs 12:15

You may have heard the old saying, “Don’t let pride get in the way.” Well, it does get in the way. It prevents you from receiving instruction from the Lord and from people who are wiser than you. Pride is the reason that some men stop attending Bible Study; something taught from God’s Word has bumped against their pride and they don’t want to hear anymore.

Have you ever been in the middle of a project and had someone drop by to tell you how to finish the job? Chances are you were in no mood to have someone tell you how to handle a problem that you clearly knew how to address. Remember Proverbs 12:5, “the way of a fool is right in his own eyes but he who listens to counsel is wise.” It is wise to listen. The other person may have experience that will enable you to complete the job more quickly, less expensively or more efficiently, and you will not learn their secrets if you swell up in pride and refuse to listen.

The wise in heart will receive commands, but a prating fool will fall. Proverbs 10:8

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts.

Proverbs 21:2

Going back to the athletic analogy, the best players are usually the ones who are teachable and work hard. Those are the athletes who accomplish the most with their abilities and contribute the most to their teams. The uncoachable ones become the prating or chattering fools of Proverbs 10:8.

The bottom line in these four passages is that we learn and grow when we are humble and we lose the opportunity when we are proud. Pride gets in the way.

Pride causes bitterness and contention.

This is one way that pride clearly contributes to addiction. Satan, your enemy, will often use pride to stir up trouble and then tempt you to relieve them with a little medication, a few minutes on an Internet porn site, or a trip to a cheap motel. He is a great one for creating a problem and then offering you his brand of relief. You will be free from his trap if you avoid the problem all together. The best way to avoid the problem is to remain humble so that your pride does not lead to strife and violence.

By pride comes nothing but strife, but with the well-advised is wisdom. Proverbs

13:10

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A proud and haughty man -"Scoffer" is his name; He acts with arrogant pride.

Proverbs 21:24

Pride often leads to violence. The problem usually begins with a petty argument over something that amounts to nothing, a seat at a table, a parking space or a mark on the sidewalk. Then pride enters and the people involved allow the problem to escalate until a fight breaks out. Soon someone is seriously injured or worse. The cause – someone's arrogant pride.

On the other hand, when an arrogant person leaves, strife and violence usually leave with them. You have probably seen this happen at a sporting event or in a dorm room. Proverbs 22:10 says, "Cast out the scoffer, and contention will leave; yes, strife and reproach will cease."

So which is the wise way to act, in pride or in humility?

God is anti-pride.

In *This World: Playground or Battleground*, author A.W. Tozer says, "The effort to appear great will bring the displeasure of God upon us and effectively prevent us from achieving the greatness after which we pant." He goes on to say, "Humility pleases God wherever it is found, and the humble person will have God for his or her friend and helper always. Only the humble are completely sane, for they are the only ones who see clearly their own size and limitations."¹

God hates pride. This is really the bottom line. If God hates it, why should we exalt it?

The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate. Proverbs 8:13

Surely He scorns the scornful, but gives grace (favor) to the humble. Proverbs 3:34

Do you want to receive God's scorn or His favor? You cannot scoff at other people and expect to receive the favor of God. God's favor is reserved for the humble.

In II Timothy 2:24-25, God provides a job description for His servants. He says, in part, "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition ...". Imagine this appearing in a want ad for a pastor or elder. This description seems a bit foreign to many but this is who God wants to serve in His church. It is a picture of the lowly, humble person in Proverbs 3:39 who receives God's grace and applies it in their service for Him.

Unfortunately, pride can also be the root cause of our next problem ...

¹ Tozer, A.W..*This World: Playground or Battleground*, pg. 34

How can I avoid becoming angry?

Anger or a lack of self-control is used by Satan to cause all sorts of problems. What does the Bible say about it, what kind of problems does it cause and how can we be delivered from it?

Anger is a work of the flesh that is encouraged by demonic forces. “Outbursts of wrath” is listed in Galatians 5:20 as a work of the flesh. You will also notice that nothing remotely resembling anger is listed in Galatians 5:22-23 as an aspect of the fruit of the spirit. So you can safely say that anger is not a work of the Holy Spirit; it is a sinful act of your own flesh. Many of us struggle with this issue. Fortunately, the Bible tells us how to deal with it.

Why do we become angry?

First of all, you recall from the book of Proverbs that anger or strife is often rooted in pride.

By pride comes nothing but strife, but with the well-advised is wisdom.

Proverbs 13:10

He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife, but he who trusts in the LORD will be prospered. Proverbs 28:25

Notice the contrast - pride causes strife but the well advised, those who think things through, are wise. Think before you act. Proverbs 28:25 makes an interesting connection between faith and pride. The contrast in this proverb says that you are not trusting in the LORD if you are proud in heart. So, your pride can interfere with your faith and cause you to act in anger.

An angry man stirs up strife, and a furious man abounds in transgression. Proverbs 29:22

Does this describe you in the past? Does it describe the people you hung around? If so, then you understand where many of your problems started. In *Proverbs for Today*, Pastor David Hocking states the problem well, “Bitterness is rooted in the problem of anger. Anger is rooted in the problem of pride. It is our natural tendency and the enemy knows it, so we often need help in dealing with it.” Your pride has provided Satan with a perfect seedbed for anger and bitterness. As you harbored it in your heart and acted on it from time to time, you also suffered from it. Get rid of the pride, anger and bitterness and you will not be tempted to lose control and you will not have to suffer the consequences.

Two passages in the book of James remind us of where this problem originates.

But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual,

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demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. James 3:14-16

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? James 4:1

Again, notice that bitter envy and strife is not of the Lord, it is earthy, sensual and demonic. James 4:1 says that the anger we experience toward each other within the body of Christ is caused by our own personal lust. We cannot claim that our anger is godly or that it comes from above. We are simply fighting to have things our way. We struggle inwardly and act outwardly against those around us and the turmoil caused by our own lust creates strife, confusion, anger and violence. It can also lead to frustration and encourage us to seek a solution to this problem from a bottle or a pill or some other addictive substance.

James 3:15 says that this kind of thinking is demonic. In other words, it is influenced by demonic forces that stir up our own self-seeking desires. If you eliminate the lust in your heart then the enemy cannot use it to stir you to anger. Remember, we are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this age, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12).

Another reason for becoming angry is that we act impulsively rather than controlling our thoughts and actions. Two passages from the fourteenth chapter of Proverbs explain the problem and remind us that there is great blessing in being slow to become angry.

He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly.
Proverbs 14:29

A wise man fears and departs from evil, but a fool rages and is self-confident.
Proverbs 14:16

If you cannot rule your own spirit then you are open to attacks that cause you to lose control. The Bible likens a man without self-control to a city that has no protection against its enemies.

Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls.
Proverbs 25:28

It is easier to subdue an outward enemy than one within your own heart. Matthew Henry was once quoted as saying, “The conquest of ourselves and over our unruly passions requires more true wisdom and a more steady, constant management than obtaining victory of the fires of an enemy. It is harder and therefore more glorious to quash an insurrection at home than to resist an invasion from abroad.”² However, if you allow the Lord to change your thinking and become slow to wrath, you are better than the mighty who take a city.

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. Proverbs 16:32

These are excellent memory verses that can keep you from losing control when you are confronted with difficult situations. A man of understanding holds his peace and is slow to wrath. Rarely is it intelligent to become angry and rarely does anger result in anything positive.

When is it wrong to become angry?

There are three explanations for most outburst of anger.

When you seek revenge.

Revenge is a killer. Whenever you have been wronged, the enemy will tempt you to repay the one who mistreated you. The Bible tells says that it isn't your job to seek revenge. It's God's job and you may have noticed that we don't perform any of God's jobs very well.

Do not say, "I will recompense evil"; Wait for the LORD, and He will save you.
Proverbs 20:22

Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Romans 12:17-19

When tempted to take revenge, remember instead to wait on the Lord. It isn't our place to take revenge. Later you will find out how to eliminate the bitterness that can cause you to react in revenge.

The second reason for becoming angry is when you believe that others are treated better than you. You probably recall the story of the prodigal son in the book of Luke. Most of the attention in this parable is given to the father's love and forgiveness for his son. Thank God for his forgiveness. There is an account at the end of the story that also deserves some attention. It

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 3

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focuses on the older brother's refusal to forgive and his reason for being angry with his father and younger brother.

"But he (the older brother) was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. "So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him. "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'" Luke 15:28-32

Essentially, the older brother was crying, "It's not fair!" This is probably the first complete sentence spoken by most children. Unfortunately as we grow older, we tend to hang on to this feeling. The older brother in this story felt that his little brother was receiving better treatment than he had been given and he was not happy about it. I mean, the older brother stayed home like an obedient son even as his sniveling little brother had run off with his part of the inheritance! Who wouldn't be angry? Does this sound familiar? Have you ever experienced the same feeling? Possibly when someone else got the promotion at work? Or when your brother received a large sum of money from your parents?

We tend to become angry when we feel slighted. Watch out. This attitude that will carry you to the grave if you do not recognize it, confess it and ask the Lord to help you with it.

My own sense of fair treatment gets put in proper perspective when I consider what I deserve from the Lord. Because of my sin, I deserve death. Any treatment less harsh than death is a gift from God, an act of His wonderful mercy. Compared to my sin against the Lord, what is a little offence that someone may have committed against me? Or who cares if someone else received a nicer gift or better treatment than me?

Here is a little warning. Most of us could relate to the younger "prodigal" son when we first accepted Christ. We knew we needed grace and we were thankful to receive it. As we get older, we run the risk of becoming more like the older son who was judgmental and became angry when grace was extended to someone he felt was less deserving. God's plea to us is then to "remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works". Remember grace.

Bitterness is the third major reason for becoming angry. Bitterness will affect every thought and action if you let it. You probably know someone who harbors bitterness and is constantly stirring up trouble.

A wrathful man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger allays contention.

Proverbs 15:18

In Colossians, the Apostle Paul warns you to get rid of the anger, wrath and malice that may have plagued you in the past.

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Colossians 3:8

He also had to address this problem with the Christians in Ephesus.

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. Ephesians 4:31

As you can see, the problems of bitterness, wrath and anger are not new but they are sinful so they aren't excusable either.

So how can you control your anger?

First of all, don't defend it or justify it. The Bible doesn't let us defend our actions or attitudes of pride and anger. We cannot claim that we haven't done anything wrong. The best advice is found in Proverbs 28:13.

He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

Confess your sins and you will receive mercy. I John 1:7-9 assures you that the blood of Jesus cleanses you from all sin.

The most important thing you can do to eliminate bitterness and anger is to practice forgiveness.

First of all, you need to know that *you* can be forgiven. The Bible teaches you and me that we can be forgiven for everything we have ever done wrong. This forgiveness and reconciliation with God is made possible by the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who took the wrath that you and I deserved. I John 1:7-9 says that, as believers in Jesus, we have been cleansed of all sin and all unrighteousness.

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But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

I John 1:7-9

Now you need to understand that the debt we owed God was much greater than any that has ever been owed to us. People may have stolen from you, robbed you of your dignity and mistreated you. They may have left you for dead. How can God help you cope with the bitterness and pain?

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:32

This is one of the most freeing passages in scripture. The Greek word for “forgiving” is the same word used for grace. So, the verse can be interpreted to read, “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, gracing one another, just as God in Christ also graced you.” By grace we have received what we don’t deserve. We can grace others by giving them kindness when we feel that they don’t deserve it.

What did you or I do to earn the forgiveness of God? Nothing. He did not ask us to jump over one hurdle or to run one step in order to be forgiven of our sins. The verse in Ephesians tells you to extend the same grace to those you need to forgive. Don’t ask them to jump any hurdles; they might not do it and you will be stuck in bitterness. Don’t ask them to pay back the money they owe or to mend the hearts that they broke. Just ask God to give you the supernatural grace to forgive them the way that you have been forgiven.

Once you extend forgiveness you are free from the pain that it has caused. And the enemy will not be able to torment you with it any longer. Forgive. Forgive. Forgive. Holding onto hatred and unforgiveness hurts you more than anyone. H.E. Fosdick, the author of *Victorious Christian Living*, said, “Hating people is like burning down your own house to get rid of a rat.” You may get rid of the rat but look at what you lost in the process.

God enables us to overlook the wrongs that have been done to us. He empowers us by the Holy Spirit to let go of the pain and hurt so that we never have to be held captive by it again. And when you let go of the pain and unforgiveness you also cut the cord that Satan has used to hold you captive to his will.

Conclusion

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Allow the Lord to transform you by the renewing your mind and you will be changed from the inside out. Instead of being motivated by your pride, you will be motivated by God's love for you and your desire to abide in Him. As a result, you will do your work as unto the Lord; you will love your spouse as Christ loved the church; you will esteem others as being greater than yourself; you will become a representative of Jesus Christ because He lives in you. You will be able to walk in joy and peace.

When you let go of your pride, you also let go of the reasons for becoming angry. You don't have to defend your reputation because your life is hidden in Christ. You are able to forgive others because you know how much God has forgiven you. You no longer hold onto anger and bitterness because as Paul 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. Galatians 2:20

You are free from temptation to become angry. The cord that bound you to abuse and addiction has been broken. No longer a puppet of Satan, you are a child of God and He will use you to help set others free.

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Assignment 9

Name: _____

1. How is pride referred to in the book of Proverbs? _____

Have you ever been in a treatment program or class that referred to it this way? _____

2. Re-read the three passages from Proverbs on page 3 and tell me what pride leads to. _____

3. How does pride interfere with your ability to learn and to grow? _____

4. How does pride cause bitterness and contention? _____

5. The Bible has a lot to say about humility. How would you describe this Biblical virtue? _____

6. How is a man without self-control like a city without walls? _____

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7. Can you relate to the older brother who became angry when the father poured out his blessing on the younger brother? _____ How did you respond the last time that someone got a job or a promotion that you believed you deserved? _____

8. Tell me how pride and anger are related. _____

9. How does practicing forgiveness enable you to overcome bitterness? (Read Ephesians 4:32 and the notes on pages 16-18) _____

10. How does dealing with pride and anger properly help to free you from the likelihood of returning to addiction? _____

Once you complete this worksheet, mail it to:

Free In Christ Prison Ministries
PO Box 1492
Yanceyville, NC 27379

We will review your answers and return this sheet to you along with the next lesson. Study the Foundational verses included in this chapter and continue to allow the Lord to transform you by the renewing of your mind. People are praying for you!