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23: THE TWO FACES OF PRIDE (PART 1)

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Articles

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When we were young, we received mixed messages about how to think and talk about ourselves. We were told to achieve and win and be the best that we could be. We were told to be proud of our achievements. On the other hand, we were told to not be conceited or proud. We must keep our achievements to ourselves, otherwise we have a swelled head and think too much of ourselves. We learned to work hard and be performance oriented, but we were never to talk about it lest we develop an excessive opinion about our worth. So, there are two distinctly different and opposite meanings to this word pride. Pride is good when you do well, but pride is bad when you let it go to your head. To help talk about this confusing subject, I use two different words to describe the two different meanings. For the good pride, I prefer the word "Esteem", and for the negative pride I use the word "*Comparrogance.*"

Before we begin, we need to understand the negative influence that our culture has on both meanings of the word pride. It is generally believed that a person needs to have a strong and healthy self-esteem to be able to function. But, if culturally, we are not allowed to talk about what is good about ourselves, for fear of being conceited, then how can we have a strong self-esteem. If 70% to 80% of all language is negative, and if we are constantly being judged and not measuring up, then we tend to fill up our negative cup inside ourselves with critical statements. Even when we succeed, we cannot talk about it so the negative container inside of us dominates our internal landscape. As a result, our culture has created an epidemic of people with low self-esteem. The dichotomy seems to swing from winner to loser with nothing in between. We strive to be the winner and when we miss the mark, we are worth nothing.

The church exacerbates this feeling with legalistic thinking that creates beliefs of guilt and shame. As sinners we are always missing the mark, so we must be pretty bad. But, the church and our culture have not taken **Philippians 4:8** into consideration. It says, "*Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things.*" We are commanded to think positively about the truths of ourselves. Often these truths are lost in the barrage of negative feedback and then people honestly say, "I do not know my true self". The problem is that there are so few people around who provide positive, truthful feedback that, if we just listen to the world, we will forever suffer from low self-esteem. As believers, while we are to see our sinful ways and change them, we are not to dwell on the sins. Our sins have been forgiven and we are holy and righteous in God's eyes. We are to dwell on the goodness of his creation. We are to see and understand what is true and noble and pure about ourselves and we are to think about how we are excellent and praiseworthy. This is not conceit this is positive self-esteem. The Lord knows that we need a strong self esteem to be the best that we can be. So, if filling our internal cup up with positive beliefs about ourselves is God's plan for us—*will this not lead to a self-inflated image?*
