

Battle Ready: Recognizing and Overcoming the Strategies of the Enemy

Servant or Master: Overcoming Pride and Independence

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Servant or Master: Overcoming Pride & Independence

Ephesians 6:10–12 NLT

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. ¹² For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

Daniel 10:4–6 NLT

On April 23, as I was standing on the bank of the great Tigris River, ⁵ I looked up and saw a man dressed in linen clothing, with a belt of pure gold around his waist. ⁶ His body looked like a precious gem. His face flashed like lightning, and his eyes flamed like torches. His arms and feet shone like polished bronze, and his voice roared like a vast multitude of people.

Daniel 10:12–14 NLT

Then he said, "Don't be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day you began to pray for understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your request has been heard in heaven. I have come in answer to your prayer. ¹³ But for twenty-one days the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia blocked my way. Then Michael, one of the archangels, came to help me, and I left him there with the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia. ¹⁴ Now I am here to explain what will happen to your people in the future, for this vision concerns a time yet to come."

Luke 10:17–20 NLT

When the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported to him, "Lord, even the demons obey us when we use your name!"

¹⁸ "Yes," he told them, "I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning! ¹⁹ Look, I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy, and you can walk among snakes and scorpions and crush them. Nothing will injure you. ²⁰ But don't rejoice because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven."

Proverbs 16:18 NLT

Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall.

James 4:4–8 NLT

You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God. ⁵ Do you think the Scriptures have no meaning? They say that God is passionate that the spirit he has placed within us should be faithful to him. ⁶ And he gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

⁷ So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

⁸ Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world.

Biblical pride is a "heart-based rebellion" against God. It is rooted in the belief that we can "do it without God" and/or "without others."

Matthew 22:37–40 NLT

Jesus replied, " 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

Humility is having the right view of ourselves before God, submitting to Him, accepting His grace, and choosing to put others before ourselves.

Four Keys to Growing in Humility:

1. Recognize our dependence upon God and release control to Him.

Matthew 5:3 NLT

God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

2. Be honest with those around us.

1 Peter 5:5–7 NLT

And all of you, dress yourselves in humility as you relate to one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”⁶ So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor.⁷ Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

3. Acknowledge when we are wrong or have made a mistake.

4. Serve others.

John 13:1–5 NLT

Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end.² It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.³ Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God.⁴ So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist,⁵ and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel he had around him. ...

John 13:12–17 NLT

After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, “Do you understand what I was doing?¹³ You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because that’s what I am.¹⁴ And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet.¹⁵ I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.¹⁶ I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message.¹⁷ Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.

Small Group Guide: Servant or Master

Opening Question

Is there a quality you are genuinely proud of — work ethic, self-sufficiency, resilience — that you can also see has sometimes worked against you or the people around you? What does that tension look like?

The Enemy's Best Tool Is a Twisted Version of Something Good

The spiritual battle we are in is not fought with conventional weapons, and it is not waged against other people. Paul precisely frames our struggle in Ephesians 6: it is against evil rulers, authorities of the unseen world, mighty powers in darkness, and evil spirits in heavenly places. This is a structured hierarchy. The enemy has strategies — specific, layered, and adapted to the people and places he is targeting. Understanding that changes how we engage.

One of those strategies operates at a regional level. Scripture gives us clear examples: Daniel prayed and his answer was delayed for twenty-one days because the “spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia” blocked the messenger sent to him. When Jesus sent out seventy-two disciples to minister across the region, He observed that their victories on the ground were dethroning a regional spiritual power. The demonic does not operate only in individual lives. It operates in the values, assumptions, and patterns that entire communities absorb as “normal” over time, until those patterns simply feel like “the way people are around here.”

Take West Texas people, for example: Tough, independent, resilient, and gritty — qualities forged by generations of ranchers and farmers scratching out a living in a hard and windswept place. These are genuinely good qualities. The enemy is not particularly interested in attacking us with something obviously bad. His more effective move is to take something genuinely good — resilience, self-reliance, hard work — and twist it with pride until it becomes a weapon against us. “I don’t need anybody, and I’m proud of it” sounds like strength. Scripture calls it the posture that God opposes (James 4:6).

Biblical pride is not about confidence or accomplishment. It is a heart-based rebellion against God — the deep belief that we can do life without Him and without others. It is the final step of the enemy’s Big Lie, the one that began with shifting our focus from abundance to limitation and ended with an invitation to become our own god. Pride and independence work together to keep us out of the interdependence that God designed us for — full reliance on Him and genuine responsibility toward others. The Great Commandment is structured around exactly this: love God with everything you have,

and love your neighbor as yourself. That is not an independent life, it is a fully surrendered one.

The antidote is humility. Humility is not self-deprecation or weakness. It is having the right view of ourselves before God: submitting to Him, accepting His grace, and choosing to put others before ourselves. Jesus demonstrated it in the upper room on the night of His betrayal. He knew who He was. He knew the Father had given Him authority over everything. And from that place of total security, He got up from the table, wrapped a towel around His waist, and washed His disciples' feet. The sequence in that scene is important. Humility is not the absence of knowing who you are, it is what you do with it.

For Discussion

1. The enemy's most effective strategy is not to attack us with something obviously bad, but to take something genuinely good —like resilience, self-reliance, grit — and twist it with pride. Where do you see that happening in your own life? What good quality has occasionally become a liability?
2. The four keys to growing in humility in your notes are: recognizing dependence on God, being honest with those around us, acknowledging when we are wrong, and serving others. Which of those four is hardest for you — and what does the resistance feel like when you try to practice it?
3. Jesus washed His disciples' feet from a place of total security — knowing exactly who He was and where He stood with the Father. How does that reframe what humility actually is? Does it change how you think about serving others when it feels costly or beneath you?

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, You oppose the proud and give grace to the humble, and we want Your grace more than we want to be right or to appear strong. Forgive us for the ways we have taken the good things You built into us and held onto them so tightly they became walls. We confess the pride that has kept us from You and from the people around us. Jesus, You had all authority and You picked up a towel to wash your disciples' feet. Give us the security in You that makes that kind of humility possible; not weakness, but the confidence to lay ourselves down because we know who we are and whose we are. Holy Spirit, show us where we are still trying to do life alone, and give us the courage to be honest, to acknowledge when we are wrong, and to serve rather than be served. May we be people who walk humbly with you, our God. In Jesus name, amen.