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The Poison of Pride: Why Arrogance Destroys Trust and Influence

On a recent trip to one of my favorite coffee shops, a business contact invited me over and introduced me to a colleague. As our conversation unfolded, I asked what they enjoyed about working for their company, especially since both had stayed for years despite high staff turnover in that field. Both immediately replied with “humility,” which surprised me. They explained that their president is a strong leader who consistently demonstrates true humility. Arrogance and excessive pride simply aren’t traits in this leader’s character.

Consider individuals in your network who display significant arrogance and pride. Do they inspire trust? These traits are detrimental to trustworthiness, conflicting with qualities like credibility, relatability, dependability, and reliability. Arrogance and pride are among the greatest barriers to trust in relationships. Trust is as essential to humans as air and water. Research calls it the “invisible glue” of human bonds, enabling vulnerability, emotional safety, and intimacy that support mental health and resilience.

These destructive traits have plagued humanity since the beginning. Across cultures and eras, non-biblical sources treat arrogance and pride as ancient, universal problems that ruin people and communities. In ancient Greek thought, hubris—excessive, offensive pride—was a grave moral offense, often leading heroes to divine punishment in tragedies. Ancient Near Eastern wisdom warned against boasting and self-importance, noting that pride blinds and invites harm. Even Stoic and Roman moralists cautioned against haughtiness, insisting that virtue requires self-control and that prideful comparison corrupts the soul.

Scripture, Old and New Testaments, is even more direct: pride and arrogance are dangerous; humility brings wisdom and God’s favor. Proverbs 16:18 warns, “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.” Proverbs 16:5 adds, “Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; they will not go unpunished,” showing that pride is not a small flaw but something God takes very seriously.

The New Testament continues this theme. James 4:6 states, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble,” meaning pride aligns you against God’s work, while humility invites His help. First Peter 5:5–6 urges believers to “clothe yourselves with humility” toward one another and to humble themselves under God’s mighty hand, trusting that He will lift them up at the right time. Humility is not weakness; it is the posture that places a person where God Himself promises to act.

Jesus drove this home repeatedly, especially with people who craved religious status. In Matthew 23:12 He says, “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” In Luke 14:11, after watching guests scramble for the best seats, He

repeats the same warning. In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9–14), the confident, self-righteous man leaves unchanged, while the broken, honest man is the one declared right with God. In every case, those who lift themselves up are brought low, and those who bow low before God are lifted.

The apostle Paul summarizes this way of life in Philippians 2, urging believers to “do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit,” but in humility to value others above themselves. He then points to Jesus, who had every right to cling to status yet took “the very nature of a servant.” That pattern defines what genuine humility is meant to look like not only in church but also in boardrooms, classrooms, and public debates.

These passages together paint a clear picture: pride leads to downfall, God actively resists the arrogant, and humility opens the door to grace, wisdom, and honor. Pride’s damage is clear in advocacy, leadership, and relationships—it erodes trust and influence. “Scripture assumes pride runs deep yet promises transformation: ‘Learn from me...for I am gentle and humble in heart’ (Matthew 11:29)—an invitation to trade self-exaltation for the Savior’s lowly path. “Yet change is possible. In Part 2, we’ll explore practical, Scripture-based steps to cultivate “humble engagement,” turning from self-exaltation to Christlike service that builds lasting trust and impact, and inviting God to form in us the kind of character that makes others say, without hesitation, “I stay because my leader is humble.”