

Sermon 8-16-20 — Love is not proud
Central Church
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This week we find ourselves at the midpoint of our Love Is sermon series. We are studying what Paul had to say about the agape love God offers to us and calls us to exhibit toward others. We are devoting eight weeks to this sermon series because nothing is more needed and more important than love. On top of that, the unconditional love we show towards others is our most effective witness to the world. In John, Jesus explained it this way:

I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. - John 13:34-35

We began this series by reminding ourselves that we love because God first loved us. Indeed, we were created to love God and love others. Unfortunately, most of us have little experience with the unconditional love that God offers and asks us to share. Which is why we have been looking at Paul's description of unconditional, agape, love found in 1 Corinthians 13, and using it as a guide as we seek to love unconditionally ourselves.

Over the past three weeks we have been reminded that agape love is patient and kind and does not envy. Which reminds me, were you able to let go of envy this past week? Were you able to stop comparing yourself to others and what they have and instead simply be thankful for the grace you have been given?

It is important that we try to put into practice what we learn each week, because this sermon series is not just an intellectual exercise. It does no good to increase our understanding of unconditional love, if we do not then live it out in our lives. Indeed, a part of why we are doing this together is so that we can challenge one another and support one another as we seek to be more Christlike in our love. As the author of Hebrews advised:

Let us spur one another on to love and good deeds. – Hebrews 10:24

Which brings us to the verse we have been adding to and memorizing these past four weeks. This morning we are going to add another 8 words to what we have already learned from 1 Corinthians 13:4. **Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. — 1 Cor. 13:4**

But first, let's review what we have learned: We have learned that love is patient. It is also kind and does not envy. Now, today we learn that love is not proud, that it does not boast. That's right, we are going to talk about pride this week.

This is not an easy lesson to get across to those of us who need it, because, as Francis Chan said, people who struggle with pride, by pride's very nature, are unlikely to recognize that the lesson applies to them. Oh, sure others may struggle with pride, but not me. Not me.

One of the great challenges in dealing with pride is that most of us are too proud to see that it is a problem for us. So, let me ask you, at least for this morning, to try to be open to seeing whether some of what I have to say may apply to you. Ask yourself whether pride might be keeping you from loving in the ways that God wants you to love?

But let's start by taking a look at the Greek word that the NIV translates proud. The word is "physioo". It literally means to inflate, to puff up, to blow up, to be proud or arrogant.

One challenge, in dealing with pride, is that we sometimes lift pride up as a virtue. I am proud of my school, proud to be an American, proud to be a Fields, proud to be a member of Central Church. Pride can be a virtue. However, if you read your Bible, you will soon find that if there is anything that God hates it is pride.

Let me try to get at that by asking, what you hate? I know that the things I hate fall into two different categories. One list is rather trivial. It contains things like: pickled beets, any sports team from New York, really hot, spicy foods, spinning carnival rides that leave me sick, things like that. My second list is not so trivial. I also hate child abuse, false teaching, gossip, slander and lies, hypocrisy, and people who thrive on conflict. So, again, what do you hate?

You know what God hates? God hates pride. Take a look at Proverbs. In Proverbs 6:16-17 there is a list of seven things the Lord hates. Do you know what is first on the list? That is right. Pride. Proverbs condemns pride again in 8:13, 16:5 and 21:4. Proverbs 16:8 gets right to the point when it reminds us that **“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”** Why does pride lead to a fall? Psalms 10:4 explains that **“In his pride the wicked man does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.” – Psalms 10:4**

The Bible tells us that God opposes pride. I can think of a number of people I wouldn't want to have opposing me. I would not want to be in a swimming lane opposed by Michael Phelps. I would not want to be on a basketball court opposed by LeBron James. I would not want to be opposed by Bill Gates at an auction. But the one I really don't want to be opposed by is God.

Why does God oppose and hate pride so much? God hates pride because it destroys relationships. I have seen it destroy marriages, families, and churches. Pride undermines unity and can ultimately divide a family or a church. Show me church where there's division, where there's quarreling, and I'll show you a church where there is pride.

Speaking of pride, perhaps we could all use some deflating. I know few things deflate me faster than being reminded of my red neck roots. I grew up in the small, farming community of Fairfield, Idaho and much of what Jeff Foxworthy has to say about red necks describes me and my home town. Perhaps some of you might relate to the immortal words of Jeff Foxworthy as he reminds us that we might be a red neck if....

- If you own a home that is mobile and have 14 cars that are not, you might be a redneck.
- If you've ever been accused of lying through your tooth, you might be a redneck.
- If you've ever cut your grass and found a car, you might be a redneck.
- If directions to your house include the words 'turn off the paved road,' you might be a redneck.
- If you think a subdivision is part of a math problem, you might be a redneck.

That was deflating, but back to pride. We now know how to identify whether we are a red neck or not, (and for some of us those things hit pretty close to home), but how do we know if we struggle with pride. Let me suggest that we might need deflating if...

- if you have a tendency to take things personally. If you find yourself regularly defending yourself. If you can't stand being misunderstood or disrespected, it is rooted in pride.
- If you always have to be right. More than that, if it's not enough for you to know you're right, but you insist on other people recognizing that you're right. It is likely an issue of pride.
- If you always have to have your way and get what you want. It is likely rooted in pride.
- If you think it's always the other person who should apologize or change. Then you are at risk of falling into what Jesus was talking about in the Sermon on the Mount when he pointed out the danger of noticing the speck in someone else's eyes while ignoring the plank in our own. Pride focuses us on the weaknesses of others while blinding us to our own. It causes us to blame others and their refusal to do

things differently instead of asking if we need to change. If what you are thinking right now is “I really hope that so and so is listening to this sermon because this so describes them”, then you might want to check your own pride.

The truth is that at some level we all struggle with pride. And if we don't think so it is probably pride that is keeping us from seeing it. Ask yourself, is it possible that I might be struggling with pride? The hard truth is that, for most of us, the real issue is not “if” pride exists in our hearts, it's “where” pride exists and “how” pride is being expressed in our lives.

I want you to complete the following statement “**God helps those who**, what? That's right. God helps those **who help themselves.**” Can you tell me where you can find that in the Bible?

I hope your answer was “I can't”, because it is not in the Bible. It is not even true. Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible tells us that God helps those who humble themselves. For as much as God opposes pride he helps the humble. Let me share just a few of the scriptures that support this.

- **The Lord supports the humble. - Ps 147:6**
- **With humility comes wisdom. - Pr 11:2**
- **Whoever humbles himself will be exalted. - Mt 23:12**
- **God...gives grace to the humble... - James 4:6**

Did you catch that? God supports the humble God gives wisdom and grace to the humble. God exalts the humble. Not a bad list to be included in, if you can get on it.

So how do we get on the humble list? Humility is something that we must choose for ourselves. Repeatedly, in the scriptures, we read, “Humble yourself before God.” It's a choice.

If humility is a choice, then humility must be something that we can work on. It's must be something we can learn to do. In that way, it is a bit like riding a bike, driving a car, swinging a golf club, or playing an instrument. It is something we choose to do and then do it over and over and over, until we start getting good at it.

Like riding a bike, it may not seem natural at first. But the more we do it, the better we get. With that in mind, I'd like to share a few practical ways that we can seek to be more humble.

But first, it might be helpful to explain what humility is. Listen to what some kids had to say when asked what humility meant:

<https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/13870/kids-talk-humility>

The kids have a point. In the church we talk about humility a lot, but we seldom take time to explain what we mean. “*Humility*” comes from the Latin word “*humilis*”, which literally means low. So humility literally means to make oneself low. On the negative side it is related to humiliate which is to put another down and make them low, but humility, being humble is usually considered a virtue. As such, it means to not place ourselves above others, to put their needs above our own.

The best example of humility is Jesus. As God, Jesus could have demanded anything he wanted. He could have stayed in heaven rather than be born a helpless baby. He could have ordered everyone to serve him instead of allowing them to reject and kill him. However, Philippians tells us that (2:5-6) though He was God, he did not demand His rights as God. He gave up being God. He even gave up his right to life. He humbled himself out of love. Humility does not demand its rights, instead humble people give up their rights out of love for others.

What does that look like? Imagine you are grocery shopping on a Saturday morning. The **checkout line stretches** almost the length of the store. The guy behind you is crowding you with his cart. A two year old is screaming that they want candy. The woman in front of you must be shopping for a family of 22. You have just resolved yourself to a long miserable wait, when a clerk calls out that lane 4 is now open with no waiting.

So, what would you do? Would you channel JJ Watt rushing a quarterback, running over small children and old ladies to be the first to lane 4? Would you try misdirection, pointing others to lane six, even as you beat them to lane 4? After all, you have as much right to be first in line as anyone else.

It's hard to let others go first, to give up our rights. Leonard Bernstein, the famous orchestra conductor, was once asked what is the most difficult instrument in the orchestra to play? Do you know what he said? He said, "Second fiddle." Everyone wants to be first chair, but without the other instruments there is no orchestra. It takes all the instruments playing their parts to play a symphony. I like how the Message Bible translates **Romans 12:10: "Practice playing second fiddle."**

Paul asks us to be willing to play second fiddle. But practically what might that look like?

1. Rather than doing all the talking, try shutting up and listening for a change.
2. Choose discomfort so that others can be more comfortable.
3. Take a personal loss so that someone else can win.
4. Take the spotlight off yourself and shine it on others, allowing them to be the heroes.
5. Instead of waiting for someone to serve you, take the initiative and serve those around you.
6. Wear a face-covering. I know that that is controversial, especially around here. Some of you may counter that asking you to wear a mask takes away your freedom and your right to free assembly. Maybe so. But as Christians we are not to demand our own rights. We are to defer to the needs of others out of love. So, when you are in public show your love for others by wearing a face covering.

There you have it. Paul reminds us that if we are going to love with God's unconditional love we must not be proud. We must not put ourselves and our needs above others. Like Jesus we need to be willing to give up our rights in order to love and serve others. So, let's add that to the verse we are memorizing from 1 Corinthians 13. Will you read it with me:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. — 1 Cor. 13:4

Go out this week and love. Love others with the love of Jesus Christ. Quit trying to be first chair. Instead, try putting others first and play second fiddle.