



God Opposes the Proud

Kicking It Off

Was there anything from the sermon or the passage that stuck out to you?

Read

James 4:6-10

Discussion Questions

1. Defining Pride and Its Impact

Proverbs 13:10, Proverbs 16:18, 1 Peter 5:5

- Where does pride tend to show up most subtly in your life?
- Which of these impacts have you experienced or seen: division, resistance to correction, loss of trust, or isolation?
- Why is pride so destructive to both individuals and community?

2. The Deception of Pride

Jeremiah 17:9, James 1:22

- Have you ever believed something strongly that later proved untrue? What made it feel true?
- What does it look like to be familiar with truth but not transformed by it?
- Why is it so difficult to change the mind of someone convinced they are right?

3. Pride vs. Truth

James 4:6, Proverbs 16:5

- Why do we tend to defend ourselves instead of submitting to truth?
- What happens internally when truth challenges something you believe?
- How can you tell the difference between pursuing truth and protecting self?

4. How Pride Manifests

Proverbs 3:5–6, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Proverbs 18:1

- Which area stands out most in your life right now:
 - resisting correction
 - Self-dependence
 - distorted motives
 - strained relationships

- Why is pride easier to see in others than in ourselves?
- How does pride affect the way you relate to others?

5. Pride and God's Glory

Galatians 6:14, 1 Corinthians 10:31

- In what ways can good actions become about self instead of God?
- Why is it dangerous that pride can exist alongside outwardly good behavior?
- What would it look like for your life to consistently point back to God's glory?

6. Putting Pride to Death

Colossians 3:5, Galatians 5:24, Hebrews 4:12

- Why do we tend to manage sin instead of putting it to death?
- What makes honest self-examination before God difficult?
- How does God's Word expose what we might otherwise miss?

7. Submission, Resistance, and Drawing Near

James 4:7–8, 2 Corinthians 10:5

- What does it practically look like to take your thoughts captive?
- Where do you tend to negotiate with sin instead of resisting it?
- What does intentional pursuit of God look like in your daily life?

8. Humility and Repentance

James 4:9–10, Psalm 51:6

- What is the difference between regret and true repentance?
- What is one area where you need to stop trusting yourself and trust God instead?
- What is one practical step you can take this week to walk in humility?

Sermon Notes

James 4:6-10

6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Our topic today is pride and let me clarify what I mean by pride. I'm not talking about pride in a job well done, or the feeling you get when your child makes a good decision. That isn't really pride anyways, its gratitude, its satisfaction. What I'm talking about is something far more dangerous, and that is pride that elevates self above God, the pride that trusts its own judgment as final authority. My personal conviction is that pride causes an incredible amount of damage to both the body of Christ, as well as to the unsaved world at large around us. Proverbs 13:10a By pride comes nothing but strife. Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. The point being that pride damages both individuals and relationships.

- Pride erodes trust.
- It creates division.
- It shuts down correction and teachability.
- It violates accountability.
- It makes genuine loving relationships impossible.

Pride can be damaging, and when it is present in a Christian community, such as ERCC, it can bring destruction and discord to the community. Pride can also corrupt so many of the character traits that we as Christians esteem. It can damage the character of our witness that we try to demonstrate while serving the community around us.

- Patience
- Kindness
- Unity
- Forgiveness
- Truth
- Faith
- Humility
- Love

These wonderful Godly traits are all damaged by the presence of pride, and this should be expected as God is against pride. 1 Peter 5:5b for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

This tells us that God is in opposition to the proud. And this confirms what I've noticed in my life, as I've drawn closer to God. What I've noticed is that I have less and less social tolerance for overtly proud and arrogant people.

Allow me to add a clarifying note; as an elder of ERCC, I have all the time in the world to meet with people struggling and contending with pride, text or email, we'll hang out.

But it's pretty obvious that pride is one of the most destructive and deceptive forces in life and in community. And when I was trying to understand why individuals would allow themselves to be ruled by pride, I came to this conclusion: it's because pride rarely presents itself in an obvious, or easily identifiable way. Pride doesn't usually look like blatant arrogance; it doesn't look like loud self-exaltation, though it can. Most often, it hides beneath personal delusions... delusions like virtue signaling, self-righteousness, and hypocrisy. Pride allows someone to appear to be a person of faith on the outside while, inwardly, that same person is essentially worshiping themselves rather than God. Instead of living as one who is dependent on God, with a teachable spirit and an awareness of their own depravity, the proud individual operates as if they are self-sufficient, leaving no room for God in their life. Which brings us to another reason pride is so dangerous... pride creates a need for self-deception, to protect itself. And within the proud individual, pride doesn't just resist truth; it creates a version of reality where a person will never have to face the truth. And this is what makes pride so dangerous, you're contending with an enemy that's difficult to identify and that your flesh and sin nature actually welcome and desire.

Pastor Mark would very frequently warn the congregation of the dangers pride, quoting Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? And that's the truth of it, the human heart is deceitful, justifying a multitude of sin in our lives. But the truth is that the proud individual does not want to trust in God. And this indicates the reality that pride can exist undetected in anyone... even in professing Christians. And as to how this can happen, unfortunately, it seems to be quite easy to fall into this trap.

There is strong, well-established research showing how easily we can deceive ourselves. In 1977, Lynn Hasher, David Goldstein, and Thomas Toppino identified the “illusory truth effect,” demonstrating that people tend to believe something is true simply because it is repeated. This has been reinforced by researchers like Daniel Kahneman, Leon Festinger, and Ziva Kunda. Different studies, same conclusion: the human mind does not automatically verify truth.

Instead, it relies on shortcuts, and one of the most powerful is familiarity. When something is repeated, it becomes easier to process, and that ease creates a feeling of correctness. Over time, statements, whether from others or from our own internal dialogue, begin to feel true simply because they are familiar.

Consider the implication: when you repeatedly tell yourself something that is not biblical and not true, whether intentionally or not, you can convince yourself that it is true. Your internal narratives, your justifications, your explanations, all begin to shape what you believe to be reality.

Even if those thoughts were initially false, repetition can turn them into convictions. Over time, this distorts how a person interprets reality. They are no longer seeing clearly, but through a false lens reinforced by repetition. This is why self-deception is so powerful. Once something feels true, especially in someone struggling with pride, they become convinced they are right. And at that point, it becomes extremely difficult to change their mind.

- First, you have to unwind their familiarity with the falsehood. Repetition made it feel true, so you’re not just correcting an idea, you’re confronting something that is an entrenched belief to them.
- Second, you’re up against confirmation bias, which is the tendency to favor evidence that supports existing beliefs and dismiss evidence that challenges them. Even when truth is clear, it gets filtered, reinterpreted, or rejected to preserve what they already “know.”
- Third, you must overcome motivated reasoning. The false belief is no longer just an idea; it’s tied to their identity. Challenging it feels like a personal attack to them, so the mind defends the existing idea rather than examining the new and accurate evidence.
- Finally, there is cognitive dissonance. When truth creates tension, to the mind the easiest path is not to change, it is to reject the truth and protect internal consistency.

And while this all may sound complex, it's very real. I've seen it, not just in others, but in myself. When truth confronts something that we've come to believe, there is a natural resistance. We begin to adjust the story, defend the position, and shift the focus, anything to avoid admitting we are wrong.

And if we're not careful, that resistance hardens. What started as a false idea becomes something we protect. And after this transition occurs, we are no longer pursuing truth, we are defending self. We have chosen pride over truth, and self over submission to God. And this is exactly what Scripture warns us about. When we choose pride over truth, we don't just distort reality, we place ourselves in opposition to God. Let's look at what Scripture says about pride.

1. James 4:6 God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Pride isn't neutral, Pride is in direct opposition to God.
2. Proverbs 16:5 Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord; be assured, he will not go unpunished. Abomination is strong language, and if you're proud, this is how God sees you. This individual will be judged as an abomination before God.
3. Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. What else is there to say, after pride comes destruction.

At its core, pride is a positioning issue. An individual shifts from being under God to placing themselves in God's position, trusting their own thinking, defending their own view, and seeking their own recognition. It's subtle, but it changes everything. And this is where you begin to see what pride actually does to a person. It shuts down correction, it pulls them away from dependence on God and begins to twist their motives. The dangerous part is it doesn't blow everything up right away. It allows someone to keep functioning outwardly while their improper position to God is corrupting them.

And if that goes unchecked, it doesn't stay personal, it starts to affect how they live life with others. These individuals will be less loving, less honest in their engagement, less giving, and less committed to the community, as they're more interested in self than others. And the cost of that is real. An individual can still look like they're walking with Christ on the outside, while on the inside, they are not. Pride impacts us in many ways, and I'm going to detail some of the ways that I've witnessed.

1. Pride resists correction and dulls teachability

Pride rarely says, “I reject correction.” It’s more subtle than that. It distracts, deflects, and wears the truth down over time. A proud individual evaluates truth based on whether it aligns with what they already believe, and if it doesn’t, it will be discarded. Conviction gets explained away through circumstances, intentions, or exceptions. Because of this, an individual can sit under solid teaching, read clear Scripture, even feel conviction...and still walk away unchanged. Not because the truth wasn’t clear, but because they rejected it. Over time, this constant rejection of truth creates a dangerous illusion: familiarity with truth without being transformed by it. James 1:22 Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

2. Pride shifts dependence from God to self

This is one of the most dangerous effects because it can coexist with what appears to be outward obedience. A proud believer may still work hard, lead well, say all the right things, provide, serve... but internally, the posture shifts from dependence to independence. Prayer becomes less urgent, seeking God becomes less vital. Decision-making becomes more self-referential. Instead of “Lord, guide me,” it becomes “I know how to handle this.” This is where personal strength and competence can become a liability, the more capable a person is, the easier it is to stop depending on God. Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. (6) In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

3. Pride distorts motives, even in good works

Pride rarely stops good behavior; it repurposes it. What should be worship becomes self display. An individual can serve, give, lead, teach, correct, and sacrifice, and for the proud individual, motivation will shift from God’s glory to self-recognition or self-promotion. This doesn’t always show up in obvious ways, sometimes it’s just a quiet awareness of being seen, appreciated, or validated. This is where pride becomes especially dangerous, because the fruit still looks right on the outside. But underneath, it becomes transactional: “I do this... and I receive affirmation, influence, or identity. 1 Corinthians 10:31 Whether, then, you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

4. Pride fractures relationships and isolates

Pride makes it difficult to:

- Admit when you’re wrong.
- To ask for forgiveness.
- To truly listen to another – Big Indicator.

- To receive input.
- To have deep conversations.
- To submit to others.

Even when someone believes they are pursuing the truth, pride can make them hard to approach, and hard to walk with in life. Sometimes the person is still in community, still leading, still present, but relational depth erodes because humility is missing. And this matters because the Christian walk is not designed to be lived in isolation. Growth is meant to occur in the body, through sharpening, correction, and mutual care. Proverbs 18:1 He who separates himself seeks his own desire, He quarrels against all sound wisdom.

5. Pride competes with God for glory

At the deepest level, pride is about glory. Prides desires recognition, credit, position, or identity apart from God. Pride redirects attention from “what God has done” to “what I have done.” This is why pride is so serious in Scripture, it doesn’t just affect behavior; it challenges and usurps God’s rightful place within an individual. People can still say the right words outwardly... but inwardly, they begin to attach their own identity and worth to their performance, leadership, and outcomes, cutting God out entirely. Galatians 6:14a Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...

Men and women, I’ve spent the last 25 minutes discussing the subtle and hidden dangers of pride, and the point is that pride isn’t a minor inconvenience or a personality disorder; pride is disobedience to God, it’s disconnection and rejection of God. My goal is to give a proper warning to this deceptive, terrible and very common downfall known as pride. And with that, we now get to the good part, and that is what to do with pride?

First of all, we should never try to manage pride, this is entirely the wrong approach. When considering pride, there is no baby in this bath water to save. We don’t try to manage pride; we put pride to death. Colossians 3:5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Galatians 5:24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. The process of putting pride to death starts with truth, and with self-examination. It starts with our honesty about ourselves before God; it starts with our willingness to go where excuses and justifications for sin stop and discipleship can begin. To do so, we have to become willing to admit we are wrong, we have to be willing to be corrected. Even further, we have to be willing to have our motives exposed

and examined, and we have to be willing to submit ourselves fully under obedience to God. This is what repentance is, and this is how you put your pride to death. It means inviting correction instead of avoiding it. It means measuring everything, not by what feels right to you, but by measuring against what is actually true according to God's Word. Acts 17:11 Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. The noble Bereans were teachable, meaning they didn't resist truth because it challenged their personal desires. They tested everything against God's word, examining the scriptures daily. Even when the apostle Paul was speaking, who was responsible for 13 or 14 of the 27 books in the New Testament, they would confirm what he was teaching aligned with the scriptures. Additionally, Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. If you want to know what your heart motives and intentions are, search the scriptures, know the scriptures, and examine your heart motivations and intentions in the light of God's Word.

Putting pride to death is change, and if you desire to change, pray. We pray to the God of the bible, to God the father, and pray for change, ask Him to change your heart. That is where it always begins, with God, it begins with the author and perfecter of our faith. If you're not sure what to pray for, pray for wisdom, James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. If

you pray to God, to have a heart like His, to be aware of and be free of pride, God will answer that prayer. God wants to answer that prayer; God gives generously to all who ask in faith. And after we pray and appeal for change to God, I offer you the following practical steps to follow, in faith and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. Submit Your Will to God

Submitting your will to God begins by tearing down the authority you've given your own thoughts and bringing them under God's authority. His word tells us to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). That means you don't entertain arguments in your mind that oppose what God has already made clear. You don't justify, you don't negotiate, you replace those thoughts with God's truth. Not what you feel, not what you prefer or desire; you replace those thoughts with what God has said. Your obedience becomes a decision, and you become a doer of the word, and not a hearer only (James 1:22). And when that decision is made, you act on it, this is how

obedience goes from concept to practicality, by the power of the Holy Spirit and by our decisions.

Over time, this is how your perspective shifts from self to God, you stop treating your internal voice as authority and you begin testing everything against Scripture, like the Bereans. You measure not just your actions, but your motives. And when your flesh pushes back against your decisions, you recognize them as the sinful desires that they are. 1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Galatians 5:17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. This is the civil war that all faithful believers have to live with until they go home to the Lord. And when we submit to God, we're choosing our new nature over our old nature. We're choosing eternal life with God rather than eternal death without God.

2. Actively Resist Sin and Temptation (v.7)

To resist sin and temptation is not passive, it is active opposition. When James says, "Resist the devil," he's not calling for awareness, he's calling for action. You don't entertain temptation, you confront it. You don't let it sit in your mind while you weigh your options, you shut it down. Scripture is consistent on this; we're to flee youthful lusts (2 Timothy 2:22), we're to make no provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14), we're to take every thought captive (2 Corinthians 10:5). The pattern is clear, you don't manage sin, you cut it off, you put it to death. Whatever feeds it, remove it. Whatever gives it access, close it. Resistance means you are no longer cooperating with it in any form.

And this resistance is not done from a place of uncertainty, but from a place of standing firm in God. The devil flees, not because of your strength, but because you are aligned under God's authority. There is no negotiation here. Jesus didn't debate temptation in the wilderness; He answered it with truth and stood on it. That's the model. You don't go back and forth with sin; you oppose it and you hold your ground. And when you do, consistently, decisively, without compromise, Scripture says the enemy will flee. Not always immediately, but inevitably, because resistance rooted in submission to God cannot be overcome.

3. Draw Near to God with Intent (v.8)

Drawing near to God is not something that begins with us, it begins with Him. Scripture makes it clear that God is the initiator of relationship, He chooses, He calls, He draws. We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). What we call our pursuit of God is actually a

response to His prior pursuit of us. Election, calling, conviction, all of it is God moving toward sinners who would never move toward Him on their own. So when James says, “Draw near to God,” it is not a call to initiate a relationship, but to respond to the relationship that God has already initiated with each one of us.

And the response from genuine faith is exactly that, we draw near in return. Not casually, not occasionally, but intentionally. True faith doesn’t sit still; it moves towards God; it desires to be closer to God. Genuine faith opens and reads the bible, it prays, it seeks, it listens. These actions are not earning anything; they are responding rightly to God. God draws, and we draw near. God calls, and we come. And as we do so, the promise holds, “He will draw near to you.” Not because we earned it, but because we are walking in the very relationship He established with us. This is the rhythm of the Christian life, God initiates, and those who are truly His respond by pursuing Him in return.

4. Humble Yourself Through Honest Repentance (v.9–10)

When Scripture says, Be wretched and mourn and weep (James 4:9), it is calling us to take sin very seriously, not to manage it, or to live with it, or explain it away. We’re to acknowledge sin for what it actually is before a holy God. In 2 Corinthians 7:10, Paul speaks of godly sorrow that leads to repentance; not surface-level regret, but something that deeply affects you. This is where conviction should be allowed to do its work. You don’t try to avoid it, you don’t distract yourself from it, you let it do its work on you. You let it expose the truth of the thoughts and intentions of your heart. That kind of sorrow is not destructive, it is cleansing, because it leads you back to God with honesty instead of pretense or excuse.

And this will lead directly into humility; when acknowledging the truth,

- There will be no more performances
- No more reasons or excuses for sin
- No more false images to protect our true image
- No more pretending you’re better than you are

What remains is for us to just stand before God in truth. David said it this way, You desire truth in the innermost being (Psalm 51:6), and this is a Godly desire. God is not interested in outward appearances when the heart is still holding on to sin. Humility is agreeing with God about who you are and where you stand. It is releasing your grip on the sin that your flesh desires, and placing yourself fully under His authority. Turning to God, responding to His loving call, this is repentance unto salvation. Martin Luther called this

the joyful exchange, in that after we place our faith in Christ, Christ takes our sin, death and condemnation upon Himself and in exchange gives us His righteousness, life and salvation. That is what grace is, it can't be earned, it is unmerited favor.

So where does this leave us? Pride is not something we tolerate, manage, or work around. It is something we put to death. Pride is an enemy that hides well, that speaks in our own voice, and feels right when it is leading us wrong. And because of that, it requires vigilance. It requires honesty and self-examination in light of God's word. It requires a willingness to let God's Word cut where it needs to cut. The call today is simple: stop trusting yourself as the authority, and trust God to be your authority. Not in what you say, but in how you think, how you decide, and how you live.

And the good news is this, God is not standing at a distance waiting for you to fix yourself. He is the one who draws us close, the one who gives wisdom, the one who changes hearts. Don't wait to fix yourself before responding to God, let go of whatever sin you're holding on to, and humbly approach the living God. When you respond in humility, when you draw near to Him, God will meet you there.