



# Improve Your Effectiveness and Relationship with God: Rein in Your Pride

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In the last 24 hours, I've met a leader, read an article, and started a book by an author, all three of whom claim to be Christians, yet appear to be more concerned about themselves than their audiences. They profess to have and live Christian values, yet their words and actions are full of pride and conceit. I doubt they realize that seemingly every other word out of their mouth is "I" or "me". Is "let's talk about me" really God's agenda? Isn't that more selfish pride and arrogance?

Thinking you are more important than others or God is a sin and despised by God. Arrogance and pride are equated to wickedness over 100 times in the Bible. God said through Solomon in Proverbs 8:13, "To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech", and in Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall", and in Proverbs 11:2, "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom." Pride is self-centeredness. It is selfishness. It is putting yourself ahead of God and everyone else. It is taking credit for what God and others have done.

Pride is also a quality that people dislike. No one enjoys going to a dinner party or sitting in a meeting with a person who thinks they are better than everyone else and talks endlessly about themselves. Customers don't want to talk to a babbling sales person who doesn't know how to listen. Thinking too highly of oneself has derailed many people who otherwise could have been very successful.

If you are a sales person, consultant, coach, parent, church leader, boss, community leader, or are in any other role with influence, you are a leader. As a leader, you have followers. Having followers means you have power. Having power means you have a responsibility to be responsible. All leaders have a higher standard to live up to because of their ability to influence. And the larger your circle of influence, the larger your responsibility.

People follow someone because either: a) they have extrinsic "power of position", e.g. they are the boss or parent; or b) they have intrinsic "power of resources", e.g. they possess products, services, wisdom, money, or access to others. Great leaders don't abuse this power. They know that if it weren't for followers, they wouldn't be a leader. They don't focus on themselves, but on what they can do to enable their customers, employees, children, or constituents. It is a subtle difference in mindset, but makes a huge difference in how they operate.

In defense of leaders who have trouble remembering why they are in a position of influence, leadership can make you proud. Power, like success, has a tendency to make you self-centered. It is easy to feel a sense of personal accomplishment when your organization's efforts result in achievement. It is easy to promote yourself while endorsing your people, products, and services. The line between being confident and proud is a thin one. I fall on the wrong side of the line sometimes myself and have to be careful in what I base my own confidence.

Christian leaders resist the temptation to take credit for other's efforts. They base their confidence on their own God given talents, self-discipline, integrity, competence, and personal relationship with God. They don't need to take self-esteem away from others to prove themselves. They are secure. Their effort speaks for itself. In fact, great leaders are humble. They have no need for self-aggrandizement. They focus on their customers, employees, children, and constituents, not themselves.



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Be careful with pride. It can unknowingly bury itself in your subconscious and sabotage you. It will permeate your thoughts, words, and actions. Without intending, you will come across as arrogant, conceited, and selfish. Not qualities that endear people or God to you. Consider these six principles to maintain your humility:

1. **Seek feedback** – Ask those that know you well for their candid and constructive feedback. Ask if your style, tone, or content has any arrogance to it. Be accessible and maintain an open-door policy where people can share their thoughts with you without fear of reprisal.
2. **Test your motives** – Consider why you do what you do. Do you lead bible study more for your personal satisfaction or to help others? When in meetings, are you willing to let others do most of the talking? Do you give your children a chance to explain themselves, or are you quick to apply a heavy hand of discipline because you can. Bring into your consciousness your true motives.
3. **Know your responsibility** - Realize your responsibility as a leader is to lead people, not to exercise your power over them. Your value-add is often invisible. It is what your constituents do that validates your leadership, not what you do yourself. Focus on helping and enabling others. It will come back to you like the repayment of a loan, with interest.
4. **Ground your confidence in yourself and God** – Don't depend on the perceptions of others for your self-confidence. If you do, you will be on a constant roller coaster ride. Your mood and self-esteem will constantly go up and down by no cause of your own. You may not be perfect, but neither is anyone else. Strive to improve yourself, but be confident in yourself as you are. God made you in His image and loves you unconditionally. Don't feel like you need to brag on yourself in order to receive self-validation.
5. **Know how to promote your value-add** – There are occasions when people need to understand your value-add. Customers, investors, and supporters need to know that their resources are being put to good use. You can promote your value-add without being conceited. Focus on your constituents and the benefits they receive. It is about them, the results, the team, and the value-add itself. It is not about what you did. Be careful about using the "I" word, especially when it should be the "we" word.
6. **Learn to listen** – God gave you twice as many ears to hear with as He did a mouth to talk with for a reason. You are more likely to earn someone's trust and respect if you care enough to listen to them. Learn to ask questions, probe for meaning, and reflect back to the other person what you are hearing. Show them that you understand. You will hear more, learn more, influence more, earn more, and be more respected.

Follow these six principles to keep your pride in check and improve your relationship with God. The effectiveness of your influence here on earth will also dramatically increase.

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