

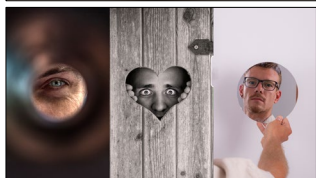


You Turn

Killing the Me-First Mentality

November 9, 2025

Today we're learning how God uses *other people to kill our pride!* Cuz the fatal flaw of our *flesh* that causes all the *suffering* of our *sin* – is our arrogant *ego!* And until *someone* puts it *down*, there's *no room* on the *throne* for the *rightful* King to *reign!* So, **Have you been dethroned?**



You sure? Or do you still have one cheek on God's chair in an effort to stay *in charge?* Cuz *that* was the *convicting* question I heard in Bruce's sermon last week when he *made* us examine whether *our response* to God's kindness was a *soft-hearted* "**Thy will be done**" or a *hard-hearted* "**My will be done.**" And after an *honest* assessment, I gotta say, I *wasn't* thrilled with how much sway my *flesh* still has over my *heart* – cuz we all *know* the key to living our *best life* is having the *right King*. Therefore,

In your hearts **[you must always]** revere Christ as Lord. – 1 Peter 3:15 NIV

So, **why is it so hard to soften our hearts to His commands – even after we believe He's got the plan for our perfection?** Well... anyone who *still* tries to *call the shots* after an invitation to follow a *flawless* leader, must be either **stupid, scared, or selfish.** So take your pick – *I did!* Ask, am I holding on to control because my mind is *stupidly* choosing a *shallow*, short-sighted perception; is my heart still *scared* of what I'll *lose* or the *pain of change*; or is my flesh so *selfish* that it prefers the *false comfort* of *control* to the *true satisfaction* of *surrender?* Fun exercise, huh?!

Don't worry, it's part of the process and *Jesus* reveals our *diagnosis* and *treatment*: **pride makes us stupid, scared, and selfish;** so **it's gotta go!**

"Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and *follow Me*. For whoever wants to save their life *will* lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me will find it. – Matthew 16:24-25 NIV

For we know that our *old self* was crucified *with [Christ]* so that the *body* ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be *slaves* to sin **[cuz when we kill the old you, pride goes too!]** – Romans 6:6-7 NIV

And all of the *stupid, scared, and selfish barriers* to a *better life* with a *better Lord* just *disappear* when we learn to *let go* of our earthly *ego*; the way John the Baptist famously *explained* God's plan:

[Jesus] must *increase*, but I must *decrease*. – John 3:30 NKJ

So, whether you *already believe* that's true or you're willing to *test* that truth for a taste of what it actually *produces*, *here's* the million dollar question: *How?* **How do we kill pride to soften our hearts?**

Well, last week *Bruce* gave a bunch of great ideas: stop *judging*, take a *knee* and *pray* for help, let the Spirit *nudge you*, let the Bible *break you*, and *see* all the struggle as God keeping your clay *warm* enough to finish *working you* into *His masterpiece*! But, I'd like to add another option; *socialize*.



God's primary tool to kill pride – is *people*. Cuz pride hides in *isolation* but gets revealed in *relationships*. And you can *feel* humble *alone* – but **our community proves our humility.** So God put us in close *proximity* – not just to *gauge* our pride – but to *practice* the *humbling process* that *prepares* our heart to be filled with His will over ours! Like James says:

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will *lift you up*. [How?] Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. [Cuz] Anyone who speaks *against* a brother or sister or *judges* them speaks *against the law* and *judges it*. [And] When you judge the *law*, you are *not* keeping it, but sitting in judgment *on it* [as judge]. [But,] There is only *one* Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and destroy... who are you to judge your neighbor? – James 4:6-12 NIV

[So,] All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, [in your community] that He may [be able to] lift you up in due time. – 1 Peter 5:5-6 NIV



Both James *and* Paul point out that *to let God lead* – **the humility we need comes from practicing with *people*.** Cuz if we can master a *selfless posture* with *imperfect people*, our earthly *ego* will get *worn down* enough for our supernatural spirit to *waken up* and be *taken up*!



You ever use a rock tumbler? It's crazy how they reveal *every* ordinary pebble has a *hidden beauty* – but you ever think about *how* they work? Toss in *jagged* stones, a little *water*, a little *grit*, turn it on, and *walk away*. And it's *loud* and *messy* all night – but the stones are *perfect* and *polished* by morning. Well, if you haven't *noticed*, **this world is God's rock tumbler.**

[Because,] As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. – Proverbs 27:17 NIV

But, as great as *smoothing* and *sharpening* sounds, there's some *subtext* we *also* need to *hear*: *First*, this means **we're all a little dull and unrefined.** Cuz you *can't* *hone* or *polish* what's already *sharp* and *shiny* – so before your *pride* tells you that you *still* have your *edge*, remember *this* blunt truth:

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God – Romans 3:23 NIV



However, because you *don't* sharpen a sword with another sword, the *second* insight we need to hear is **sometimes you're a sword and sometimes you're a tool.** Which means we're called to play *both* roles; the one patiently *putting up* with someone *grinding off* our imperfections – and the *abrasive tool* who *someone else* endures to sharpen *their* spirit.



And *that* is one of the most *humbling* realities I've ever had to accept. Cuz we tend to *focus* on how much *we've grown* instead of how much we *make others groan*. But, **I'm somebody's sandpaper.** And *their* *patience* with *my* *imperfection* is making *them* more *sharp* and *shiny*!

Just ask my wife! She'll tell you I'm a master class in producing her patience – so much so, that I'm pretty sure *she* thinks that Jesus telling us to “*Love your enemies*” might be *marriage counseling*. And the only thing that keeps *that* from being an *intolerable* attack on my *ego*, is how *humbled* I've *already* been by *others* – in fact, at some point *two* of my *best* friends *both* revealed that they originally thought I was an *obnoxious jerk* before they warmed up to me. *Ouch!* But good to know. Cuz humility *helped* me see that **without pride, conflict can be more constructive than destructive.**

It's only when *pride* is *present* that our time in the tumbler *feels* destructive cuz that “me-first *mentality*” naturally rubs *others* the *wrong* way and makes it *hard* to *co-exist* in *close* quarters.



Remember back when everybody was *divided* on the *Covid* vaccine and as *that* snowballed into more and more profound *political opposition*? I had a *number* of talks with people who wanted to *move away* to places more *aligned* with what *they* already believed – and every time I asked the *same* question, “**What if everybody did that?**” We'd just *sit around* and *pat each other* on the back for how *right* we *already* were... and *that's* not *constructive* or *destructive*; it's stagnant. And *that's* the worst, cuz at least *conflict* can grow into *cooperation* but *nothing* grows by *stagnation*.

It takes *action*, *reaction*, and *interaction* for things to grow – *including love*! So remember, **friction isn't the failure of love; it's the forge of love.** And God put us in *this* tumbler *on purpose* cuz *forcing* us to get along is *how* our rough spots get *polished off* and our *heart* learns to make *room* for others. Cuz when God's kids *won't* try to get along, He helps the exact same way my friend did with *his kids*; I told you this a while back, *but* whenever *they* started fighting, he just got out the “*Big Shirt*” and the kids would *both* have to *wear it* until the fighting *stopped*. And it worked like a *charm*, because just being in the “*Big Shirt*” teaches the same lesson real fast: **harmony with others is always in my best interest.**

So God designed *this* world with *different* people sharing the *same* space to force *us* to learn **earthly ego creates conflict but spiritual unity produces peace.** Cuz *that's* when God's *love* begins to grow.

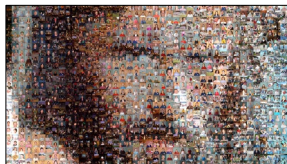
[As Paul explains] Love must be sincere. [So,] Hate what is *evil*; cling to what is *good*. Be devoted to one another *in love*... Be joyful *in hope*, patient *in affliction*, faithful *in prayer*... [all so you can] Live in harmony with one another. [Which mostly means] Do not be proud... [But instead,] If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live *at peace with everyone*. – Romans 12:9-18 NIV

[And since *our* selfless *unity* is essential to experiencing God's sincere *love*, we must] Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the *bond* of peace. – Ephesians 4:3 NIV



Cuz **the unity with the Spirit that we all share begins with unity with the community we all share.** And we can't have *that* until “me” becomes “we.” Otherwise, we're doomed to the same fate as *Narcissus* – cuz he was so *fixated* on his *own reflection* that he couldn't tear himself away – and that self-centered *stagnation* ended up starving him to death!

It sounds like a dark *comedy* – but it should *also* ring out as a *real warning*: **self-focus feeds our flesh but starves our spirit**. But that should sound both *convicting* and *encouraging* – cuz if self-centeredness is the common *cause*, then prying our eyes *off* ourselves is the common *cure*. **If attention to our ego *doesn't* decrease our spirit will starve.**



So, how does the flesh *die to self*? **Start by dying to selfies!** *That is*, realize you don't *need* to be the *center* of every picture! Call me crazy, but when I was a kid – barely any photos had a *single* person in them; we took photos of the landscape *alone*, the *others* we were *with*, and the *experiences* we *shared* – yet *now*, it feels like we want to measure our life by how *things* relate to *us* instead of how we relate to *things*. But, God's **creation isn't just for confirmation, but confrontation.**

It's *not* just meant to show you how awesome *you are*, but how awesome *God is*; to *awaken* our spirit's higher desire for someone *better* than our flesh on the throne. Cuz **our spirit has an appetite for the fulfilling harmony of unity** – cuz *it* knows that *we need each other* to be *complete* – and we need to be complete to be *in Christ*!

For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.
– James 3:16 NIV

[So,] Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. –
Philippians 2:3–4 NIV

[Cuz] [Jesus] died for *all*, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again. – 2 Corinthians 5:15 NIV

[Which is why] He must become greater; I must become less. – John 3:30 NIV

[Cuz] From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. – Ephesians 4:16 NIV

[So don't let pride let you think you're all you need] The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" – 1 Corinthians 12:21 NIV

Cuz *we're all in this thing together!* And the sooner we realize that's a *good* thing, the sooner we'll *soften* to each other and the sooner *pride* will *move out* so *Christ* can *move in*. Cuz **unity is the poison that kills pride**. But, **unity isn't uniformity**. Eyes, elbows, knees, and toes are all wildly *different* and often create *conflict* when they don't *cooperate* – but when they're *unified* to work as *one* body under *one Head*, life gets good! Cuz *that's* when we discover that **harmony is the source of happiness**. So *stop* saying, **"Relationships are hard"** or **"Marriage is a lot of work"** – cuz that's just *not true* – *unity* is hard, *surrendering* is hard, and *killing* our *pride* is hard – but in a crowded world like *this*, *relationships* just *happen* on their own! But they only get *good* when we make the "you turn" that changes "*me-first*" into "*you first*" – cuz *that* grows into "*God first*" – and *that's* when He can finally lead you to the life you always wanted, cuz *that's* when you finally get *both* cheeks off *His* chair!

Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.