

# Pride in Parenting

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[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. And I'm going to talk about pride in parenting, but I'm going to hit that from a completely different angle of attack, at least to begin with. I'll be juxtaposing two activities, number one being pride in the pastorate, and then number two being pride in parenting.

My reasons for doing this are multiple. One is that I'm doing a self-check and making sure that I understand where pride exists in my own life and what I need to do about that.

[ 2 : 13 ] I want to warn myself about the incredible dangers of pride. To that end, I was reading something that Richard Baxter, a Puritan, wrote called The Minister's Pride. I think our ministerial pride is the title of that essay. Now, there's another reason, though, that I want to bring this up to you and talk about both pride in pastoring and pride in parenting, and that is because sometimes when we see sin in a different setting, its dangers and its sinfulness really do stand out to us more than when it's in a setting with which we are more familiar. I think that that'll help us to think about a little bit about pride in pastoring and pride in parenting, as I think that it could give us some new perspectives. But secondly, pastoring and parenting are just very similar works.

Both are supposed to be about developing disciples of Jesus Christ, but both have so many opportunities to lose track of the main thing and get on to other things. And even within remaining committed to making disciples, it is so possible to attempt to do that in the flesh or for the sake of pride, and so on and so forth. So I think that's a helpful intersection between pastoring and parenting.

You know, in Matthew 23, Jesus warns the Pharisees. Well, he woes the Pharisees. He says, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you traveled across sea and land to make a single proselytite. But when he becomes a proselytite, you make him twice as much a child of hell as you yourselves. You can see the transparent overlap here, even in Jesus's thinking, between pastoring and parenting. Both produce children in their own image, right? And both are really going to have to, well, both invest quite a bit of time into the production of these, quote-unquote, children.

But that if you are ministering or parenting in pride, you will produce very grotesque children. And this is a really consequential warning from Jesus. So those are some of the reasons why I want to juxtapose pride in pastoring with pride in parenting. I'm going to say parenting a few times today, I think.

Anyway, first of all, I want you to understand kind of how Baxter is approaching this work. The main idea, again, I think also applies to parenting, is we are attempting to do something that cannot be done apart from the Holy Spirit's blessing. Both parents and pastors have that in common. So bear that in mind as I read the introductory statement from Baxter's essay. He writes, One of our most heinous and palpable sins is pride. This is a sin which has too much sway in most ministers, but which is more hateful and inexcusable in us than in other men. He's saying that pride is bad wherever it appears, but it's especially bad when it appears in pastors. I agree, and for many of the reasons that I had mentioned earlier, I would say that pride in parenting is also uniquely bad for the exact same reasons. Namely, as I mentioned, we are attempting to do something that can only be done through the supernatural infusion of grace. We're attempting to do something that only God can do through us, right? Psalm 127, one, unless the Lord builds the house, those who labor, labor in vain. See, you could be a prideful brain surgeon and potentially still do a good job in that field. Your pride may manifest itself in other areas of your life, but it's potentially possible, I suppose, at least in the short term, to be a good brain surgeon and also be a prideful brain surgeon. But you actually can't be a good pastor if you're prideful, and you can't be a good parent if you're prideful, because both of these depend on an infusion of supernatural grace to produce a supernatural outcome, produce a spiritual outcome. God will certainly not bless activities done in pride, not really. And here's the thing to remember. Again, using pastoring as a way of helping us think about things a little bit clearer, a prideful minister can get butts in the pews, and a prideful minister may even be associated with some form of conversion. Pharisees did convert people, after all. But over time, pride will keep that pastor's ministry from being of lasting value to his people. And indeed, a prideful ministry produces a grotesque people or even a unfaithful people and so on and so forth.

[ 7:15 ] So you can see that God would just not bless a pastor in that role, but it would appear a prideful pastor in that sense. It would appear that the prideful pastor is accomplishing things, because he may get butts in the pews and may even have some sort of conversion happening within his congregation. Likewise, parents who are filled with pride may have short runs of superficial success.

The children of prideful parents might be outwardly obedient, they might be outwardly successful, and so forth. But the long-term effect that prideful parenting has on children is always negative. Going back to Baxter, one of our most heinous and palpable sins in pride, this is a sin which has too much sway in most ministers, but which is more hateful and inexcusable in us than in other men. Yet it is so prevalent in some of us that it fills our discourses, it chooses our company, it forms our countenances, it puts the accent and emphasis upon our words, it fills some men's minds with aspiring desires and designs, it possesses them with envious and bitter thoughts against those who stand in their light, and who by any means eclipse their glory, or hinder the progress of their reputation. Oh, what a constant companion, what a tyrannical commander, what a sly and subtle insinuating enemy is the sin of pride. The big idea in this section is that pride is sort of a thing that will just affect our lives in all kinds of unexpected ways. It doesn't just sit in one particular area, it doesn't stay in one particular area, and we'll talk about that more in a moment.

He says, oh, what a constant companion, what a tyrannical commander, and what a sly and subtle insinuating enemy is the sin of pride. Baxter says that pride affects a pastor's speech. He says it fills their discourses, which means it guides what he chooses to talk about. It says it puts the accent and emphasis upon our words. In other words, it doesn't only deal with the topic of our conversations, but also the tone of our conversation. You can have a conversation full of truth that still brings death and discouragement because people don't merely communicate with words. The spirit in which we say things gets communicated along with the things we actually say. And then Baxter goes on to say that pride guides a pastor's choice of company. For many, pride will result in pastoral tendency to disassociate from or grow impatient with the lowly, those who have little to offer, or the needy. Pride will cause a pastor to avoid people who would slow us down or take us off of our preferred work. And for some, pride provokes favoritism toward successful people and away from less successful people.

But I think it's important to say that pride is also expressed in the opposite way because some pastors will actually fill their lives full of needy people who look up to them or make them feel wanted or needed. Baxter adds that pride makes pastors view others as competitors for the spotlight.

It fills some men's minds, he says, with aspiring desires and designs. It possesses them with envious and bitter thoughts against those who stand in their light. See that competition for the spotlight there?

[ 10 : 58 ] Or who by any means eclipse their glory or hinder the progress of their reputation. So now let's apply these principles to parenting. Firstly, we can see that pride does affect both the topic and tone of our household conversations. Remember what I said, you can have a conversation full of truth that still brings mere death and discouragement because people do not merely communicate with words. We are not computers. We are not simply an arrangement of propositional, logical, hopefully logical statements. We are spiritual beings incorporated or incorporeal beings. We are both body and soul, both spirit and flesh. And that means that the spirit in which we say things will, over time, get communicated along with the things we say. This is important to understand because you will usually get away with having a broken spirit or a foul spirit when speaking to someone in a one-off conversation.

But remember, in parenting and in pastoring, you're talking to people, the same people, over and over and over again. And the spirit then most certainly does get communicated along with the things we say.

The pride most certainly does kind of wind up pouring out of our mouths in various ways, both in the topics that we choose and the tones with which we say those things. If we were to continue to read Baxter's essay, he goes into a lot more on how pride affects pastoral preaching.

And his main concern in that section relates to pastors who pull punches because they're so in love with their own reputation and ambition and so forth, they pull punches in order to accumulate praise and in order to sort of cater to people who like him. Well, in the realm of parenting, that same dynamic will appear. And it will appear often as passivity, you know, a reluctance to have hard, heart-based conversations with our kiddos, you know, really born out of a desire to be liked by our children.

But you know, there are other ways that pride affects both the speech of pastors and parents. Pride might cause some people to pull punches, but it will cause others to throw them. Pride is deeply connected to impatience.

[ 13 : 27 ] And many a sharp word has been thrown out of both pastors' and parents' mouths due to a desire to speed up the work of sanctification beyond the weight of the Holy Spirit and to get this over with so that we can move on. This sort of thing happens both in the home and in the pulpit.

Baxter also talks about pride, choosing a minister's company. So how does that work in parenting? Well, it certainly can inject favoritism into parenting. Just as a pastor might choose to invest more time in people who are more successful in various ways, you know, parents who are led by pride can tend to, in subtle ways, grow to prefer one child over another. This might be because one child is easier, testing the patients less, more compliant, better looking. It can also be because that child is more like you. And prideful people think a lot of themselves. And so they have a tendency to prefer others who are like them over those who are different from them. And lastly, I think we ought to say that pride will make parents defensive. And this is another way that it affects our relationships and the company we keep. Because pride makes you defensive. That makes you less likely to seek counsel.

I mean, we know the verse in Titus 2, 3 through 6, older women, likewise, are to be reverent in behavior, not slandering or slaves to too much wine. They are to teach what is good and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

The proposition here is, it's actually a presupposition here, is that younger women are actually not known, not born, knowing how to properly love their husbands and children. Do you see that in the text? They have to be taught, they have to be trained how to love their husbands and children. This is why counsel and parenting is so essential. And that is not, by the way, unique to young women. This is true of all people. Love is simply not, as the Bible defines it, a natural phenomenon. Feelings are. Oxytocin is natural. But love, as it's understood in the Bible, is something that must be learned and trained into us. But of course, a prideful parent is both independent and defensive. And so they are actually less likely to seek out teachers who can help them simply love their families as they're supposed to love them. So I've only touched on a couple of problems associated with pride. The one is how it affects the way we talk and what we talk about. And, you know, sometimes pride will make us too passive. Sometimes it will make us too impatient.

All the while, a certain tone gets communicated over time, especially with those that we talk with often. And then pride also affects the choice of our company. It can cause some parents to prefer one child over another. It can cause other parents to dote too excessively on a particularly needy child.

[ 16 : 44 ] You'll see that sometimes where a child really needs to be corrected and encouraged to grow in independence. But boy, mama or daddy really like feeling needed and wanted. And the child learns to sort of transact love and, you know, doting on mom and dad and so forth, snuggles or whatever, in exchange for mom and dad, you know, kind of stepping in too soon and meeting needs that the children should meet for themselves. So some parents will prefer, it just is like pastors, you know, some pastors have a tendency to rally, you know, to surround themselves with people who are very successful or have some way of kind of advancing a pastor's own agenda. But other pastors, and gosh, I've seen plenty of these too, that kind of ruin their health, ruin their families, ruin all sorts of things because they just jumped headlong into a sea of pure need because that made them feel heroic or wanted or important.

So finally, pride also just just reminding choice of company, it can cause us to prefer one or the other, it can cause us to potentially dote too excessively on a needy child. And then of course, it affects the company we keep, the adult company we keep pride tends to make parents defensive, and it keeps them from seeking and receiving counsel. And we need that counsel to do a good job.

To these two, let me add a third aspect of pride's effect on our parenting. Pride creates superficial standards of success. The prideful pastor will define success as a full church, or mere theological accuracy, or kind of cheap conversions. And, you know, very often he will actually accomplish these things. And it will appear to him and to others that he is winning and that the Lord is using him.

And it takes time for all of these superficial standards of success to be exposed as superficial. Likewise, prideful parents will often appear accomplished. Their children will seem obedient.

They will seem successful. But over time, the success reveals itself to be superficial. Superficial. Mothers and fathers who parented in pride will often wind up looking back at their, looking at their adult children and wondering what went wrong. And one answer, and not all answers have to do with the parent's culpability, but one answer is that there was a prideful focus, a pride originating focus on very superficial measures of success. And so you really took your eye off the ball because all of the sort of generic, performative, behavioral-based markers were there.

[ 19 : 50 ] And you weren't actually pursuing your child's heart and helping them to struggle up into a disciple of Jesus Christ. You were really wanting them to be your disciple. You were really wanting them to follow sort of your kind of plan. Parents will typically that struggle with pride will typically wind up building kids who have no respect for the value of losing. They only see glory in winning, and this causes them to choose both for themselves and their children life paths with low resistance.

See, kids need to be forced to do hard things that they are bad at, and they actually need to just learn how to be bad at things. They need to be regularly placed in some context where losing is the most likely outcome, not just once, but regularly, because there's a whole stream of character formation that only takes place via this heavy dose of failure. And prideful parents can't stand that for themselves, let alone for their kids. And so there is a real tendency. And by the way, this is often cloaked in, I'll help you find your strength and grow in it and so on and so forth.

Well, I suppose there's definitely something to that, of course, but boy, that can go way, way, way too far. And you create this sort of frictionless environment where even when you ask your child to do hard things, the hard things are things that they have a natural ability to do well.

And so with just a modicum of struggle, they wind up, you know, succeeding again. But prideful parents will often sort of think of that as like, that's what it means to grow in resiliency and toughness. Like, no, what it means to grow in resiliency and toughness is to get good at sort of engaging in activities that for a very long period of time don't pay off.

There's just something about that. And what you'll see is that parents who have a lot of control issues in their own life stemming from pride, they will tend to also sort of shield their kids from this whole other side of life, which is learning how to lose. And you know, like I said, obviously, there's there's a balance here, because we do want to help our children discover and develop their strengths. But there are few strengths more useful in the end in life than resiliency. And I would like to know what your plan is, if you're not putting your kids in things that they will fail at, I would like to know what your plan is to help them develop resiliency, or is the plan to sort of like somehow perfectly control their lives all the way through, so that they never face anything that they're going to be bad at? Well, good luck at that. You know, in summary, sorry, pride, pride just gets into everything. In a couple places, the Bible refers to pride as yeast that penetrates the entire loaf. That's what Jesus talks when he talks about the leaven of the Pharisees.

[ 23 : 07 ] It was a pride that permeated everything they did. In 1 Corinthians chapter 5, Paul chastises the Corinthians for their pride, and then says, your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? In recent years, we've seen the advent of guess what we were calling the sourdough mamas. And even though I don't eat many carbs, I am on 100% on board with this, you know, wholesome cultural development. I love the fact that people are getting into making bread.

But what sourdough mamas know, and so do their husbands, because, you know, there's a whole lifestyle associated with this, is like all sourdough comes from a starter. And it's possible, literally, I mean, it's pretty common, actually, for centuries worth of bread to all come from the same starter. And I want you to think about that when we're talking about pride, because what I'm trying to get at here is, boy, it really does get into everything. Don't think that I've provided an exhaustive list. I've done quite the opposite. I've actually only pointed out to a few, pointed out a few areas amongst many where pride will infiltrate and penetrate your work.

And it's just a bummer, because when you look back at your parenting or your pastoring, there is a real sense in which pride was pervasive, and it was kind of touching everything and polluting everything and so on. And so that's why I'm bringing this to you. I want you to know, especially as young parents, I want you to know how big of a deal this is. Remember what I said earlier, Psalm 127.1, unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. You see two activities here, building a house, which in parenting corresponds, I suppose, to raising a family, and then watchfulness, which is just, you know, parents protecting and being alert and scanning their horizon for potential threats. But see, none of these activities, I mean, these are the right activities, but they're not going to be successful unless the Lord blesses them. God does not bless pride. Instead, He actively, you know, resists it.

We're told that in both 1 Peter and in James. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. So pride threatens to take all of your household building and all of your defensive watchfulness and make it vanity. And that's why I think it's such an essential issue to discuss. Now, I won't get into a lot about how to fight pride. I plan to do another podcast with Dove on humility.

But let me just give you this. There is hope for this issue found in 2 Chronicles 7.14, which reads, After hearing some of this, you might worry that pride has penetrated a great deal of your parenting and worry that your whole household has been irreversibly poisoned with your pride.

[ 26 : 32 ] You might think that the snake of pride has bitten you and that venom has spread into everything. But the good news here is in 2 Chronicles 7.14 is that whatever kind of body, whatever kind of institution, whether it's a nation, a family, or a church, when it has been sickened with pride, it can be healed through a renewed focus on humility. And I want to just leave you with this.

Humility is a choice because the Bible says repeatedly that we can humble ourselves. We can humble ourselves. And so that's really what we need to talk about next time, is how do we consciously pursue humility in order to keep ensuring that pride doesn't enter into and poison our whole parenting or pastoring project?

The Bible says that we can humble ourselves. We need to figure out how to do that. We need to have another conversation about that. But it definitely says that we can humble ourselves. Matthew 23.12, whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

James, humble yourself before the Lord. He will exalt you. 1 Peter, humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of the Lord. The Word of God.

The Word of God. guitar solo The Army Blues!

[ 29 : 00 ] The Army Blues!

The Army Blues!

The Army Blues!