

The background of the cover features the dark silhouettes of several industrial chimneys or smokestacks of varying heights and widths, set against a light, hazy sky. The chimneys are positioned on the left and right sides, with the tallest one on the far left. The overall aesthetic is industrial and minimalist.

# **How To Step Off Your Tower**

**Noah Olson**

There are many tall sins in the world, but none of them reach as high as pride. Some might call it the loftiest sin in the Bible. Pride places people on pedestals that were never designed for them. It is not uncommon for people to uplift pride as a desirable attribute (Malachi 3:15); however, pride is the greatest sin in the Bible because it puts man in God's place. God will have no part in such a trade (Isaiah 42:18).

If the Bible had a verse index of sins, pride would be at least in the top three. Pride is sin and this we know, for the Bible tells us so (Proverbs 21:4; Romans 1:30). Every Bible dispensation provides multiple illustrations of pride. Various words are used to denote this sin like "pride," "proud," "haughty," "lofty," "highminded," and "arrogancy." The Hebrew and Greek words denote boastfulness. The best definition of pride was probably given by Paul when he said that men would be "lovers of their own selves" (2 Timothy 3:2). Pride is nothing more than a haughty search to fulfill the "I love me,"<sup>1</sup> quest.

The Bible illustrates pride in many ways. Pride is pictured as a person with a long neck in Isaiah 3:16. Solomon said, "*There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up*" (Proverbs 30:13). One Greek word (*tuphoo* [1 Timothy 6:4]) shows pride to be inflation. Like smoke that rises to the air, so does man's pride, however, as smoke also fades into nothing the higher it rises, so will a man who rises in pride cease to be something.

Pride thinks too highly of self and too little of God.<sup>2</sup> Paul told the Romans "...not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly..." (Romans 12:3). The words "more highly" come from a compound word (*hyperphroneō*) which literally means to over think. Thayer said it means "to think more highly of one's self than is proper." Pride turns the creation into the creator and humans into gods. It places self as the sun of the universe, and creates a play where oneself is the main act. Pride places all attention on self and no attention on God. The prideful heart mocks God, the prideful feet run from God, and the prideful hand pushes God off His deserved pedestal. Deceptively, such a vertical trek leads to a vertical fall.

One Chinese Proverb says, "He who stands on a pedestal has no place to step but off." David prayed "LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor

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<sup>1</sup><https://churchofchristarticles.com/pride/>

<sup>2</sup><https://bedfordcoc.com/sermons/fight-the-good-fight-pride-of-life/>

mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me” (Psalm 131:1). Unfortunately, some are too arrogant to see their haughtiness. As “Uncle” Bud Robinson said, “Pride is the only disease known to man that makes everyone else sick except the one who has it.” You must not be at this level seeing you are reading on how to correct it. So, how can we step down from the pedestal of pride? Here are four stairs to climb down:

### **Stair 1: Recognize that Pride is the First Sin**

Pride is a sin as old as time. The first sin in angelic history was pride (1 Timothy 3:6). One of the first sins in human history was also pride (Genesis 3:4-6). If pride is bad enough for an angel to be cast out of Heaven and a couple to be sent out of Eden, we should be extremely cautious of what it might do to us.

Pride is the mother of all sins. God listed it at the top of His abominable list of seven (Proverbs 6:17-19). John wrote “For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:16). Almost, if not every sin can be traced to pride. The man that cheated on his wife wanted to please his lust. The woman who wanted an abortion wanted her life back. The teen that drank with his friends wanted to be liked. Solomon said that prideful persons “stirreth up strife” (Proverbs 28:25). Alexander Whyte said, “It is out of self-love that all other evil passions spring.” Let’s look at some test cases for this claim:

- Babel’s building was preceded by Babel’s pride (Genesis 11:1-4).
- Jacob’s lie came from a prideful desire to have the blessing of his father (Genesis 28).
- Sexual sins are preceded by an attitude of entitled to bodily pleasure (Genesis 38; 39; 2 Samuel 11; 1 Kings 11).
- Ahab and Jezebel’s murder came from a prideful desire to have something that was not theirs (1 Kings 21).

- Pride precedes foolish speech (Proverbs 14:3).
- Pride fueled Edom’s violence over Israel (Obadiah 3).
- Pride precedes false doctrine (1 Timothy 6:4).
- Diotrefes desire for preeminence is listed first (3 John 9-10).

Every sin is first preceded with the question “what is good for me?” Recognizing the unstable foundation of pride will encourage us to step off of our pedestals. The next time you sin, ask yourself “what did I seek to get out of it?” Maybe this will help you stay away from it next time.

### **Stair 2: Don’t Talk About Yourself.**

“Ronald Reagan, told the following story: ‘I once addressed a very large, distinguished audience in Mexico City and sat down to rather scattered and unenthusiastic applause. And I was somewhat embarrassed, even more so when the next man who spoke, a representative of the Mexican government speaking in Spanish, which I don’t understand, was being interrupted virtually every other line with the most enthusiastic kind of applause. To hide my embarrassment, I started clapping before anyone else and longer than anyone else until our ambassador leaned over and said to me, ‘I wouldn’t do that if I were you; he’s interpreting your speech.’”<sup>3</sup>

No one likes a person who is his own biggest fan. It is easy to talk about self because we know the most about ourselves, but we should be careful about what we say and how much we say. “After two weeks of Pre-K, Linda Wilbanks’ 5-year-old grandson came home with a mighty big compliment. Nick told his grandmother that he was the smartest kid in the class. With a deep sense of pride, Linda asked him if that was what his teacher said. Nick replied, “No ma’am. I had to tell her.”<sup>4</sup> Solomon called such an attitude “*not* glory” (Proverbs 25:27). If you want to read about your accomplishments, make sure you are not the author; let someone else write the book for you (Proverbs 27:2).

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<sup>3</sup><https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/he-applauded-his-own-speech>

<sup>4</sup><https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/the-smartest-kid-in-the-class>

Talking about yourself is sure to get an applause from men but not from God. Be leery also of your attitude in prayer when talking about your good deeds; God doesn't need a full run down (Luke 18:11-12). A man came to a minister and said "I keep talking about myself so much. I want to stop my pride but how do I do it?" The minister asked "Its quite simple. Do you have a hand?" The man said "of course." The minister responded, "then put it over your mouth." Solomon wrote, "If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, *lay* thine hand upon thy mouth" (Proverbs 30:32).

Instead of talking about everything you have done, acknowledge areas in which to improve. "A friend was really tired of hearing Muhamad Ali boast about his physical prowess. His constant claiming 'I am the best!' was wearing thin. So a colleague asked him how he did at golf. Ali replied, 'I'm the best. I just haven't played yet.'"<sup>5</sup> The fact of the matter is, you cannot do everything. Agur's words should be meditated upon: "Surely I *am* more brutish than *any* man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy" (Proverbs 30:2-3).

Is there room for self-confidence and satisfaction in ability? Sure (Proverbs 13:19), but only when God is glorified (Matthew 5:16). If you happen to talk about your accomplishments, make sure God is on the front cover and your name at the end of the credits. Herod's orating talent was given by God, but he died because he looked inward instead of upward (Acts 12:21-23). Don't be like the man that had to have his humility medal taken away because he wore it.<sup>6</sup> Self-abasement is not the cure for pride; secret virtue is (Matthew 6:1-4). Here's the lesson: Don't hate yourself, hide yourself. You cannot help if someone watches your show unannounced, but don't charge them for the fee. If God is the only one watching, it is enough. "The story is told of two women in Shanghai who were discussing the topic of pride and began to wonder if Hudson Taylor was ever tempted to be prideful because of his many accomplishments. One of the women decided to ask Taylor's wife, Maria, about it. Maria promised the woman that she would find out. When Mrs. Taylor asked her husband if he was ever tempted to be proud, he was surprised. 'Proud about what?' he asked.

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<sup>5</sup>Michael Hodgin, *1001 Humorous Illustrations For Public Speaking*, Zondervan, 1994, 280.

<sup>6</sup>Wendell Winkler

‘About all of the things you have done,’ his wife explained. Taylor responded, ‘I never knew I had done anything.’<sup>7</sup>

Pride makes small people smaller. Someone said “A man wrapped up in himself makes a pretty small package.” Benjamin Whichcote said, “None are so empty as those who are full of themselves.” “Pride is to the character what the attic is to the house, the highest part, and generally the most empty.”<sup>8</sup>

If you spend your time talking about Jesus, you will not have time to talk about yourself (Mark 16:15). Through Jeremiah, the Lord said, “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:23-24). Step off the pedestal and let God take your place.

### **Stair 3: Stand on Equal Ground with Others.**

In ancient times, when servants were called in to the king they would fall down to the ground before his throne. It was an act of humility before the almighty authoritarian. Intriguingly, this is what humility means; to lower oneself.<sup>9</sup> Humility is God’s cure for pride. God will not infuse us with this attribute; He wants us to take the initiative (2 Chronicles 7:14; Romans 12:16). If we are standing on prideful peak, we need to take a trip to humble hills. Humbling self is the tallest action to take. When God does the lifting, man surpasses all elevated towers (Matthew 23:12; James 4:10). Peter urged his readers to be “clothed with humility” (1 Peter 5:5). True honor is lowering self (Proverbs 15:33; 18:12); this attitude is superior to any other (Proverbs 16:19). Wisdom rests in the bosom of humility (Proverbs 11:2). Want to be rich? Be humble (Proverbs 22:4). How can stand on equal ground with others? Let’s commit to:

- *Believing the best about others* (1 Corinthians 13:7). Pride lessens

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<sup>7</sup><https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/avoiding-pride>

<sup>8</sup><https://sermoncentral.com/sermon-illustrations/58752/pride-is-to-the-character-what-the-attic-is-to-by-sermon-central>; comma added.

<sup>9</sup>Thayer notes that the Greek word *tapeinos* denotes a depression or not rising from the ground (see Ezekiel 17:24, Septuagint).

others to elevate self. C.S. Lewis said, “A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and of course, as long as you're looking down, you can't see something that's above you.” “A woman looked out of her window every morning and commented on the dirty laundry on her neighbor's line. One day she noticed it was sparkling clean. ‘Maybe she's using a new detergent,’ she said. ‘No,’ said her husband, ‘I got up early and cleaned our windows.’”<sup>10</sup> Choose to see the good!

- *Acknowledging when you are lower than them* (Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9). Laugh at your mistakes, confess your sins, and know that others have recognized your faults too. One little boy asked his dad, “dad why don't you confess your sins at night in our prayers?” The father responded, “I would son, if I had any!”<sup>11</sup> Leroy Brownlow said, “Saying that you have been wrong about something should not be difficult, for it is the same as saying you are wiser today than you were yesterday.”
- *Choosing to see essence not accomplishments.* Men love to make idols out of some (1 Corinthians 1:12-13) and roaches out of others (Luke 5:30). No human is above another; all are made in

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<sup>10</sup><https://sermoncentral.com/sermon-illustrations/80261/pride-and-dirty-laundry-by-davon-huss>

<sup>11</sup>Leroy Brownlow in his book entitled “Greatest Questions in the New Testament, page 22.

God's wonderful image (Genesis 1:26-27).

- *Seeing others not self* (Proverbs 26:12). It can be tempting to clean the windows, only to see oneself in the reflection. Look at others before you see yourself (Philippians 2:3-4).

Pride grows larger when we push others down. Instead, let us lift them up (Ephesians 4:29).

Don't know where to start? Read about Jesus (cf. Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 11:29; Philippians 2:3-8). Expect to grow in this; humility doesn't happen overnight. Thomas Guthrie wrote, "The Christian is like the ripening corn; the riper he grows the more lowly he bends his head."<sup>12</sup> Work at it every day. Pray for God's help. Ask other Christians for help. The sharpest sword to pierce pride is humility. Jonathan Edwards said, "Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil's reach as humility."<sup>13</sup> Place yourself no higher than anyone else, you are not more important than any other soul.

#### **Stair 4: Expect the Fall to Be Great.**

Unless you step completely off prideful peak, your fall will be fatal. If God sheds tears because of pride (Jeremiah 13:17), then the least we can do is hate it (Proverbs 8:13). Recognizing the downfall of pride may spark the fire of humility. Pride speaks against a man (Hosea 5:5; 7:10). Its weight is like a chain (Psalm 73:6). The Bible is clear about the consequences of pride:

- "*When* pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly *is* wisdom" (Proverbs 11:2).

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<sup>12</sup>As quoted by Bobby Liddell in [https://cdn.subsplash.com/documents/XJ7DGK/\\_source/89f66faa-72c7-4e7b-9703-34e9b6a2813a/document.pdf](https://cdn.subsplash.com/documents/XJ7DGK/_source/89f66faa-72c7-4e7b-9703-34e9b6a2813a/document.pdf)

<sup>13</sup>As quoted by Bobby Liddell in [https://cdn.subsplash.com/documents/XJ7DGK/\\_source/89f66faa-72c7-4e7b-9703-](https://cdn.subsplash.com/documents/XJ7DGK/_source/89f66faa-72c7-4e7b-9703-)

- “Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised *is* wisdom” (Proverbs 13:10).
- “The LORD will destroy the house of the proud...” (Proverbs 15:25; cf. Leviticus 26:19; Job 9:13; 26:12; Job 40:11; Psalm 12:3; 94:2; 101:5; 119:21; Proverbs 15:25; Isaiah 2:12; 13:11; Jeremiah 13:9; Luke 1:51; Daniel 4:37).
- “Every one *that is* proud in heart *is* an abomination to the LORD...” (Proverbs 16:5).
- “Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18).
- “Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour *is* humility” (Proverbs 18:12).
- “A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit” (Proverbs 29:23).
- “And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day” (Isaiah 2:17).
- “And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up: and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him” (Jeremiah 50:32).
- “But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6; cf. 1 Peter 5:5).

The word “resisteth” in these passages means to oppose or set in battle against.<sup>14</sup> God declares war against the arrogant!

Is pride that bad? Yes; it makes all of its worshippers little devils<sup>15</sup> (1 Timothy 3:6). Pride is like falling off the Empire State Building—and there is no net to catch you. The consequences of haughtiness outweigh the momentary feeling that it brings. We must humble ourselves or God will humble us (Luke 14:11). The Psalmist wrote, “Though the LORD *be* nigh, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off” (Psalm 138:6). Let us commit to “Talk no more so exceeding proudly...for the LORD *is* a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed” (1 Samuel 2:3).

Haughty eyes are the result of an arrogant heart. It is the majority who live in this sin (cf. Proverbs 30:13; Philippians 2:21). Pride is nothing to be proud of!<sup>16</sup> Let us learn to step off our towers quickly else God will come and push us off of them.

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<sup>14</sup>Thayer

<sup>15</sup>C.S. Lewis said Pride made the devil the devil. Source was not recorded. We become just like him when we engage in pride.

<sup>16</sup><https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/intimacy-path-toward-spirituality/201506/why-pride-is-nothing-be-proud>