

Do You Choose a Proud Heart or a Happy Marriage?

By Joshua Pease –Thriving Marriages email– Oct 18, 2019

A dear friend & I were talking about the battle of being proud — how difficult it is to detect and how impossible to conquer. She told me a story that perfectly captured the problem:

“Every morning I go out to my garden and find spider webs all over my vegetables. Each day I brush them away, but they are back anew the next morning. Webs will keep showing up until I find & kill the spider. It struck me—that’s how it is with pride. I confess it to the Lord, but every morning it grows back in a different form.”

I can relate to that. The relentless “spider” weaves daily webs in my life, too. One day it shows up in my irritation with my husband. Next, I see it in how I react to my children. And then there it is again in my silent, judgmental thoughts toward a fellow Christian. Being proud is always there, spinning its web.

Being proud has been a battle for as long as I can remember. For years, I didn’t recognize it as the spider of pride. It felt more like insecurity or self-contempt. I would lie awake at night unhappy about being excluded in a friend group or self-conscious about feeling too fat. But pride in my younger years was simply a different manifestation of my self-obsession.

As we journey with Jesus, it’s very possible that we never confront the spider of pride. We become adept at masking our pride & reinforcing it in our relationships. Whether it is narcissism or subtle self-righteousness, pride is perhaps the greatest barrier to intimacy with God and with others. Proud is the antithesis of what Jesus embodied on earth. He invites us to come to Him and to learn from Him, “For I am gentle and humble in heart.” Interestingly, when Jesus said these words, He did so in the context of offering peace and rest. “Come, you who are heavy-burdened, and I will give you rest for your souls.” Jesus was referring to the heavy burden of self.

Our burdens become infinitely greater when mixed with self-focus. Irritation turns to anger when I dwell on why I was treated “*that way*.” A setback becomes a total failure when I haven’t lived up to my own expectations. My limitations become humiliation when I obsess about how others judge me.

The problem is that *I* am the spider. It’s not an enemy outside of my being or even Satan taunting me. My greatest threat is the one that rages from within: demanding to be noticed, to be satisfied, and to have justice.

Killing the Spider of Being Proud

“If anyone wants to come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” These words spoken by Jesus are so familiar that we tune out their radical meaning. Following Jesus means inviting Him to kill the spider **daily**. It’s viewing myself (*my agenda, my desires, & my reputation*) as the enemy. Far too often, our Christian lives involve dusting away spider webs without ever considering the ego monster that daily reinvents them.

An intimate marriage is impossible with spiderwebs of pride. It keeps us from forgiving, from seeing our spouse’s perspective, from the patience to listen, & from a willingness to try new things. Think of the spider not simply as creating webs, but as a consistent threat to intimacy with the ones you love the most.

If you long to see transformation in your walk with God and in your relationships, dare to pray daily a bold prayer: “Jesus, save me from the spider of my pride. Whatever it takes, give me a humble and gentle heart.”

The world does not need more eloquent & zealous Christians to champion the cause of Christ. The world desperately needs those who will commit to a daily death so that Christ may live in and through us.