



Mere Christianity

Week 5: June 17, 2018

“Christian Behavior and the Great Sin of Pride”

It’s Impossible to See in Ourselves

Lewis points out that pride can be nearly impossible to see in ourselves. Having been blind to his own pride for many years, Lewis became more and more aware of his pride as he came closer to converting to Christianity. On January 30, 1930 — in between his conversion to theism and his acceptance of Christ — Lewis wrote to a friend describing what he now saw when he examined himself and confessed that he was disturbed by the pride he had discovered.

During my afternoon “meditations” — which I at least *attempt* quite regularly now — I have found out ludicrous and terrible things about my own character. Sitting by, watching the rising thoughts ... one out of every three is a thought of self-admiration ... I catch myself posturing before the mirror, so to speak, all day long. I pretend I am carefully thinking out what to say to the next pupil (for *his* good, of course) and then suddenly realize I am really thinking how frightfully clever I’m going to be and how he will admire me. I pretend I am remembering an evening of good fellowship in a really friendly and charitable spirit — and all the time I’m really remembering how good a fellow I am and how well I talked. And then when you force yourself to stop it, you admire yourself for doing *that* ... There seems to be no end to it. Depth under depth of self-love and self-admiration.

In *Born Again*, the best-selling story of his conversion, Chuck Colson, former special counsel to President Nixon and founder of Prison Fellowship Ministries, recounts the effect that this chapter on pride had on him.

“Now, sitting there on the dimly lit porch, my self-centered past was washing over me in waves. It was painful. Agony. Desperately I tried to defend myself ... It was pride — Lewis’ ‘great sin’ — that had propelled me through life.”¹

This Week

“Christian Behavior and the Great Sin of Pride”

Mere Christianity chapters covered:

- Book 3, Chapter 1: “The Three Parts of Morality”
- Book 3, Chapter 8: “The Great Sin”

¹ From *Discussing Mere Christianity: Exploring the History, Meaning, and Relevance of C. S. Lewis’ Greatest Book* by Devin Brown (Zondervan, 2015)

Further Study

Question 1: As Lewis observed, there seems to be no end to pride. What about you? Have you had moments when you were able to see yourself as you really are and discovered the great sin of pride? What was it that finally allowed you to see it?

Question 2: Can you point to something you take a proper pleasure in? Can you point to an area where, because of pride, you always compare yourself with others?

Question 3: Lewis writes that as long as you are proud, you cannot know God. What does the parable of the Pharisees and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14) reveal about the nature of pride and about real humility?

A Look Ahead

June 24, 2018

“The Christian Virtue of Hope”

Mere Christianity chapters covered:

- Book 3, Chapter 10: “Hope”

July 1, 2018

“God In Three Persons”

Mere Christianity chapters covered:

- Book 4, Chapter 1: “Making and Begetting”
- Book 4, Chapter 2: “The Three-Personal God”

July 8, 2018

“Counting the Cost”

Mere Christianity chapters covered:

- Book 4, Chapter 9: “Counting the Cost”
- Book 4, Chapter 10: “Nice People or New Men”

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