

Do you believe Him? Where would you place your belief at this point on the following diagram?



If you are not struggling with belief, be careful not to judge another's weaker faith (Rom. 14:1). Many reasons can exist for unbelief in the area of freedom from captivity. Because some believers have been in chains for so long and have tried so hard to break free in the past, they almost have given up hope for the future.

How does God want you to respond to what He showed you today?

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If you are having difficulty believing you really could live out the liberty of Christ, would you make the same plea the father made in Mark 9:24? Spend some time in prayer asking the Father to overcome your unbelief. If you are not struggling with belief, in your prayer finish the sentence, "Lord, help me overcome my..."

As you close today, glance at Isaiah 43:10 one more time. God wants us to know and believe Him. The most effective key to believing God is right before our eyes: the more we know Him, the more we will believe Him. The apostle Paul said it best: "I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). We tend to run to God for temporary relief. God is looking for people who will walk with Him in steadfast belief. Beloved, choose to believe. Those who trust in Him will not be put to shame.

D A Y 2

## The Obstacle of Pride

Today's Treasure  
 "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite" (Isa. 57:15).

We are preparing for a mighty work of God in our lives by considering and hopefully removing five major obstacles. We will benefit most from the weeks that follow if we remove each obstacle in advance of the material to come. Each of these obstacles correspond as a direct hindrance to one of the five benefits of our covenant relationship with Christ. On day 1 we focused on the primary hindrance to Benefit 1: To know God and believe Him.

What was that obstacle? \_\_\_\_\_ Based on the example of the father of the demon-possessed boy, what should become our fervent prayer if we have difficulty believing God? \_\_\_\_\_

Today we will consider the primary obstacle hindering Benefit 2: To glorify God. First let's refresh our memories concerning what it means to glorify God. Remember that the word *kavedh* means to "be renowned...to show oneself great or mighty." In simple terms, God is glorified in anyone through whom He is allowed to show Himself...and show Himself great or mighty. How can we be assured of living a God-glorifying life? By adopting a God-glorifying attitude. Remember, Proverbs 23:7 describes our human state

by saying, “as he thinks within himself, so he is” (NASB). God tucked a wonderful Scripture in the Book of Isaiah that beautifully illustrates an attitude through which God will undoubtedly be glorified.

*I*n Isaiah 26:8, what do the people desire or value?

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God will show Himself “great and mighty” in those whose heart’s desire is His name and renown. The original word for *name* is *shem*, which means “definite and conspicuous position ... honor, authority, character ... fame” (Strong’s). Those who possess a God-glorifying attitude have allowed Him to assume a *definite position* in their personal lives that can’t help becoming conspicuous.

*P*lace an X on the scale below to indicate how you would estimate the visibility of God in you at this point in your life.

practically invisible conspicuous

Please don’t think you’re alone if He’s rather inconspicuous in you. Few things are more contrary to our human natures than desiring anyone’s “fame” or “renown” above our own. Nothing could be more natural than self-seeking. Believers sometimes stop short of a God-glorifying life because they want to share in God’s glory.

*A*ccording to Isaiah 42:8, how would God respond to this mentality?

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According to Isaiah 43:7, we are called to allow the King of all creation to reveal Himself through us. He will not share His glory with another, not even with His own children. Not because He’s egotistical, but because He’s interested in our eternal treasures. By demanding that we seek His glory alone, He calls us to overcome the overwhelming and very natural temptation to seek our own.

*W*hat then do you think would be the biggest obstacle to glorifying God?

- pride       indifference       ignorance
- rebellion       disobedience

Alexander Pope called it “the never-failing vice of fools.”<sup>1</sup> Pride—a destroyer of ministries, marriages, friendships, jobs, and character. God will be most readily seen through those who desire His fame above all else. Sounds simple, but it’s not. In fact, few things are more contrary to our human natures than desiring anyone’s fame above our own. Even when we desire the fame of our spouses or children, deep inside we are often yearning for the fame they might lend to us.

To fulfill our God-given destinies—to allow the King of all creation to show Himself through us—we must overcome the temptation to seek our own glory by desiring His instead. If we are to recognize and allow God to free us from any areas of captivity, we must recognize pride as more than self-promotion. It is a dangerous lure to captivity.

*R*ead Jeremiah 13:15-17 very carefully. I want you to feel the weight or seriousness of this reference.

1. Why do you think arrogance could hinder us from paying attention to God and His commands?

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2. According to verse 16, why would the arrogant be wise to quickly seek the remedy of giving glory to God?

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3. What did God say would ultimately happen if His people, due to pride, did not listen to Him (v. 17)?

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Can you think of several reasons why we would have to cast down pride to break free from any areas of captivity? Name as many reasons as you can.

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Beware of the fact that pride often disguises itself. For example, I have known people who thought they were too far gone to save, too wicked, too sinful. Such people would be shocked to hear that their attitude is a form of pride as well. They think their sin or problem is bigger than God.

I want nothing to hinder God's work in your personal life through these weeks. My convictions concerning this Bible study are bone-marrow deep. I know the reality of captivity, and I know the reality of liberty. I will stop at nothing biblical to beg you to let freedom ring loudly in your life. Pride will be a huge inhibitor to the journey ahead.

- God wants to get to our hearts. Pride covers the heart.
- God wants to free us from any hindrances in our past. Pride refuses to take a fresh look back.
- God wants to treat us with the prescription of His Word. Pride doesn't like to be told what to do.
- God wants to set us completely free. Pride thinks he's free enough.
- God wants to bring us out of dark closets. Pride says secrets are nobody's business.
- God wants to help us with constraining problems. Pride denies there is a problem.
- God wants to make us strong in Him. Pride won't admit to weakness.

We are on a journey to freedom. As we embark on our road trip, let's imagine that we have everything we need packed and ready to go: Bible, book, pen, anticipation, time set aside. But before we can take our first few steps, we run into a boulder in the road. The size of this boulder differs with each of us according to the degree to which we struggle with pride. I can hardly imagine that any of us see only a small pebble in our way. To go forward from here, God must empower each of us to roll the boulder of pride off our road to liberty. I believe this stone will roll if we give it three mighty shoves.

1. *The first shove is to view pride as a vicious enemy.*

What motivation do each of the following Scriptures provide for viewing pride as an enemy?

Proverbs 8:13 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 11:2 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 13:10 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 16:18 \_\_\_\_\_

Obadiah 1:3 \_\_\_\_\_

2. *The second shove is to view humility as a friend.* Often our society reviles biblical humility as a sign of sickening weakness. Nothing could be further from the truth. Being filled with pride is easy. It comes naturally. Humility takes a supply of supernatural strength that comes only to those who are strong enough to admit weakness.

What motivation do each of the following Scriptures provide for viewing humility as a friend?

James 4:6,10 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 57:14,15 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 66:2 \_\_\_\_\_

*Esteem* basically means to “have respect” (Strong’s). Can you imagine being one whom God “respects”? What a wonderful thought!

3. *The third and final shove is humbling ourselves before God.* James 4:10 and 1 Peter 5:6 plainly tell us to humble *ourselves*. You see, humility is not something we have until humbling ourselves is something we do. This step necessitates action before possession. Humbling ourselves certainly does not mean hating ourselves. Humility can be rather easily attained by simply opening our eyes to *reality*. I have plenty of reasons to be humble, far more reasons than I have to be proud.

A simple reality check should make humbling ourselves achievable. Just read a few chapters of Scripture boasting in the greatness of God; Job 38 is one of my favorites. We certainly don’t have to hate ourselves to see how small we are in comparison to God and to respond appropriately by bowing down before Him. In a nutshell, that’s what humbling ourselves before God means: bowing down before His majesty. We don’t have to hang our heads in self-abasement to humble ourselves. We simply must choose to lower our heads from lofty, inappropriate places. We choose to humble ourselves by submitting ourselves to His greatness every single day.

*Humbling ourselves before God means bowing before His majesty.*

The last sentence of Daniel 4:37 provides one of the most effective motivations for humility in my personal life. What does it say?

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I look at it this way: I'd rather humble myself than force God to humble me. Let's allow the circumstances and weaknesses, and any thorns in the flesh God has chosen to leave, to do the job they were sent to do—provoke humility. This is not so we can be flattened under God's doormat, but so He can joyfully lift us up. Take a moment today to find a private place to get down on your knees and humble yourself before your mighty and glorious God. The hosts of heaven are sure to hear a thunderous rumble as boulders of pride roll off our road to freedom.

D A Y 3

## *The Obstacle of Idolatry*

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*Today's Treasure*  
"Who shapes a god  
and casts an idol,  
which can profit him  
nothing?" (Isa. 44:10).

Today we place the spotlight on a third obstacle that blocks the path to freedom in Christ. This obstacle corresponds as a hindrance to the third benefit of our covenant relationship with God.

**What is Benefit 3? \_\_\_\_\_ In week 2, day, 3 we learned how much God wants us to find our satisfaction in Him rather than waste our time and effort on things that cannot satisfy.**

**Let's begin our reading today with Isaiah 55:1-9. In the margin, list everything these verses teach us about our God.**

In Isaiah 55:2, God posed a concern to His own children: people who knew Him but were not coming to Him to receive all He desired to give. Sound familiar? God asked, "Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?" Then, like a frustrated parent determined to get through to his child, He said, "Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare." I believe God's prescription for those who possess an inner thirst (Isa. 55:1) and hunger they cannot fill is implied in Isaiah 55:6.

**What should those who are spiritually thirsty and hungry do (Isa. 55:6)?**

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Isaiah 55:3 issues the perfect invitation for all those who cannot find lasting satisfaction: "come to me."

I believe God creates and activates a nagging dissatisfaction in every person for an excellent reason. According to 2 Peter 3:9, God doesn't want anyone to perish. Rather, He wants everyone to come to repentance. He gave us a will so we could choose whether or not to accept His invitation: "come to me." God purposely created us with a need only He can meet. One of the most common and overt human experiences is the inability to be completely satisfied.

Many come to Christ out of their search for something missing; yet after receiving His salvation, they go elsewhere for further satisfaction. Christians can be miserably dissatisfied if they accept Christ's salvation, yet reject the fullness of daily relationship that satisfies. Just as He offered the children of Israel, God offers us so much more than we usually choose to enjoy.