

On Egotism

I'm smarter than you; I'm prettier than you; I'm better than you. Inveterate in our psyche is a tacit status-anxiety that thinks: without preeminence, we fear invisibility. So we naturally grasp for approbation; conversation becomes often dramaturgy.

The gospel commends kenotic love. Yet in our own superbia, we enthrone the self, transmuting worship into self-display and our neighbors into instruments.

The Idol

Egotism isn't ordinary *self*-respect or the *self*-esteem of human dignity, but it's disordered *self*-love—the *self* set up as vainglory. Oftentimes this pride treats other persons as props for *self*-validation or instruments for *self*-advancement and is misdirected glory: praise siphoned from its rightful end and redirected to the *self*.

I'm sure you can recognize this posture by its habits. The self becomes the standard, so reality is appraised chiefly by questions of image, control, and comfort. Your eyes have probably twitched at its extremes whether your friends turn every conversation into their mirror or that ministry leader who *needs* the spotlight to “serve.” In each case the logic is the same: truth is negotiable as long as it threatens image; people are valuable insofar as they secure status; practices of piety become theater when an audience is present. Even good doctrine can harden into a tool for domination rather than a means of love

Yet egotism must not be confused with what Scripture commends. It is not the sober self-assessment that thinks with “sound judgment”, nor gratitude for gifts or the pursuit of excellence “as for the Lord”, nor the right joy of receiving commendation.

The biblical record exposes egotism in sharp relief. Babel is the civilizational form of self-exaltation: “Let us make a name for ourselves” (Genesis 11:4). In the temple, the Pharisee performs before God while despising his neighbor (Luke 18:9–14). Paul excludes boasting so that “no human being might boast in the presence of God” (1 Corinthians 1:29–31). James calls so-called wisdom fueled by jealousy and selfish ambition “earthly, unspiritual,” and notes that “where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder” (James 3:14–16). And love itself is defined over the ego: “Love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant” (1 Corinthians 13:4).

You may NOT be Humble

If we don't know what we're looking at, pride and humility can look alike. A few clarifications I've come over:

- Holding sound doctrine is good; using it to avoid repentance is pride. When correct positions become a way to stay uncorrectable (“people like us don't do that”), truth is functioning as image-management. The test is simple: can your theology still lead you to say, “I was wrong,” to someone with less standing?
- “Faithful remnant” language can turn into moral aristocracy. We begin to need a shrinking circle of “the truly faithful” to secure our identity. Distinctives become badges; distance from the wider church becomes the proof we're pure. Orthopraxy gets redefined as “people like me.” Be wary of those who seek uniformity in unnecessary places.
- Public honesty can be grace, but also be marketing. If “sharing” increases platform, pity, or control, it's still self at the center. A crisp diagnostic: share 90% less publicly for a season; increase confession face-to-face. If the latter dries up when the former stops, it wasn't sanctification. It's strategy.
- Taking low tasks can still be a power move if we must direct every detail. True lowliness surrenders control as well as credit. If you can clean the floor but can't let a younger, less “competent” leader make real decisions, the towel is a prop.
- Calling cynicism “wisdom” preserves superiority while avoiding love's risk. Discernment serves redemption, but suspicion serves control. If your “discernment” never ends in intercession, hospitality, or costly pursuit, it's a moat, not a ministry.
- Telling our hardships can be testimony; it can also be leverage. When the story of our wounds reliably purchases exemption from correction or entitlement to deference, pain has become status.
- “Spent for the gospel” may hide a refusal to be finite. If you cannot sabbath, cannot say no, and quietly resent those who do, the ministry is serving your self-concept.
- Avoiding hard conversations can look gentle but often protects a curated image: “I'm the nondivisive one.” Humility endures being misunderstood when fidelity requires speech; pride needs to be seen as kind more than it needs to be faithful.
- Being “countercultural” can become a way to be exceptional. If we constantly need to be the contrarian (the only one who “really gets it”) we've found a refined path to preeminence.

- “Sharing a concern” can function as control-by-information. If prayer gatherings consistently increase your sense of who owes what to whom, pride is catechizing the intercessors.
- Boast-free fruit is real, but brandable metrics are sugar. Testimonies can slowly become quarterly reports shifting from faithfulness to performance. God measures harvest, let’s just steward obedience.

Scrupulosity

Scrupulosity is not holy contrition; it’s preoccupied self-accusation—an excessive, cyclical fixation on one’s sins, motives, and failures that keeps the gaze glued to the self. It often masquerades as humility, but functionally it recenters the ego: the self becomes the object of relentless attention, and grace remains theoretical. Instead of “godly grief” that leads to repentance and life (2 Corinthians 7:10), scrupulosity produces paralysis, despair, and endless internal audits.

Confession and sobriety are well commended (1 John 1:9, Romans 12:3), but we also need assurance to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:22). By contrast, the scrupulous heart confesses without resting, repents without receiving. The cross is acknowledged but not enjoyed; justification is affirmed but functionally suspended. Paradoxically, scrupulosity is similar to pride because it keeps the self at center. The familiar control of self-scrutiny to the vulnerability of trust can smuggle in a perfectionist demand that my repentance has to feel pure enough or my tears has to be sincere enough before I will accept Christ’s sufficiency. In that sense it reverses the order of the gospel: assurance no longer rests on Christ’s finished work, but on the quality of my contrition (Hebrews 10:14).

*I acknowledged my sin to You,
And I did not hide my guilt;
I said, “I will confess my wrongdoings to the LORD”;
And You forgave the guilt of my sin.
Psalms 32:5*

If your heart keeps circling the same sin (as though God’s pardon were provisional), end confession by receiving. Name the sin plainly, then receive grace. Say it aloud; give thanks before you feel worthy. Gratitude is faith breathing. On the beach, Peter answers Jesus three times, “You know that I love you,” and each time the Lord doesn’t ask for deeper anguish; he commissions him: “Shepherd my sheep” (John 21:15–17). Grace moves repentant love into vocation, not into endless self-reproach.

In the same way worthiness isn't a mood you manufacture. Self-examination is so you come reconciled, not so you come deserving (1 Corinthians 11:28). Come to trust the LORD and leave the scales at home. The Supper is food for the weak who cling to Christ. The prodigal doesn't linger at the fence line until his remorse "feels sincere enough"; the father runs and robes him (Luke 15:20–24). The feast is the father's answer to confessed ruin.

Hide and Seek

But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your charitable giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

Matthew 6:3-4

Hiddenness is the deliberate practice of secrecy in righteousness—choosing to pray, give, fast, and serve in the secret place (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18). By placing good works where only God sees, we need to learn how to retrain desire from human applause to divine pleasure. Jesus teaches us that our left hand should be kept from knowing what the right hand was doing. He Himself models it by slipping away before dawn to pray (Mark 1:35). And Christ commends those like the poor widow whose faithfulness went largely unnoticed (Mark 12:41-44) and Anna, who kept vigil in prayer and fasting (Luke 2:36-38). Hiddenness is not hiding sin, but it is hiding self so that love can be pure (Ephesians 5:11).

Consider one's generosity that leaves no trail: Cornelius' alms and prayers "ascended as a memorial before God" (Acts 10:4), though few on earth would have recorded them. Likewise, think of Mother Teresa's ordinary, hidden mercies offered without publicity and received as service to Christ himself. She likely never perceived the attention later attached to her name. Her work was not platform, but prayer. Her calculus was simple and unseen: one person before me, one act of love, "as unto Christ" as Paul says. Our only record is gratitude before God. Such secrecy loosens the grip of reputation and teaches the heart where its treasure lies.

Prayer, too, flourishes in the hidden place. Daniel opened his window toward Jerusalem and prayed "as he had done previously" (Daniel 6:10). There was no audience to impress, only the God who hears. Jesus calls us into that same "closet" (Matthew 6:6). Let us establish a small hour—before the house wakes, on a lunch break, at day's end—where you name people before the Lord without announcing it to anyone. When grace appears in their lives and your name is nowhere near the outcome, your joy becomes cleaner: you are content to be unseen because the Father has seen. Think

about Hannah: the woman who poured out her soul *in bitterness* before the Lord with no audience but a bewildered priest. Her hidden plea becomes Samuel (1 Samuel 1-2).

Hidden service may be the most countercultural practice. Tabitha sewed garments for widows; when she died, the room filled with people clutching the tangible proofs of her quiet charity (Acts 9:36-39). Let us choose the low tasks that lay beneath our skill and outside the spotlight: clean after the crowd leaves, visit the overlooked, repair what breaks; with no story to tell later. And the Father's pleasure will be enough.

*You know this, my beloved brothers and sisters. Now everyone must be quick to hear,
slow to speak, and slow to anger
James 1:19*

Being slow to speak entails resisting headline-making and choosing small, truthful words that serve others rather than our image. Barnabas is exemplary here. He vouched for Saul when others doubted, fetched him to Antioch, and then gladly faded as "Barnabas and Saul" became "Paul and Barnabas" (Acts 11:22-26, 13:1-3). He platformed another without footnoting himself. In updates and testimonies, emphasize God's grace and others' labor; keep your role in the background. Scripture is full of such quiet fidelity: Moses, whom God himself defended when maligned (Numbers 12:3); the centurion who said "I am not worthy" and made Jesus marvel (Luke 7:1-10).

Once again, we hide ourselves so that love can be seen by the only Eyes that matter. In giving, we refuse the ledger; in praying, we refuse the stage; in serving, we refuse the headline.

Sabbath

By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Genesis 2:2-3

For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and everything that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; for that reason the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Exodus 20:11

And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to celebrate the Sabbath day.

Deuteronomy 5:15

Sabbath is the weekly discipline of holy cessation: we stop our ordinary production to remember God's finished work in creation and redemption and to receive our lives as gift rather than project. It is not merely a therapeutic pause for exhausted people, but an act of worshipful resistance against the illusion that the world turns on our competence. Scripture grounds Sabbath first in creation [God blesses a day and rests](#) and then in redemption [as slaves being delivered by the LORD](#).

Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

Mark 2:27

How much more valuable then is a person than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

Matthew 12:12

The purpose of Sabbath is not to burden creatures with a new performance metric but to let creatures be creatures by receiving rest, healing, and communion under God's care. The commandment is firm, but its telos forms kindness. By renouncing constant output, we confess that fruit finally comes from God's increase, not our momentum (1 Corinthians 3:7). The Israelites learned this in the wilderness where manna could not be hoarded and a double portion arrived before the seventh day (Exodus 16).

Practically, Sabbath means letting something be unfinished and calling that incompleteness good under God. Emails can wait. The project remains mid-sentence. We can entrust the loose ends to a Sovereign who neither slumbers nor sleeps. The day is not passivity but attentive love where limits appear as liturgy ([Refer to Blog 4](#)). Rest becomes an altar where God meets creatures as creatures. And Sabbath should taste like joy. Nehemiah told a penitent people to eat and drink "for the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Neh 8:10). Candles, bread, song, and unhurried conversation tutor gratitude; delight is part of obedience. Hidden trust belongs here as well: a weekly "metric fast" from dashboards, counts, and likes trains the soul to serve without the narcotic of feedback. John rejoiced as his numbers fell because Christ's rose (John 3:30); Sabbath rehearses that freedom.

Pastorally, several temptations return each week and can be met in mercy. If something falters in your absence, let that small failure catechize you: God was competent before

you arrived and will be after you rest (Psalms 127:1–2). When the day feels “unproductive,” bless that discomfort; Sabbath forms us by holy uselessness, the kind that refuses to convert every hour into output. Sit with Scripture you cannot monetize, talk without agenda, take an unposted walk. God is not in a hurry with you, nor are we in a rush. If conscience accuses saying that we haven’t earned rest, let us know to receive grace before our obedience (Ephesians 2:8-10). We do not rest because we finished, but we rest because Christ finished.

Interruptions require discernment. Ask, “Is this mercy?” If so, do good gladly; if not, a gentle no keeps the day unto God. Sabbath is for love, not against it, but remember, love has shape; rescuing urgency can quickly become compulsion. And if the rules you’ve made begin to crush joy, hear again Jesus’ correction: *the Sabbath was made for you*. Adjust the practices so they serve the purpose of delighting in God, receiving limits, loving neighbors, etc. The goal is not performing a perfect Sabbath but practicing trust and joy. Keep the day communal where possible (family, roommates, friends) because rest deepens when shared. Allow some vocations (caregivers, medical staff, pastors) to flex. Take the portion you can and receive it without guilt.

Sabbath, kept this way, becomes an anti-ego sacrament of time. We cease, not because the work is trivial, but because the Worker is faithful. We rest, not to secure God’s love, but to enjoy the love already secured. And we rise again to labor as creatures who have learned the grammar of grace.

The Gatekeeper of Heaven

A subtle pathology is curating access to people, platforms, or processes to protect one’s preeminence.

Even in leadership, authority is cruciform and generative. Its telos is not to collect orbiters but to multiply owners. Picture this: you’re in your respective work setting with your newest model Macbook and the peer who takes notes on his beat up notebook and a bic pen he probably took from the doctors office asks you if you would want to work on the next project. But then, you think that it would be ‘Christ-like’ of you to work with him so you end up sacrificing your time and preference on a work partner to help another out a little. You notice the little things, like how he uses a dilapidated Google phone, he lacks good manners, and worse yet he doesn’t even try to collaborate or put in any effort. Nevertheless, you pull through and complete the entire project and both ends receive recognition for a job well done.

In that little scene, you and I usually walk away feeling quietly pleased with ourselves: *I was kind. I partnered down. I carried dead weight.* But notice what still stayed intact—the hidden hierarchy. We kept the reins, ensured the project met our standards, and let him “share” the credit while you preserved the story: *I’m the competent savior; he’s the lucky recipient.*

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.
2 Corinthians 8:9

The glory which You have given Me I also have given to them, so that they may be one, just as We are one;
John 17:22

Jesus didn’t simply “work with” the weak while preserving a safe distance from their lack. He identified with them. He also doesn’t lend us strength as we would lend money to our neighbors, but he shares His entire status (Ephesians 5:2).

Gatekeeping says, “I’ll help you, as long as I keep the keys”, but Christ hands over keys to former deniers and doubters. He entrusts the gospel to people who fall asleep in Gethsemane. The resurrected Lord recommissions Peter on the very shore of his greatest failure and puts sheep in his hands. Divine authority moves toward multiplication, not monopoly.

We are often willing to be generous as long as our supremacy remains untouched. We share information but not credit; opportunities but not ownership; tasks but not real decision-making. We “mentor” in ways that keep people dependent, “include” in ways that never truly threaten our indispensability. It feels virtuous, but it is just ego in a cardigan.

So, in Christ, love always goes further. We often think of Christ as the bouncer to heaven, but he is the gate (John 10:6-9). His holiness is not protected by scarcity, but it overflows in welcome. The veil is torn from top to bottom, not replaced with a more sophisticated curtain of social, educational, or spiritual filters. He does not curate access to the Father to preserve His uniqueness; His joy is that **many** sons and daughters are brought to glory (Hebrews 2:10).

In our devotion, then, we learn to live like open doors. Our lives should make introductions, open rooms we don’t control, and give away knowledge without insisting on being the permanent middleman. Faithful leadership means training people to

surpass us and even replace us, and then calling that moment answered prayer, not threat. To follow the crucified Lord is to rejoice when others increase, even when it means we quietly decrease.

Have a holy pride in ungatekeeping; boast in the Lord who delights to multiply good beyond any one pair of hands. To rejoice in another's victory is to confess that grace is never scarce. When one member is honored, the whole body truly gains; love refuses to hoard the honor (1 Corinthians 12:26). And when you invite others into your own achievements—sharing credit, process, and access—you treat success as a shared commons rather than private property.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:19-20

God said, "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). Read that not only as a mandate for families, but as a pattern for stewardship wherever God entrusts life. So yes, if we return to that oddly specific scenario, love would go beyond carrying the project; it would seek that colleague's long-term good—helping him learn, sharpening his habits, maybe even upgrading his tools—so that he can flourish when you are no longer there. Translate that instinct into your vocation. If you're any sort of leader, plan your own obsolescence by training successors. If you teach, aim for students who surpass you (2 Timothy 2:2). This is the grain of the kingdom: not scarcity and control, but multiplication and release (Ephesians 4:11-13). Our success should be measured not by how much passes through you, but by how many flourish without you. Moses said, "Would that all the LORD's people were prophets"; let that be our posture. Joyfully diminish so others can increase. That is not the loss of greatness; it is the shape of cruciform authority and the ordinary miracle of faithful discipleship.

Closing

Let us have certainty about our own charity and abide in Christ. Living in humility is difficult, for self-centeredness is etched into our human nature; but beloved, I yearn for us to unlearn scarcity. May we pray blessings upon one another.

Very frequently, I struggle to humble myself. So this blog is first addressed to my own heart. Still, in my learning I hope you might learn as well—and perhaps teach me. Would you sit with the questions that follow and ponder upon them as you share with me your thoughts:

1. Where am I trying to make a name rather than bear the Name?
2. Which convictions are truly of first importance, and which are preferences I treat like dogma?
3. Who never gets into the room where decisions are made, and what would change if they did?

I continue to laugh at some responses and appreciate your time in reading these blogs. If you see other hidden forms of pride, please share them—they may apply to me first.

Best wishes,
Blessings,
Ray



Daniel 4:28-37

28 “All of this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king. **29** Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. **30** The king began speaking and was saying, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?’ **31** While the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, **32** and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the animals of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.’ **33** Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws.

34 “But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever;

For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
And His kingdom endures from generation to generation.

35 All the inhabitants of the earth are of no account,
But He does according to His will among the army of heaven
And among the inhabitants of earth;
And no one can fend off His hand
Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’

36 At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the honor of my kingdom, and my state counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me. **37** Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just; and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”