

Lessons from Lewis

Looking Down

C. S. Lewis wrote about a kind of looking down that we may have a problem with: "In God you come up against something which is in every respect immeasurably superior to yourself. As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you" (Mere Christianity)..

Jesus told a parable about a Pharisee who felt superior to others. In a prideful prayer, he thanked God that he was not like other men (Luke 18:11). He looked down on extortioners, the unjust, adulterers, and the tax collector who was also praying in the temple. By contrast, the tax collector knew he was a sinner before God and asked for His mercy (v.13). The first man was too busy looking down on others and too proud to look up and see that he, also, depended on God for forgiveness of his own sins. The second man with eyes cast down in humility, looked up and appealed to God for forgiveness, and received it.

Pride can be an issue for all of us. May we not look down on others but instead see the God who is far above us all. Spiritual pride is the most arrogant of all kinds of pride. (Watts)

Pride is a Sword

In The Screwtape Letters written by C.S. Lewis, a senior devil urges his young protégé to divert a Christian's thoughts away from God and focus instead on the faults of the people around him at church.

During a Sunday service, a disciple found himself distracted and somewhat annoyed by a person nearby who sang loudly off key and kept rattling pages during the readings in the sermon. But when he bowed his head for prayer, it struck him that the Lord must surely be more pleased with that other person's heart than with the judgmental feelings He saw in him.

A few days later he read Proverbs 8 and was struck by verse 13: "Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate." Throughout this chapter, wisdom calls to us to gain an understanding heart (v.5) and to find life and obtain favor from the Lord (v.35). The alternative is to go through life with a superior attitude while dying inside in the process (v.36).

Pride is a sword that wounds the person who uses it along with those against whom it is used. Arrogance robs us of all God longs to give us, but "by humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life" (22:4). Pride brings shame. Humility brings wisdom (Bosch).

Mastering Temptation

In September 1961, Harvey Karlsen, a high school student in Brooklyn, New York, wrote to C. S. Lewis in England. Harvey had read Lewis' book The Screwtape Letters and asked the author, "When you wrote this book, did Satan give you any trouble, and if he did, what did you do about it?" Three weeks later, Lewis penned a reply in which he affirmed that he still had plenty of temptations. He said that in facing them, "Perhaps the most important thing is to keep on; not to be discouraged however often one yields to the temptation, but always to pick yourself up again and ask forgiveness."

The New Testament letters of John are filled with encouragement to persevere in the face of temptation. "I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one" (1John 2:12-13). Whatever our age or experience, we are in a spiritual battle together. "The world is passing

away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (v.17). To master temptation, let Christ be your Master.

Grief is Great

In C. S. Lewis’ story, *The Magician’s Nephew*, Digory recalled his terminally ill mother and how his hopes were all dying away. With a lump in his throat and tears in his eyes, he blurted out to Aslan, the great lion who represents Christ, “Please, please—won’t you—can’t you give me something that will cure Mother?”

Then, in his despair, Digory looked up at Aslan’s face. “Great shining tears stood in the Lion’s eyes. They were such big, bright tears compared with Digory’s own that for a moment he felt as if the Lion must really be sorrier about his Mother than he was himself. ‘My son, my son,’ said Aslan. ‘I know. Grief is great. Only you and I in this land know that yet. Let us be good to one another.’”

Think of Jesus’ tears at Lazarus’ grave (John 11:35). He wept for Lazarus as well as for Mary and Martha and their grief. Later, Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44). And He knows and shares our grief today. But as He promised, we will see Him again in the place He’s preparing for us (John 14:3). In heaven, our grief will end. “God will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying” (Rev. 21:4). Until then, know that God weeps with you (Roper).

Give Us the Tools

During World War II, the British Isles represented the last line of resistance against the sweep of Nazi oppression in Europe. Under relentless attack and in danger of collapse, however, Britain lacked the resources to see the conflict through to victory. For that reason, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill went on BBC radio and appealed to the world: “Give us the tools, and we will finish the job.” He knew that without help from the outside, they could not endure the assault they were facing.

Life is like that. Often, we are inadequate for the troubles life throws at us, and we need help from outside of ourselves. As members of the body of Christ, that help can come at times from our Christian brothers and sisters (Rom. 12:10-13), and that is a wonderful thing. Ultimately, however, we seek help from our heavenly Father. The good and great news is that our God has invited us to come confidently before Him: “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

At such times, our greatest resource is prayer, for it brings us into the very presence of God. There we find, in His mercy and grace, the help we need. Don’t let prayer be your last recourse in time of need; make it your first (Bernstecher).

--Seen on a bumper sticker: “Too blessed to complain.”

