

Russell Kelfer

Look At Me!

902-A

Series: Living Lessons From Proverbs

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It’s been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that’s a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

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We are beginning a topical journey through the land of Proverbs; God's Book of Principles. And as we do so, our goal is to discover the Four Faces of Wisdom.

That pilgrimage, we have already learned, had to begin in a very difficult place in a village called "Pride". We learned that you cannot really discover God's plan for joyful living unless you have come face to face with the "Perennial Problem of Pride." It is the primary ingredient in Satan's distorted personality, and it is the cardinal characteristic of fallen man who has conformed himself to the image of his leader. It lies (though often disguised) as the root cause of most conflict. In its wake we find wars, ruined lives, broken homes, and broken hearts. It elevates the corpse of self to the throne of the heart and says in its arrogant voice, "I'll run my life, Lord. I'm the one who can." And its deadliness is heightened by its subtlety.

Unlike so many sins that cripple our walk with God, pride is a master of deceit. It wears a thousand costumes and masquerades itself with a thousand different faces. It loves to come to church, loves to wear religious garb and manifests itself in a cloak of spirituality. Pride has got to go. We can't do it, but God can. And we must choose to let Him.

We continue with a potentially painful personal look at the perennial problem of pride. Pride, you may remember, we are defining as "any form of preoccupation with self". In one form, it is self-exaltation, (preoccupation with how rude we are). In its more subtle form, it is self-condemnation, (preoccupation with how bad we are). But both forms are deadly. For both exalt that deadly dead man "self" and promote the charade that pretends he's alive. Self is dead. God knows it. The WORD confirms it. But Satan has concocted a series of lies to deceive us into believing that not only is self alive and well, but that the phony little rascal is deserving of all kinds of attention. So we listen to the lie, play the charade, and the resulting product is an unusable, unusually

destructive commodity called pride.

Our mission (should we choose to accept it) is to allow God, in us, to rid us of this deceitful disease called pride and ask Him to clothe us with the humility we know as Jesus Christ. That is our mission. Our method, as we see it unfold in Proverbs, is to begin by seeking a spirit of knowledge.

Knowledge, remember, is the accumulation of information on God's perspective of life. Knowledge is simply knowing the facts.

Then, once we have searched the Word for knowledge and know God's mind on a given subject, our second objective is understanding. Understanding comes from personalizing the information that we have already received, making application to our own lives. This should lead us in that particular area of our lives to WISDOM, choosing minute by minute to allow the mind of Christ (Who is resident in our lives) to be Himself in us.

Last week, we looked for a word of knowledge where pride is concerned. All we were after were the facts. "What is the mind of God where pride is concerned?" we asked. We asked ourselves these three questions.

How does God feel about pride?

How does God respond to pride?

How does God deal with a prideful spirit?

And the answers we found in the WORD were these: He hates pride. He detests an arrogant spirit. Pride is abominable to God. God, we found, views a proud man as worse than a fool.

God hates pride, so He responds to it in a most predictable way. He is stern with the proud (Proverbs 3:34), but gives grace to the meek. James 4:6-8 and I Peter 5:5 seals it further. They told us God resists the proud, He stiff arms them, holds them back from possessing His grace in the same way we are to "resist" or stiff-arm the enemy.

But conversely, to the humble, He just keeps pouring, pouring, pouring out more grace. He hears the cry of the humble, Psalms 9 reminds us. But He turns away from the pleas of the proud. He hates pride, resists the proud and saves His grace (His enabling power) for those who are humble in heart. That's how He feels, and that's how He responds.

Lastly, we asked what does He do when His children will not

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deal with pride? The answer is: He passed a law, a divine law, and it goes like this—Every man and every woman who exalts this corpse of self, God will, God must, humiliate, bring down to their rightful place before His Holiness. But every man and every woman who humbles himself or herself (who takes a God’s-eye-view of self), God will exalt that person in due time, in His time, as He sees fit. So that’s a word of knowledge about pride. That’s the mind of Christ where pride is concerned.

Our next responsibility is to take that grid, that platform of truth, and lay it over our own lives and surface all of the pride that’s hidden in the secret places of our hearts. I asked you to join me in praying, “Lord, whatever it takes, show me the pride in my life.” I don’t know about you, but I don’t know that I’ve ever had a week like this. God keeps His Word. He is unearthing layers of self-centeredness and prideful attitudes in my life that I simply was too proud to even recognize I had. And I trust that He is working in your life as well.

So today our objective is application and understanding. We want God to uncover pride in us, that Christ, in us, might do something about it.

The disease of pride seems to break out in the Christian’s life in two deadly forms. The first is “natural” pride, various forms of preoccupation with the natural man. (Pride in how we look, what we accomplish, how we compare with others.) The second is “spiritual” pride, the various forms of preoccupation with self that camouflage themselves in clothes of spirituality. Both are vicious. They enter the bloodstream and spread through the soul like a raging river overflowing its banks under the pressures of a storm. And nearly always, Satan takes five simple statements and through subtle variations, tricks us into conforming to his slimy image. Those five statements of Satanic self worth are these:

- 1- Look at me.
- 2- Listen to me.
- 3- Let me win.
- 4- Give me mine.
- 5- Give me praise.

Now you just file those five statements in the back of your mind as we go through this lesson, and leave them there this

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week as the enemy works on you. You'll be actually amused to see how unimaginative the devil really is. He may dress them up, phrase them cleverly, but basically he will run those five demands through the computer that's lodged between our ears over and over and over.

Now Satan has a built-in carrier through which he inflicts mankind with pride. It's called the "world system." It is a humanistic philosophy that appeals to the natural bent of unregenerate man by elevating the value of self and reducing truth to a relative system of variables that change from day to day and from person to person. It's key ingredient is pride, the enthroning of self.

Its basic drive is expressed in those five statements we just read. (Look at me. Listen to me. Let me win. Give me mine. Give me praise.) Now the world programs those concepts into our computer from birth over and over. From school, from TV, from well-meaning parents we hear, "Look at me. Listen to me. Let me win. Give me mine. Give me praise." And when we become Christians, our responsibility is to de-program and reprogram our minds from God's perspective.

Our plan is to compare the world's perspective with the Word's perspective and try to ask ourselves some very personal questions about pride. Let's begin. The world and the Word collide over the issue of pride.

Conflict 1- The world says, "Look at me. I have the credentials for greatness. I have a right to be proud. I must glory in my strengths."

But the WORD says,

Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches:

But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgement, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

(Jeremiah 9:23,24)

I Corinthians takes it further. There, Paul says God didn't call you for your wisdom or your power or for your reputation. Not too many noble, not many mighty, not many wise have been called.

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That no flesh should glory (be proud) in his presence.

According as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory In
the Lord. (I Corinthians 1:29,31)

Now ask yourselves these questions. What are you teaching
your children to glory in?

What they can do?

Their grades?

Their athletic ability?

Their talent?

How “cute” they are?

How “good” they are?

What is the basis of your praise in their lives: physical
accomplishments or spiritual accomplishments? We wonder why
they have the values they have! God says there’s only one basis
for glorying. It is that they understand and know who HE is in all
His love, in all His judgment, and in all His righteousness.

And what about you? What pleases you most? Your
weaknesses or your strengths? For example, are you always bad-
mouthing your weaknesses? (Most of us do. We say, “I can’t this;
I can’t that.”) Self-condemnation is a form of pride.

Your weaknesses are God’s springboard to grace. His power
is perfected in weakness, Paul says, “That’s what I glory in.”

The world says magnify your strengths. The WORD says, no.
God will transform your weaknesses, then whoever glories will
glory in the Lord! The only basis you and I have to be proud is to
be proud of Him. Who HE is; what HE’S done. We ought to glory
in that

Conflict 2- is between the world and the WORD.

The world says, “Compare: Comparison proves...” Find
someone less talented than you are and compare. It’ll make you
feel good. Or find someone more experienced than you are and
compare. It’ll motivate you.

But the WORD says NO.

We dare not make ourselves of the number or compare
ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they,
measuring themselves by themselves and comparing
themselves among themselves, are not wise.

(II Corinthians 10: 12)

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(They're dum-dums.) God says don't do it. It magnifies "self".

The world says use Ivory Liquid soap, and your hands will be acceptable. Use Ban roll-on deodorant, and your odor will be acceptable. Wear this, drink this, do this. "They" all do it. God says no. My children are divinely unique. No two are exactly alike. No two are exactly in the same place in their spiritual pilgrimage, so any comparison is a wrong comparison.

Now ask yourself these questions: Am I intimidated by those who seem to do everything right? Do I wish I could just "speak" like him or "sing" like her? Or "sell" like him or "sew" like her? That's pride. Maybe he or she can't pray like you or give like you or care like you or serve like you. Ask yourself, "Am I always comparing myself with those who can't measure up so I'll feel better about myself?" (I love to do that!) That's pride. Or am I glad when someone else fails so I feel less like a failure? (I am! I really am!) That's pride. Or do I always compare myself with the "successful" so I can prove to myself how worthless I am? That's pride, too. Self-exaltation... Self-condemnation... God says, either way, stop it! Christ, in you, is not comparing you with anybody. Self wants to do that, but self is dead.

Still another form of comparative pride is an over competitive spirit. It has to win on the golf course, on the tennis court, or even at the kitchen table playing Monopoly or Scrabble. It has to win no matter whom the losers are, even our kids. Do you get excited when someone you love wins, if it means you had to lose? And when your kids win a football game or a tennis match, do you ever stop and think of how the other parents feel? How do you act at the game? Crude? Loud? Vindictive? Is winning everything? Or are people more important? The real issue is pride. "We deserve to win," it says.

Still another way we build ourselves up by comparison is by boasting of our bargains.

It is naught; It is naught sayeth the buyer, but when he is gone his way; then he boasteth. (Proverbs 20:14)

Or as the Living Bible words it,

"Utterly worthless," says the buyer as he haggles over the price. But afterwards he brags about his bargain.

Do you ever thank a storekeeper or clerk for giving you a good deal? Or do you have good deals coming to you? Do you ever

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wonder if the store owner or the employers might be struggling as much as you? Do you push your way to the bargain counter as though you needed a deal more than those you shove around? It's good to get a good deal and be grateful for it. It's wrong to get a good deal and be boastful about it. Have you ever met anyone who didn't just make a steal on that car he bought? Or that suit? Or that house? Human nature always thinks it got away with something. God's nature just never wants to do it at someone else's expense. Do you see? It's all a part of the Perennial Problem of Pride.

Conflict 3- (See if you've ever experienced it.) The world says, "Do what it takes to be noticed." Go to the right places; meet the right people. Do the right things. (Look at me.)"

But the WORD no!

Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men;

For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither, than that that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen. (Proverbs 25:6,7)

Read Ezekiel 28 and see for yourself who originated the idea of self-exaltation. Jesus pictures it in Luke.

And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the best seats, saying unto them,

When thou art bidden of any man to a marriage, sit not down in the best seat; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him;

And he that invited thee and him come and say to thee, give this man your place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest seat.

But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest seat; that when he that invited thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher; then shalt thou have worship in the honour of them that sit at meat with thee.

For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (Luke 14:7-11)

A modern illustration would be for me to go sit uninvited in the front row at our wedding because I thought I was that important to you. Then when it was time to bring in the family, there is no

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place for them to sit. I'm in their seats. So the groomsman has to come up in front of hundreds of guests and ask me to move back. How humiliating! But if I sat in the back and the family comes and said, "We want you to sit with us." What an honor!

Oh, do you see the difference in the mind of Christ? It is 180 degrees from the world! Do you want to be somebody? Stop trying to be somebody! Stop trying to work your way into the limelight. Stop trying to show the world who you are. Labor in the shadows faithfully, then, you won't face the embarrassment of abasement, but rather the exhilaration of exaltation.

Now ask yourself: Do you need the best seat or the best parking place wherever you go? Do you have to put in a word in every conversation? Are you a self-appointed authority on every subject? Do you volunteer an opinion whether you're asked to or not? Do you automatically assume you belong at the top? Or in the front? Or alongside the leaders? Do you always need to be buddies with the best? Do you automatically assume you could do that job better? How do you know? Would you rather volunteer to take command and be told you're not ready? Or labor silently in the shadows until God causes someone to notice and invite you to that place of honour? And who and why do you have guests? Jesus goes on in Luke,

Then said he also to him that invited him, when thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.

But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind;

And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. (Luke 14:12-14)

Oh, the Perennial Problem of Pride. It's the world and the Word in conflict.

Conflict 4- The world says, "Tomorrow I'll succeed, you can count on it. I'm only as good as I think I am." (Ever heard that philosophy?) But the WORD! Oh, the Word says in Proverbs 27,

Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. (Proverbs 27:1)

James adds—

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Go to now, ye that say, today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain.

Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

For that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.
(James 4:13-16)

Do you see the principle? Ask yourself these questions: Have you found the balance between planning and presumption? The Living Bible says, ‘We can make our plans; but the final outcome is in God’s hands.’ Is your confidence in the future based on your confidence in God? Or in your business experience? Your life insurance? Your five year plan for success? Is your savings account your God? And do you fit your plans into God’s unfolding of His will? Or do you fit God into the unfolding of your plans?

Do you put off ministering to your neighbor? Witnessing to your parents? Visiting that one who is sick? Because “there’ll always be another day?” What presumption! What pride! How do you know what life will bring forth? Life is a vapor. It’s here, then it’s gone. Man says, “I’ll do it ... tomorrow.” God says, “But only I know what tomorrow holds.” Be careful... It’s a symptom of the Perennial Problem of Pride.

Conflict 5- The world says, “If no one else will do it; then you tell the world how good you are. It’ll help you get a job. It’ll help you get a mate. It’ll help you get recognized for what you are. Just toot your own horn.”

But the WORD says,

Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth, a stranger, and not thine own lips.
(Proverbs 27:2)

Don’t praise yourself, let others do it. (Proverbs 27:2 TLB)

Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness; but a faithful man who can find?
(Proverbs 20:6)

God says, “Humble yourself, be honest, and let God through others give you a recommendation.” Do you find yourself sneaking your accomplishments into your conversations? (I do it all the time.) Do you say things like “Oh, I know him; why when I was

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counseling him I helped him (such and such).” (I wanted them to know I was ministering to that person.) Or, “Oh, yes I know what you mean; back when I was first string quarterback for the Bozo Bulldogs I had an experience like that.” Sometimes we even give God a little credit to give us an excuse to brag, “I have really been fortunate. God is so good to me. I sold more than anyone else in the company this month. Isn’t God great?” Question: Would God have been any less great if you had been third or fourth in the company? Stop praising yourself! God says that self is dead, and how successful can a corpse be? If God has done it, He’ll handle the encores. And ask yourself, if you take the “I’s” and the “me’s” and the “my’s” out of your vocabulary, would there be enough words left to make a sentence?

Conflict 6- The world says, “Everybody loves a good fight. Stand up for your rights. Go get what’s yours.” (Remember, “Give me mine.”)

But the WORD says,

Pride leads to arguments; be humble, take advice and become wise. (Proverbs 13:10)

He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife. (Proverbs 28:25)

God says pride is the root cause of contention and strife. Do you love a good argument? Would you rather fight than switch? Are you always having to ask somebody’s forgiveness because you have “hoof in mouth” disease? Do you always have to have the last word? Would you rather win the battle even if you lose the war? (In other words, would you rather be right and hurt somebody in the process?) Is there always strife in your home? In your office? In your ministry? Is everybody else always wrong, and you’re always right, only nobody ever sees it but you? You know where the problem is don’t you? It’s the Perennial Problem of Pride!

Conflict 7- The world says, “Walk with self-assurance, hold your head high, dress so others will see you.” (“Look at me.”)

But the WORD, God’s WORD says,

Haughty looks, a proud heart; showy splendour, it is all sin. (Proverbs 21:4)

There is a generation, oh how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up. (Proverbs 30:13)

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You know what it represents. Verse 12 says,

There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes and yet are not washed from their filthiness.

What one word would best characterize the look on your face? Arrogant? Angry? Desperate? Gentle? What one word would best characterize the look in your eyes? Compassionate? Condescending? or Unconcern? Look in the mirror! Look in your eyes! A haughty look, a proud look, lofty eyes, they are not from God. They are the remnants of a corpse, a corpse called self. And that haughtiness is but a symptom of the Perennial Problem of Pride. And don't dress to call attention to yourself! Isaiah 3:16-26 tells how God felt about the arrogant women who dressed and over dressed to call attention to themselves.

God said in that day He would remove all the fancy jewelry and destroy their extravagant clothes. Peter said it best,

Don't be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on jewelry or beautiful clothes or hair arrangement.

Be beautiful inside, in your hearts, with the lasting charm of a gentle and quiet spirit which is so precious to God.

(1 Peter 3:3,4)

God says a woman who nags is not beautiful, even in a gorgeous dress. A woman who gossips is not beautiful even with an elaborate hairdo. A woman who screams at her family isn't beautiful even with a new diamond necklace. There's nothing wrong with nice clothes unless they are a covering for a bitter or vindictive spirit. But the man or woman whose very countenance radiates the image of Christ, how relatively unimportant is what they wear. Ask yourself, do people remember you as the woman with the beautiful wardrobe or the woman with the beautiful smile? As the man who wears the high price shoes or the man who would wash another's feet or gladly give his shoes away? Clothes ought to compliment character. They should be tasteful, keyed to you, so people can see Christ in you (but not the package you wrapped it in). It's a problem, part of the Perennial Problem of Pride.

One more and we'll stop for this morning. You don't want to stop? You wanted to stop thirty minutes ago?

Conflict 8- The world says, "When other praise you, lap it up, revel in it, you deserve it."

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The WORD says,

Just as gold and silver are purified by fire, so a man is tested by his reaction to praise. (Proverbs 27:21)

Do you hear what God is saying? Your PQ (your Pride quotient), the real you, will surface like dross when gold is refined the minute you are confronted with praise. When someone says, “A job well done,” (no matter what you say) in your spirit do you swell with pride? Does your spirit say, “All right! Recognition at last!” Or, “Hey, I really was pretty good!” What if no one recognizes the job you’re doing? Are you just as motivated to keep on doing it? Or is praise the fuel that powers the engine of your faithfulness?

God tested me three times this week with that principle. If you knew what went on in my heart, you’d say, “How disgusting!” and probably never come back here again! PRIDE. It’s a disease Satan injects it right into our hearts. “For out of the heart proceedeth pride,” Scripture says, and we come to think it’s an acceptable way of life. But God hates it! It’s an abomination to Him. He resists it. If it continues, we must be humbled, humiliated. It’s a spiritual law, and God’s laws are always right.

Next, we will take a look at spiritual pride—How Satan takes his personality and sends it to church, to deacon’s meetings, to committee meetings, to programs, to plans, to pulpits. We’ll see what God says about pride in our ministry, pride in our church, pride in our faithfulness, pride in our leaders, pride in our theology, pride in our spiritual growth. And then, Lord willing, we’ll take a look at the Perennial Problem of “Success”, perhaps Satan’s greatest single tool of all for destroying a thriving spiritual ministry. And we may take a look at the supposed conflict between humility and “a healthy self image”, too. And because you loved them so much, we’ll have some more questions to ask ourselves about pride. You’ll all be out of the country next week? I see. Well, I’m sorry to leave you this way. There are spiritual bullet holes everywhere, and I feel like we’re leaving you without even a Band Aid, but please be patient. Remember, at the other end of this study of pride, we come to the Wonderful World of Wisdom where we will actually see humility take control of our lives.

In the meantime, I think a few weeks of examining ourselves is in order. God wants to show us specific areas of pride in our

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own lives. He wants to give us a spirit of understanding. And isn't it worth it? Isn't anything worth it to come to live under the control of the mind of Christ?

Oh, Jeremiah, how we need to heed your Word today.

Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken.

Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it darkness. *(Before turns out the light in your life and takes away your life in darkness.)*

But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD's flock is carried away captive.

S say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves, sit down: for your principalities shall come down, even the crown of your glory. (Jeremiah 13:15-18)

I believe God's saying that to many of us this morning. I know He is to me. And I believe if we deal with the Problem of Pride HIS way, a whole new world of fellowship and ministry awaits us. So dare we pray again this week, "Lord, give us understanding?"

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I'm such a neat, important guy
My prideful spirit cries
God really got a deal with me
(Oh, what a pack of lies!)

All God got when He got me
Was a mountainful of sin
A closet full of rebellion
Just ready to strike again.

God didn't get a bargain, no!
That's Satan's phony song
God got a box of weakness
So we could see Him strong!

And all our lives we seem to think
That surely God must know
That we and He together, wow!
We'll put on quite a show!

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Look at me! We clamor
Look at all I've done!
And while the world is gaping
They never see God's Son.

Listen to me... we holler
We simply must be heard
And while they're hearing our voice
They never hear the Lord!

Let me win... compare—you'll see
I've so much on the ball...
And so you bowl them over,
And find you lost it all!

Give me mine... that, too, we cry
I deserve my share!
And those poor guys with greater needs
Never have a prayer.

Give me praise!! Oh, tell me please
How great I seem to be
God says, Take your praise, my child,
What glory's left for Me?

Oh, Dear God, we've missed it!
Your power we've denied
We've taken from you... Lordship
We've made a god of pride...

Oh, Dear God, please teach us
Your truth to build upon
Please teach us Lord to deal with Pride
Till every trace is gone!

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