

(11) Restraint in speech - As we are more emotionally stable, less anxious, and stirred up, our speech and demeanor reflect our serenity. We are less likely to interrupt, to speak in anger or be unnecessarily terse or harsh. We don't need to "win" every debate but are content perhaps to stay in the conversation or be content to sow seeds and leave the harvest for later or for others. **Our serenity tends to lower our volume and speed in talking and we are more able and content to speak the truth in love, with clarity, but also with charity.**

(12) Congruity between one's inside and one's outside - The Greek word "hypocritas" refers to acting. **Hypocrites are actors playing a role that is not really them.** The proud and the fearful are always posturing and aligning themselves with what makes for popularity and profit. **But as humility reaches its goal, integrity, honesty and sincerity come to full flower.** This is because, by the gift of humility, **we open ourselves to be fully formed by God.** Having turned our look to God, and made the journey into our heart, we discover the man or woman God has made us to be, and we begin to live out of that experience in an authentic and non-pretentious way. Since, **by humility we are more focused on God we are less nervously self-conscious.** By the gift of lucid self-awareness described above, we are comfortable in our own skin. We do not need to posture, dominate, compare or compete. Rather, our inner spiritual life and focus on God now inform our whole self. **Humility has now reached its goal, for humility is reverence for the truth about our self. We are sinners who are loved by God.** And as we make the journey to discover our true self before God, we become ever more grateful and serene, and we live out of this, inner life with God **are enabled to walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8).**

Bernard of Clairvaux's Four LOVES

- 1. LOVING YOURSELF for "SELF-SAKE"**
- 2. LOVING GOD for "SELF-SAKE"** – (Dependence on God)
- 3. LOVING GOD for GOD's OWN SAKE** (Intimacy with God)
- 4. SELF LOVE for GOD's SAKE** (Being united with God's love) – (to be free from 'self' consumption and free to rest in God & to live as a blessed child of God)

TWELVE STEPS OF PRIDE AND HUMILITY

Bernard of Clairvaux (1160)

with REFLECTIONS by: Msgr. Charles Pope

So you think the idea of the 12 Steps is new. Well, if you think you've got a new idea, go back and see how the Greeks put it, or in this case how the Medieval Latins put it. Bernard of Clairvaux identified twelve steps up the mountain of pride. These are detailed in a work by him entitled Steps of Humility and Pride.

One will note how the 12 steps grow far more serious as we go along and lead ultimately to the slavery of sin. The steps tend to build on one another, beginning in the mind, moving to behavior, and then to deepening attitudes of presumption and ultimately bringing forth revolt and slavery. For if one does not serve God, he will serve Satan. Twelve steps up the mountain of pride. Think of these like escalating symptoms:

(1) Curiosity - There is such a thing as healthy curiosity but often we also delve into things we ought not: other people's affairs, private matters, sinful things and situations, and so forth. What makes such curiosity to be annexed to pride is that so often we think we have a right to know things we do not. And hence we pridefully and indiscreetly look into things that we ought not, things that are not for us to know, or which are inexpedient and distracting for us, or perhaps the knowledge which we seek is beyond our ability to handle well. But casting all caution aside, and with a certain prideful and privileged sense we pry, meddle, and look into things we ought not as if we had a right to do so. This is sinful curiosity.

(2) Levity of mind - Occupying our mind with things not appropriate grows and we tend to become playful in wider matters. Here too, there is a valid sense of humor and a kind of recreational diversion that has a place. A little light banter about sports or pop culture may provide momentary diversions that are relaxing. But too often this is just about all we do and we pridefully cast aside matters about which we should be serious about and pursue only light and passing things. In ignoring or making light of serious things pertaining to eternity and delving only into entertaining and passing things, we pridefully ignore things to which we ought to attend. Hours watching sitcoms and "reality" TV but no time for prayer, study, instruction of children in the faith, caring for the poor, and so forth is a lack of seriousness that manifests pride. We lightly brush aside what is important to God and substitute our own foolish priorities. This is pride.

(3) Giddiness - Here we move from a levity of mind to the frivolous behaviors they produce, behaviors in which we over-emphasize lightweight experiences or situations, at the expense of more serious and important things having to do with profundities. Silly, vapid, foolish and capricious behaviors indicate a pride wherein one is not rich in what matters to God. We pridefully maximize the minimum and minimize the maximum. We find all the time for frivolities but no time for prayer or study of Holy Truth.

(4) Boasting - Increasingly locked into our little world of a darkened intellect and foolish behavior we begin to exult in lower behaviors and consider such carnal behaviors to be a sign of greatness. And thus we begin to boast of foolish things. To boast is to speak and think of oneself more highly than is true or reasonable. While we should learn to appreciate the gifts we have, we ought to recall that they ARE gifts given to us by God and often through others who helped us develop them. St. Paul says, *What have you that you have not received? And if you have received it, why do you boast as though you had not?* (1 Cor 4:7) But the boaster thinks too highly of himself either asserting gifts he does not have or forgetting that what he does have is a grace, a gift. This is pride. And, as we have seen our boasting tends to be about foolish and passing things.

(5) Singularity - Our world gets ever smaller and yet we think ourselves even greater. We are king alright, king of an ant hill, rulers of a tiny speck of dust sweeping through the immensity of space. But as our pride grows we too easily forget our dependence on God and others for who and what we are. There is no such thing as a self-made man. We are all contingent beings, very dependent on God and others. Further, we also too easily draw into our own little mind and world and tend to think that something is so just because we think so. Withdrawing only to our own counsel we discount the evidence of reality and stop seeking information and counsel from others. The man who seeks only his own counsel has a fool for an adviser, and a prideful adviser at that. Singularity is pride. Yet this pride swells as our world gets ever smaller and more singular, focused increasingly only on our self.

(6) Self-conceit - Here is described an unjustly favorable and unduly high opinion of one's own abilities or worth. As our world gets ever smaller and our pride ever greater our self-focus and delusion grows ever stronger and we become increasingly self-referential. Something is now so merely because I say so. I am fine because I say so. Never mind that all of us are a mixture of strengths and weaknesses, sanctity and sinfulness. Too easily we grow blind to just how difficult we can be to live with. Too easily we find faults in others but fail to see them in our very self. Further, we too easily seek others to favorably compare our self to, thinking, "Well at least I am not like that prostitute or drug dealer over

understand our self in a less ego-centric way. We are mindful of what we are doing, and thinking, and how we interact with God and others. But we do this in a way that is strongly aware of the presence and grace of God. We come to self-awareness in the context of living conscious contact with God throughout the day.

(8) Submission to the common rule - The ego-centric and **prideful person resists being told what to do and is largely insensitive to the needs of others and the common good.** The proud man thinks he knows better than the collective wisdom of the community. But as our journey down the mountain of pride continues, into deeper humility, we become more aware of the effects we have on others and how we must learn to interact and cooperate with others for goals larger than our self. **Humility teaches that the world does not simply revolve around me and what I want, and that sometimes the needs of others are more important than my own.** Humility helps us accept that laws exist most often to protect the common good and that, while individual rights are also important to protect, humility makes me more willing to submit my personal needs and agenda to the needs of others and the wisdom of the wider community.

(9) Silence - **Silence is a respectful admission that other people have wisdom to share and important things to share.** The proud person interrupts frequently and quickly thinking he knows already what the other person is saying or that what he has to say is more important. But as humility grows, we become better listeners, appreciating that others may be able to offer us knowledge or wisdom that we currently lack.

(10) Emotional sobriety - Many of our emotional excesses are rooted in pride and ego-eccentricity. **When we are proud we are easily offended, easily threatened. For fear begets anger.** And, as we saw yesterday, the initial stages of pride are often rooted in inordinate curiosity, mental levity and giddiness. All of these things cause our emotional life to be excessive and disordered. But as we now grow deeper in humility we are **less ego-centric and thus we are less fearful and less easily offended.** And having our mental life focused on more substantial and less frivolous things, **also adds stability to our thought life.** We are less carried off into gossip, intrigue, rumor and so forth. We are less stirred up by the machinations of advertisers and less disturbed by the 24/7 "breaking news" cycles of the cable news marketers. We are more thoughtful and less likely to rush to judgments that often unsettle us. The humble person trusts God more and is thus not easily unsettled by all these mental machinations. And it is thoughts that generate feelings. Thus as our thought life becomes more measured, and our conclusions more humble and careful, our emotions are less volatile and we attain to an emotional serenity and sobriety. This is a very great gift to seek and cultivate by God's grace.

show forgiveness and mercy, or to accept that we must be forgiven and shown mercy. **We may be asked to remember and to realize that we have not always been 100% right, and that we have sometimes acted unjustly and sinfully toward others, that we have at times been insensitive.** This is a very humbling journey, but a necessary one as we continue to come down from the mountain of pride.

(6) Contentedness with what is – Contentedness is a form of acceptance and is a very great gift to seek and to receive. We can distinguish a kind of external and internal contentedness.

External acceptance is rooted in the capacity to LIVE SERENELY in the world as it is, and to realize that God allows many things we don't prefer for a reason and a season. Acceptance does not connote approval of everything. Indeed there are many things in the world that we ought not approve of. But **acceptance is the willingness to humbly live and work in a world that is neither perfect nor fully according to our preferences.** Some things we are called to change, other things to endure. And even in those things we are called to change, we may have to accept that we cannot change them quickly or at all right now. Jesus told a parable about the wheat and tares and cautioned not to act precipitously to remove the tares, lest the wheat be harmed. It is a mysterious fact that God leaves many things unresolved and part of our journey in humility is discern what we are empowered to change and what we must come to accept as beyond our ability to change. **Internal contentedness is a gratitude for what we have and a freedom from resentment about what we do not have.** In pride we demand that our agenda, our menu be fully followed. In our journey toward humility we come to be more content to gratefully accept what God offers and to say, "It is enough O Lord. I am most grateful!"

(7) Lucid self-awareness - In pride we are often filled with many delusions about our self, and usually think more highly of our self than we ought. We are often unaware of just how difficult it can be to live or work with us. But as we continue down the mountain of pride, fearing the Lord, submitting our will to his in docility and obedience, being more honest about the deep recesses of our heart, our disordered drives and unrealistic agendas, we are now increasingly prepared to embrace true humility. Humility is reverence for the truth about our self. It is a lucid self-awareness that appreciates our gifts, remembers that they ARE gifts. And it is an awareness also of our struggles and of our on-going need for repentance and the grace of God. With lucid self-awareness **I am increasingly learning to know myself more as God knows me (cf 1 Cor 13:12).** This is because, as we come down from the mountain of pride into deeper humility, God discloses more to us than just who we really are. We become more and more the man or woman God has made us to be, and our self-delusions and the unrealistic demands of the world begin to fade. The darkness of these illusions is replaced by a lucidity of self-awareness **where we are able to see and**

there." But being better than a prostitute or drug dealer is not the standard we must meet. Jesus is the standard we must meet. But rather than refer our self to Jesus and seek mercy, we refer our self to others we look down on and give way to pride.

(7) Presumption - Now even God's judgments must cede to ours. I am fine and will be saved because I say so. This is a sin against hope wherein we simply take salvation as granted and due to us no matter what we do. In effect we already claim to possess what we do not. It is right for us to confidently hope for God's help in attaining eternal life. This is the Theological virtue of Hope. But it is pride to think we have already accomplished and possess what we do not already have or possess. It is a further pride to set aside God's Word which over and over teaches us to walk in hope and seek God's help as a beggar, not as a possessor or as one legally entitled to glory in heaven. Presumption is pride.

(8) Self-justification - Jesus must now vacate the Judgment seat because I demand his place. Not only that, but he must also vacate the cross because I don't really need his sacrifice. I can save myself, and frankly I don't need a lot of saving. Self-justification is the attitude that says I am able, by my own power to justify, that is save myself. It is also an attitude that says, in effect: "I will do what I want to do and I will decide if it is right or wrong." St. Paul says, *I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.* (1 Cor 4:3-4). But the prideful person cares only for his own view of himself and refuses to be accountable ultimately even to God. The prideful person forgets that no one is a judge in his own case.

(9) Hypocritical confession - The word hypocrite in Greek means "actor." Now we will observe that in certain settings some degree of humility and acknowledgement of one's fault is "profitable." One can get "credit" for humbly acknowledging certain faults and calling himself a "sinner." But, the prideful man is just acting. Just playing a role and doing his part more for social credit than out of real contrition or repentance. After all, I'm really not that bad off. But if posturing and playing the role of the humble and contrite sinner will get me somewhere, I'll say my lines, play the part and look holy. But only if the applause from the audience is forthcoming.

(10) Revolt - Pride really begins to go off the rails when one outright revolts against God and his lawful representatives. To revolt means to renounce allegiance to or any sense of accountability or obedience to God, to his Word or to His Church. To revolt is to attempt to overthrow the authority of others, in this God and his Church. It is prideful to refuse to be under any authority and act in ways that are directly contrary to what lawful authority rightly asserts.

(11) Freedom to sin - Here pride reaches its near conclusion as it arrogantly asserts and celebrates that it is utterly free to do what it pleases. The prideful man is increasingly rejecting of any restraints or limits. But the freedom of the proud man is not really freedom at all. Jesus says, Whoever sins is a slave to sin (John 8:34) and the Catechism echoes: *The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to the slavery of sin.* (Catechism 1733) But the proud man will have none of this and arrogantly goes on asserting his freedom to do what he pleases even as he descends deeper and deeper into addiction and every form of slavery.

(12) The habit of sinning - and thus we see Pride's full and ugly flower: habitual sin and slavery to sin. As St. Augustine says, *For of a forward will, was a lust made; and a lust served, became custom; and custom not resisted, became necessity.* (Conf 8.5.10) And thus we have climbed in twelve steps the mountain of pride. It begins in the mind with a lack of sobriety rooted in sinful curiosity and frivolous preoccupation. Next come frivolous behavior and excusing, presumptive and dismissive attitudes. Last comes out right revolt and slavery to sin. Pride is now in full flower. The slavery comes for if one refuses in pride to serve God he will serve Satan.

We have seen an escalation in these steps which is not far from an old admonition: sow a thought, reap a deed; sow a deed, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character, sow a character, reap a destiny.

12 Steps Out of Pride and into Humility

1) Fear of God - to fear the Lord is **to hold God in awe. It is to be filled with wonder and awe at all God has done, and who he is.** Cringing, servile fear is not counseled here. Rather, the fear rooted in love and deep reverence for God is what begins to bring us down the mountain of pride. It is a look to God, and away from ourselves and our egocentric tendencies, that begins to break our pride. **Scripture says To fear the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 9:10). To fear the Lord is to turn to the Lord, seeking answers, seeking meaning, realizing that in God is all wisdom and knowledge. To fear the Lord is to hunger and thirst for his truth and righteousness. To fear the Lord is to look outside and upward from myself to God. Here begins our journey down the mountain of pride, a simple and loving look to God who alone can set us free from the slavery that pride and sinfulness created for us.**

(2) Abnegation of self-will – In the garden, Jesus said to his father, **Father, not as I will, but as you will (Lk 22:42).** And this is what abnegation of the will means. **It is to be WILLING TO SURRENDER**

MY WILL TO GOD's WILL, to subsume my decisions under his. Pride demands to do what it pleases, and to determine whether it is right or wrong. But in this stage of humility I am willing to look to God. The Saints say, "If God wants it, I want it. If God doesn't want it, I don't want it." The prideful person says "How come I can't have it? It's not so bad. Everybody else is doing it." But on the journey away from pride, and having come to a fear of the Lord, now the 'we' are more joyfully ready to listen to God, and to submit his vision will for us.

(3) Obedience - And now, having obtained to a more humble disposition of heart, **we are more capable and wiling to obey.** Obedience moves from the hearing to the heeding of God's word, of God's holy will, and of being willing to surrender our stubborn wills. **We are made ready, by God's grace, to execute that will, to obey and put into action the will of God.** And thus the descent of the mountain of pride **begins a pace, toward the freedom of the children of God, little by little.**

(4) Patient endurance - Embarking on this journey down the mountain of pride and striving to hear and understand God's will and to obey him, one can **surely expect obstacles both internally and externally.** **Our flesh, that is, our sin nature, does not simply and wholeheartedly surrender, but continues to battle. Our flesh resists prayer, resists being submitted to anything other than his own wishes and desires.** And thus, **INTERNALLY** we suffer resistance from our sinful nature. **But little by little we gain greater self-discipline and authority over our unruly passions. This is truly a struggle, requiring patience, and an enduring spirit and will.** **EXTERNALLY** too, we often encounter resistance as we try to come down from the mountain of pride. Perhaps old friends seek to seduce us back to former ways. **The structures of our pride remain standing; structures such as willfulness, self-reliance, powerful positions, etc., continue to draw us away from our intentions to come down the mountain of pride and further embrace humble submission to God.** Perhaps the world continues to demand that we think and act out of old categories that are not of God, and still hold us bound to some extent. Patient endurance is often required to see such things born away. Yes, it often takes years of patient and persistent action, even decades, for the sinful world dominated by structures of sin and rebellion, to lose its grip on us.

(5) Disclosure of the heart - Perhaps the most humble journey, as we come down the mountain of pride, is the journey into our wounded hearts. Scripture says, **More tortuous than all else is the human heart; beyond remedy; who can understand it? I, alone, the LORD, explore the mind and test the heart (Jer 17:10).** To make this journey, requires a lot of humility as we see our sinful drives, and also many misplaced priorities. We must often uncover unpleasant memories, and even trauma from the past, that we have experienced or have inflicted on others. And in that place of our heart we are called to repentance and to