



Misguided Pride

by Lisa Suuppi, Lapeer, Michigan

The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, in your lofty dwelling, who say in your heart, "Who will bring me down to the ground?" (Obadiah 1:3)

Pride ... what a complicated emotion! Pride can be a positive thing: pride in your kids, pride in your work, even pride in what your church does to help the needy in your community. Those are all good things.

Yet pride can also be destructive. When people stop giving glory to God for their abilities or good fortune and start thinking it's all about them, pride turns ugly. It can destroy friendships, marriages, and even churches.

As a worship minister, I've seen the effects of misdirected pride. I've seen elders, those who are called to humbly serve the Lord, let power and authority go to their heads. I've seen ministers who think the growth in the church is all because of them, while disregarding God's hand in it. I've seen people on a worship team try to sing louder or play louder than everyone else because of their misguided pride.

Some time ago, our team was practicing before a Sunday morning service. One of our team members, who is normally very helpful and accommodating, came in with an attitude. Sarcastic comments were made regarding the songs for the service that morning and about the way I was conducting practice. I was bothered by this, but let it go to focus on things more pressing before worship began.

During service, the music was going fine ... until this same person decided to change some notes and go off in a different direction from everyone else, an off-key direction at that. Fortunately, I work with very gifted people who were able to stay on track.

I was really bugged! What was up with this person? It was so out of character. It took a little while, but then I understood. This person had brought a guest to church, and the attitude was just to "show off" for them. The focus on Jesus had been lost. Pride had crept in. Worship that should have been all about God, had now become, at least for that person, all about them.

It caused me to start thinking. How often have I done prideful things in worship to bring glory to myself? Have I chosen certain songs for worship to please people, rather than to please God? How often have I been more focused on making a guest minister happy with the worship set, rather than making sure God was happy? How often have I chosen songs that make the team sound awesome, rather than songs that are spiritually deep and glorifying to Him?

It's an easy trap to fall into. When you're in front of people, it's not unusual for compliments to be given about your instrumental talent or your vocal abilities. Worship starts to be a time of "see me" instead of "see *Christ through me*." Before you know it, the focus is on you instead of on Him. You may not see it in yourself, but others do.

I can't say I've been free from the sin of misguided pride, but I have learned to combat it. When putting a service together, I ask God to guide me. So, if every song that is chosen is not on my top-ten favorites list, it doesn't matter. It's *His* service. When I receive compliments personally or about the worship, I always say, "Thank you." Later, though, I give the greater thanks to *Him* for what He does through me. And always, before service begins, the team prays for His leading, and for God to be glorified.

Keep misguided pride under control by remembering it's *not* about you. It's *all* about *Him*.

Father God, thank You for the abilities and talents with which You've blessed us. Let us use them to serve You, to glorify You, and to honor You ... and You alone. May the only pride in our hearts be of knowing and serving You as our Lord. As You have blessed us with these abilities, may we, in turn, use them to be a blessing to You. In Jesus' Name we ask this. Amen.

GOING DEEPER:

1. Have you ever struggled with misguided pride?
2. If yes, how did you realize there was an issue? Did you discover it on your own? Did another person bring it to your attention (lovingly or unlovingly)? Or did God somehow make you aware of it?
3. If you saw someone on your team struggling with misguided pride, would you be willing to go to them and talk about it?