



Three Habits of Highly Destructive People: Pride of Life (1 John 2:15-17)

How do you keep score in life? We all select some sort of measurement of success that drives our behavior. It might be money, accolades, assets, degrees, vacations, or even our good works. When we keep score of our success by standards that are diametrically opposed to God's, we focus on measuring our record of achievement by boasting about what we have and what we do.

The Apostle John called this the boastful pride of life, the third of three habits of highly destructive people: "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:15-17 NASB). The NIV refers to the boastful pride of life as "the boasting of what he has and does."

Pride is the lock on the human heart; humility is the key.

The Sand and Stone of Pride

Pride is a hard heart, one that makes itself higher than others. We find it in two forms: a heart of *sand* or a heart of *stone*.

A *sand* heart partially surrenders the horizontal at the expense of the vertical. It focuses on people and tasks rather than on God. This is license. A heart of sand is loose and scattered; it requires a storm to be shaped and restored.

A *stone* heart partially surrenders the vertical at the expense of the horizontal. It focuses on God rather than on others. This is legalism—the thought that one can manipulate the deity of the universe through the actions and activities of our lives. A stone heart is hard. It requires tooling by a sharp instrument to be shaped and restored.

Ironically, both sand and stone are the same substance, just a different aggregate. In its essence, sand is just tiny pieces of crumbled up stone. However, neither a heart of sand or a heart of stone reflect the design of the Designer who is also our Restorer. Sand hearts and stone hearts break apart the vertical from the horizontal, creating four walls that form a prison. The result is the incarceration of pride.

The Master Key of Full Surrender

The Master Key that fully surrenders our hearts, desires, and lives to the Restorer is cross-shaped; this is the perfect picture of the vertical intersecting with the horizontal. The vertical axis is our relationship with God. The horizontal axis is our relationship with people. In order to fully surrender the Master Key into the lock of pride on the human heart, one must humble his heart vertically to God, and horizontally to others.



Christ the Designer (Colossians 1:16) and Restorer (Colossians 1:19) holds the restoring key of David that unlocks the kingdom of heaven. What He opens, no one can shut; what He shuts, no one can open (Revelation 3:7). He has unlocked the door to abundant and eternal restoration to those who humble their hearts, desires, and the three resources of life—time, talent, and treasure—to Him. For those who choose to live in their pride and reject Him, the door will remain closed on this side of life and the next. In order to discover who God created us to be, we must gather the courage to travel into the mystery that God will reveal to us as He unlocks the condition of our hearts, our desires, and our three resources of life, for the advancement of His kingdom.

A Clay Heart

A *clay* heart lives in the sweet spot where the vertical intersects with the horizontal—where our relationship with God intersects with our relationships with others. A heart of clay is a humble heart. The words “humility” and “humanity” come from the same Latin word, *humus*, which means “from the ground.” Humility involves bending the knee. It means “to make ourselves lower than.” Consequently, humility always has an object.

Whereas a sand heart is a picture of license, requiring a storm to be fashioned, and a stone heart is a picture of legalism, requiring a severe tool to be shaped, a heart of clay is a picture of love. It’s a heart that is malleable in the hands of its gracious Designer. While all three substances come from the ground, the heart of clay is void of meaning unless it is shaped and restored by the heart and hands of the Designer.

CLAY is an acronym that helps us remember how to live with a humble heart. First, we *confess* to God our proud sinful hearts of sand or stone. Second, we *learn* His design for our lives from the Bible. Third, we *apply* what we learn from the Scriptures to our daily tasks and relationships. Fourth, we *yield* the outcomes to God. A clay heart experiences the design of the Designer through full surrender.

The heart of the Designer, the One we desire to emulate, is clay. His deep desire is to restore all that He has designed. As the Designer, he understands the pattern that he has built into humanity—the pattern that has been damaged by sin. As the Restorer, He is the embodiment of a clay heart, of the vertical axis intersecting with the horizontal axis. He walked the earth as fully God and fully man. He is the authentic picture of a humble heart that fully surrenders everything in communion with the Father and at the same time humbly surrenders everything in community with others. He has restored the vertical (God with man) and the horizontal (man with man). He invites each of us to be restored to authenticity, to the unique expression of the Designer in us.



The Pursuit of Wisdom

Money is pride's measurement of our giftedness (time, talent, and treasure). Wisdom is humility's measurement of our godliness (Christ in us). Although the Bible often comments on money, it is the latter commodity that we are advised to pursue repeatedly throughout Scripture.

Wisdom is the intersection of the vertical with the horizontal. It is God's heart (vertical) combined with street smarts (horizontal). Wisdom applies one's relationship with God to one's relationships with others, including the tasks to be achieved. We were designed to have a heart for wisdom (Proverbs 3:5-6; 22:17-18). We were designed to desire wisdom (Proverbs 3:15). We were designed to pursue wisdom with our three resources of life (Proverbs 4:7). Wisdom begins with a humble, malleable, clay-like heart toward God (Proverbs 1:7; 11:2; 22:4).

Thousands of years ago, Jewish Rabbis searched for the ultimate word to describe God. They chose "wisdom." Wisdom resides in a person in whom the vertical perfectly intersects with the horizontal. Christ the Restorer is the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). Christ is the authenticity of God (Hebrews 1:3). He is humble in heart (Matthew 11:29). Humility toward him is the beginning of His wisdom in our lives (Proverbs 11:2).

Foolishness is the opposite of wisdom. It is derived from a proud heart. It begins as wet cement and progressively hardens like cured concrete. A stone heart is foolish. A sand heart is foolish. The two substances added together form a concrete mix that imprisons us in lives filled with pride instead of humility, and foolishness instead of wisdom. In our pride, we foolishly pretend that the satisfaction of our desires will occur through the pursuit of more time, talent, and treasure apart from God. The result is a life of pride, pretense, and foolishness that leaves us unrestored and dissatisfied.

Street Smarts for The Restoration Road

Fully surrender the stone and sand in your heart of pride for Christ's heart of humility, His heart of CLAY. Confess your pride. Learn His design for your life by starting each day with reading the Bible. Apply what you learn to your tasks and relationships. Yield the outcomes to God. Humbly exchange the scorecard of your life from money or your false measurement of choice to the pursuit of God's wisdom. He will make you new again.