

Additional Remedies

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[0:00] Well, we're continuing our study through Lou Priolo's book, *Pleasing People*.! You might recall the first seven chapters, probably didn't know how many there were, but the first seven chapters we focused on our people-pleasing problem.

And the last six chapters of the book are devoted to God's solution, which in a nutshell is to become a God-pleaser. And we also learned that sin, the sin that is at the root of people-pleasing is what? What sin is at the root of people-pleasing? Pride. That's right, pride. So this morning, we're going to be considering six remedies for this poison of pride.

Six remedies for the poison of pride. Or as Priolo puts it, six antidotes. So the first, don't overvalue friendships.

Friendships. Don't overvalue friendships. Friendships are important. They're vital to the Christian life and walk. And in fact, they're even commended by God.

[1:08] Listen to Proverbs 27, 9 and 10. Or Proverbs 17, 17.

Or Proverbs 17, 17. In fact, most of us need more and deeper friendships.

So what makes a friendship wrong? Well, it becomes wrong when it becomes idolatrous. And what makes something idolatry?

Well, God tells us in the Ten Commandments, doesn't he? Thou shalt have no other gods before me. It's when we put something above God that it becomes idolatrous. So as it relates to friendship, such idolatry can be expressed through the craving of the friendship, fear of losing friends, allowing friendships to drag us into sin or flirting even closer to the world, and failure to confront friends over sin.

These are all just examples of how friendships can become idolatry for the Christian. When I remain loyal to a friend as they practice their worldliness, I have by definition become an enemy of God.

[2:28] James 4, 4, you adulterous people. Don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

I'd like your participation in this next question. How can I know when friendships are becoming idolatrous? What are things I may or may not do that would warn of possible idolatry?

Think a moment on that. How can I know when my friendships are becoming idolatrous? What are things I may or may not do that would warn of possible idolatry? I'm afraid to witness to a friend.

Very good. I'm afraid to witness to a friend. I'm sure we have all experienced that far too frequently. What else?

I have to sin in order to participate in the friendship. Pardon? I have to sin in order to participate in the friendship. I'm back.

[3:36] Ready to tell your friend what the Lord has done to you in your life? Okay. Fear of telling to the friend what the Lord has done in your life.

You know, I struggle with this much. Where if I am here in the lobby and the Lord has done something for me, it naturally flows from my lips.

I don't want to tell someone else about it. And yet, standing there with a group of people I'm working with, when I would naturally just, what wants to flow out of my heart, it's almost like there's something within me that wants to bottle it up and not say what naturally would come forth in wanting to just praise God for what he has done.

What else? Something Priolo pointed out that I had not thought about is weak doctrinal beliefs. Weak doctrinal beliefs.

He comments on this point. Our churches are full of cowardly Christians who will not objectively study the scriptures because they are afraid they might change their views and consequently face rejection from their family, friends, and church leaders.

[4:55] Well, closely linked to this first antidote for the poison of pride is the second, which is avoid friendships with flatterers. Avoid friendships with flatterers.

I want you to think of one or two people that you would consider good friends. Conversely, I want you to think of someone to whom you are a good friend.

Have someone in mind? So when is the last time your friend, the one you consider a good friend, corrected, reproved, rebuked, or otherwise exposed your sin so that you were able to see it?

Conversely, when's the last time you've done the same for them? When is the last time you have reproved or rebuked them such that they're able to see their own sin?

When's the last time your friend has told you what you've needed to hear rather than what you've wanted to hear? Well, the flesh would much rather surround itself with flatterers and be a flatterer than to take sometimes that hard road of truth and love.

[6:25] The medicine for pride at first isn't necessarily going to sting and go down hard. It's going to cause pain and discomfort and will not be a pleasant experience for either the patient or the doctor.

It often must slice deeply in order to cut out that festering infection of the proud heart. And it's even going to have to inflict wounds in order to cut away those tumors.

No friendship is true that does not attend to their friend's greatest needs. Well, the opposite of true friendship is flattery. And yet it is the flatterer that the approval junkie craves.

Listen to Proverbs 29.5. Whoever flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his feet. Priolo comments, When you're dealing with an approval junkie, his pride blinds him to the flatterer's danger.

He doesn't see the trap because he craves the bait that is in the trap. He continues, How much wisdom is there in hanging out with a person you know is going to set a booby trap for you?

[7:29] Do you really want to be a friend with a minor league terrorist? A logical antidote for pride, therefore, is to avoid friendships with flatterers.

Psalms 101.7, No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house. No one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence. David would not keep close company with flatterers and liars, and neither should we.

Instead, we should purpose to surround ourselves with wise men and women who are not afraid to humble us with the truth, rather than puffing us up with flattery.

Are you a flatterer? Or are you a true friend to those who would call you their friend? Well, our third antidote for the poison of pride is to learn contentment.

To learn contentment. We must learn to be content with the condition and proportion that God has given us. How is learning contentment an antidote for pride?

[8:36] What does contentment have to do with pride? Yes? It's the opposite. Contentment is he can come who is something and embrace what God has given you.

But pride is the opposite of that. Pride is not expecting you. Very good. So, pride expects much. Because it thinks highly of itself, so it's going to expect much, right?

Humility is going to expect little. And therefore, it's going to be content with little. Priolo states, If the essence of people-pleasing pride is covetous lust for others to esteem us above and beyond the condition and proportion that God has appointed for us, then the essence of God-pleasing humility is contentment with the condition and proportion that God has appointed for us.

Of course, the classic passage on contentment in our Bibles is Philippians 4, 11, and 12, where Paul says, I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

[9:54] Since Paul was content regardless of his circumstances, I think it's obvious that his circumstances weren't part of the secret of contentment, the secret of contentment equation that Paul is speaking of here.

How different it is for the natural man. Let me ask again, what are some things that can often affect our contentedness?

Think about what causes you on a daily basis to become discontent. What are some areas? Let's be honest. Not having our dream job.

Who else? Just shout them out. Not having our dream children. Poor health. I get frustrated when the things that I'm accustomed to working with break.

Okay, very good. If you didn't hear in the back, the things that we're accustomed to having work, they break. Yes. You can ask our family about that with our changed phone service.

[11:09] What else? I'm just going to comment. I don't think I've... I've heard so many times on the Christian radio, God describes someone who wants to grab our dreams and that kind of stuff.

I think that just generates a lot of discontent. Very good. That's another I had not thought of. So could I state that as wrong beliefs? Wrong beliefs about the truth.

Anybody become frustrated about your lack of abilities in certain areas? Frustrated because of a lack of things?

Wanting more or different types of things? Better things? Do conflicts with people ever frustrate us? Jim.

Pardon? Reoccurring sin. Didn't have much time to think about this, so I'm writing a lot of yours down.

[12:24] Reoccurring sin. Very good. Someone infringing on your territory. Somebody infringing on your territory. Okay. Okay. Now I want to ask, why is it that these temporal circumstances and changes affect our contentment?

And I'd like to allow Thomas Watson to answer it. Essentially, it's because our inclinations have been affected by the fall. He says, and he uses the Old English term fancy to describe this concept. It is the fancy which raises the price of things above their real worth. What is the reason one tulip is worth five pounds, another perhaps not worth one shilling?

Fancy raises the price. The difference is rather imaginary than real. So why should it be better to have thousands than hundreds? It's because men fancy it so.

If we could fancy a lower condition better, as having less care in it and less accountability, it would be far more desirable. The water that springs out of the rock drinks as sweet as if it came out of the golden chalice.

[13:34] Things are as we fancy them. Ever since the fall, the fancy is distempered. God saw that the imagination of the thoughts of his heart were evil. Fancy looks through the wrong spectacles.

Pray that God will sanctify your fancy. A lower condition would make us content if the mind and fancy were set correctly.

Another reason that contentment is an antidote for pride is going back to what Karen said, and that is that contentment flows from humility. Have you ever noticed that there aren't many rich kids that are happy and content?

Have you also observed from your own heart that the more you are lifted up, even if just in your own mind, the more discontent you become? On the other hand, who are some of the most contented people in the world?

Are they not usually those who are least important and have the fewest toys? Their lowly position fosters a spirit with few expectations. I'll never forget the time my wife and I went.

[14:47] I believe it was our first... No, it wasn't the first, but it was soon after our marriage, one of our first hotel stays. And I splurged, and we stayed at one of the most expensive hotels in Ann Arbor.

Well, after we arrived, we quickly became disappointed. The towels were raggedy. The room wasn't as big as I had hoped. The shower barely got you wet, let alone gave you a massage.

There was grime in the corners. As we became more and more discontent, I remember thinking that if I paid a Super 8 price, we probably both would have been perfectly happy.

But because I paid many times more than that, our expectations have been raised proportionally.

Well, humility works like that. The higher my view of self, the more I'm going to struggle with discontentment.

After all, I deserve better. I'm of too much worth to be the recipient of these circumstances.

Conversely, if I have a low view of self, I won't have much in the way of expectations for the treatment and circumstances that are coming my way.

[15:58] Like the raggedy old towel on the budget end, anything negative that happens is only expected, and in fact, better than I deserve. And anything that is pleasant is undeserved.

It's a gracious surprise. The application's obvious. How easily does life's circumstances cause your contentment to fly away? I wonder, have we considered that our discontented responses are really

just an outside indicator of pride that's lurking within?

Conversely, a thankful spirit naturally flows from a humble heart because it rightly interprets all as undeserved grace. While thanklessness exposes a heart that believes these graces to be deserved, so a discontented, thankless heart betrays one who is full of pride and conceitedness. Well, in the next antidote for the poison of pride, I'd like to explore more deeply Thomas Watson's idea of fancy. The fourth point is this.

Realign your values to God's values. Realign your values to God's values. The old English idea behind the word fancy is summed up by the American Heritage Dictionary's fourth and fifth definitions.

[17 : 22] A capricious liking or inclination, critical sensibility, taste. In other words, what is it that you value? One's core values will likely be reflected through their outward pursuits.

How do we pursue good standing with others? There are really only two options. We can either do it through Christian character or through temporal traits and or accomplishments.

Things like good looks, well-toned body, athletic ability, worldly position, either at work or within other organizations, ownership of a company or business, wealth, fame, accomplishments and degrees, intellectual prowess, spiritual gifts and abilities, our standing within the church, yes, even our ministries.

So as to not overstate the case, the pursuit of many of these things are not wrong and in fact are even commended by God. Listen to 1 Timothy 3.1. Here is a trustworthy saying, if anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.

It isn't the pursuit of certain things that usually gets us in trouble, rather it's the motive behind the pursuit. When we're pursuing temporal traits and accomplishments because they're an end in themselves in order to cause us to be lifted up, it doesn't really matter whether I give up my body to be burned, it's still going to be all worthless for nothing.

[18 : 56] And of course, that idea is taken from 1 Corinthians 13, where Christian character, true love, is set up against earthly accomplishments, many of which outwardly are very noble.

So which of these two areas, Christian character or temporal traits accomplishments, is to be our primary pursuit and or motivator? Listen to 1 Timothy 4.7 and 8.

Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

Every good Christian is going to probably sit here and say, oh yes, Christian character, your Christ-likeness. That's what matters most to me. But how can I know which area is really my point of focus?

What is it that I truly value? How can I cut through all my self-deception and really know what is of importance to me in my heart of hearts? Well, there's many ways to expose one's true motives and values.

[20 : 03] I'd like to consider one of them briefly in this point and then look at the second one in our fifth point. First, a way to know what I truly value is to answer the question, how do I respond to circumstances?

Would you be crushed if you overheard someone commenting about how ugly you are or fat or weak or homely or hairless?

You see, our responses provide a fairly accurate reading of what I'd like to call our value thermometer in a particular area. I could have a turkey in the oven and when I plunge a thermometer into it, it's going to give me a reading, a temperature reading, of what it's warmed up to inside.

And if I'm putting on a big spread, I might have a duckling in another oven and a goose in a third oven and I'm going to need a separate thermometer for each and each of them is going to tell me what the temperature is for, yes, they're all birds, for those birds.

Well, so it is with us and what we value. There's many ways we can expose my true motives and values.

[21 : 26] Allow me to illustrate how the value thermometer works. If someone sought to belittle you by accusing you of having a disconnected earlobe, would it bother you a whole lot?

Would you be crushed to learn of your supposed deficiency? Would you be lying awake at night wondering how to overcome this serious flaw? for those of you that don't know, some of us have connected earlobes, superior ones like me, and others have disconnected earlobes.

Or would you verbalize or at least think to yourself, what an idiot. Whether or not I have a connected or disconnected earlobe has nothing to do with anything. This guy's got a serious problem. He's in need. I need to send him to a psychiatrist or something. But you wouldn't lay awake sleepless at night wondering how to overcome the deficiencies because you have placed no value on whether or not you have a connected or disconnected earlobe.

The point is that there is no emotional handle that a person can use against you over whether your earlobes are connected or not because it's not something you've placed any value in. On the other hand, those things for which you've placed some or much value will render an appropriately proportional response to the way and effect in which it touches you.

[22 : 58] So bringing it more into the realm of reality, if I view my worth as a person as having nothing to do with my level of physical strength, then I'm not going to feel degraded were I to be ridiculed for a lack of strength or for being weak.

In the same way as I'd feel little emotional response if I am accused of having a connected earlobe in my case. If on the other hand my relative level of physical strength is important to me, my level of sensitivity to the degrading thereof is going to again be proportional to how important it is of me. Picture the different emotional responses that a high school boy friend and girlfriend would have if they happened to do an arm wrestling match, something I would not advise for any young man, and the girl happened to lose the arm wrestling match, what do you think her emotional response would be?

Well, if she's like most young women, probably her value system is not built around being physically stronger than her boyfriend, and so it probably wouldn't bother her a whole lot.

Now, you flip the scenario and you think, what if the guy lost that arm wrestling match? I would venture to say that his response is going to be far different because, at least in our society, there is quite a bit of value that's placed around that young man being stronger, or so he thinks.

[24 : 29] If I place great value in intellectual ability, I may be crushed to learn that people believe me to be stupid. And so on it goes. The point of all this is to discern whether our values are the same as God's values.

Until I can see my problem, I won't be able to do anything about it. So are God's values truly my values? Listen to 1 Samuel 16, 7. But the Lord said to Samuel, Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him.

The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. If we truly value what God values, not the outward appearance and accomplishments, but the inner qualities of a meek and humble spirit, then our emotional value thermometer will remain under control when we are attacked or humanly devalued in these areas that God places no value.

Conversely, our hearts will be rightly pricked and smitten when deficiencies are exposed that are of high importance to God. So if you've used your value thermometer this morning and found yourself to be wanting in at least one area, what are you to do?

What do we do about misplaced values? Well, misplaced values are the result of propaganda from the world, the devil, and the flesh that has led us to wrong beliefs.

[25 : 57] As with all areas of sin, the antidote is truth, for it is the truth that will set you free. We must stop our wrong thinking and replace it with proper thinking that meditates on God's values.

We must preach truth to ourselves and expose, through God's word, those lies flowing from without and from within. For example, the lie that beauty is what is of real value and what really matters.

Let me just pause to state for clarity that every one of us is proud because we're sinners. We sin because we're sinners and we're proud because we have sinful hearts.

There can be no antidote for pride, nothing we've said this morning is going to matter without the saving grace of God that first transforms the heart and makes one into a new creation.

All of these antidotes assume that this transforming work of God has already begun. The Christian then by faith and the grace of God works through the power of God to put to death the misdeeds of the flesh by daily applying a truth of God's word to his life.

[27 : 10] So then, how will aligning my values to what pleases God become an antidote for pride? Because pride flows out of misplaced values. If I mistakenly take credit for my skills talents, looks, and accomplishments, in valuing these things, I will naturally boast and feel good about myself because of them.

And if I naturally have strong reactions and responses when one of these areas of misplaced value is attacked or belittled, then I'm going to know that that is an area through my value thermometer that needs work.

If on the other hand I begin valuing what God values, little room will be left for pride, I will begin coveting and fostering inner attitudes of meekness, humility, brokenness, weakness, and dependency.

All attitudes which are the antithesis of pride. Well, this brings us to the fifth antidote for the poison of pride. Learn to glory in your weaknesses.

Learn to glory in your weaknesses. Putting this in terms of values, in the previous point, we said that I can identify my true values by considering my responses, reactions to circumstances, and criticisms.

[28:31] This point asks the opposite question. What is it that I glory in or boast about? I've been known to boast about my athletic achievements, probably because they're so few and far between.

It's quite common to hear people boasting about their accomplishments. We usually do all such boasting in a skilled and subtle way so that even ourselves don't recognize the blatant pride that feeds our words.

If you're of the quieter disposition, you would probably never imagine bragging about yourself. So let me help you identify a more subtle and internal form of boasting of which we're all guilty.

What aspects about yourself do you gain pleasure in by replaying it back in your mind? As you think about your actions or attitudes or words or accomplishments, what things do you keep going back to?

What brings a smile to your face, or at least to your heart, as you think about yourself? Was it your good looks that were celebrated in some way by others?

[29:40] Was it your physical agility that won the day? Was it a particular cunning answer you gave during a debate with a co-worker? Was it how you made everyone laugh or how everyone thought you were the life of the party?

Was it an especially polished and impressive presentation that blew away the competition? Or was it your own weakness exposed which caused God alone to receive all the glory?

What do we play back in our minds? That gives us an indicator of what it is we truly are boasting in and therefore valuing. Listen to a few verses that espouse God's values and consider how our pride will be smothered once we take on his values and make them our own.

Lamentations 3, 27-30 It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young. Let him sit alone in silence for the Lord has laid it on him. Let him bury his face in the dust there may yet be hope.

Let him offer his cheek to the one who would strike him and let him be filled with disgrace. Later it says, For the Lord does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.

[30:56] It is he who brings these things to us and thus brings us low because that is what he values. Psalm 34-18 The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

And then Jesus' words, Matthew 5-5 Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.

But we cannot just stop putting value in the wrong things. It's impossible to stop valuing one thing without replacing it with a different value system.

I can't just say I'm going to stop glorifying or glorying in the deeds of my flesh. We can't just live in a vacuum, a value vacuum.

We must replace pleasure in our pride and strength with pleasure in something else. What was it that Paul replaced it with? 2 Corinthians 12-9-10 said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

[32:08] Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. For when I am weak, then I am strong. I cannot improve on Priolo's commentary on this passage.

Paul boasted about the very things by which most of us are embarrassed. weaknesses, insults, distresses, persecutions, and difficulties. Rather than wanting to appear strong, he longed to appear weak, so that God's strength would be seen at work in his life.

He didn't want to promote himself, but Christ, so he magnified his weakness in the eyes of others, that they might see the glory of God.

I'm never going to stop glorying in my weaknesses, if I'm not keeping ever before my eyes the value for doing so. This means that with each humbling circumstance, I must be preaching to myself the value of that circumstance, and as I do so, I'm going to slowly begin reprogramming my responses to actually glorying my weaknesses, and become cautiously fearful about my perceived strengths. What are some reasons for boasting in weaknesses and insults and distresses and persecutions and difficulties? I was going to open this up, but we're lacking in time, so I'll just give you a few.

[33 : 35] It is when I am weak and crushed and brokenhearted that the Lord draws close to me. Well, isn't that a wonderful thing to be weak over, to have the Lord draw close to me?

It's when I'm poor in spirit that the blessing of God rests on me. Do I want the blessing of God? God, then it's as circumstances come that make me poor in spirit that I'm going to find that blessing from God as I allow the circumstances to make me poor in spirit.

Such experiences will enable me to encourage others in the Lord. God is teaching me to rely on Him through such circumstances. Listen to how Paul reasoned out the value of his weaknesses to not only bring encouragement to his own soul but also to the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 1, 8, and 9. We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure far beyond our ability to endure so that we despaired even of life.

Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened, that we might not rely on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead.

[34 : 49] You see how Paul thought through his bad circumstances and saw the good in them that God was bringing about because that good was lining up with what God truly values.

And what God truly valued was that Paul would begin relying on Him and not on his own flesh. Let me also point out that glorying and weakness become sickly and perverted if it stops there.

We've all known people who lives their lives with a woe-on-me attitude. It's ugly and ultimately self-centered. Yes, I am weak, but when I am weak, I become strong as I learn to rely not on myself but on God who raises the dead.

The purpose for all self-abasement is to become absorbed in Christ and His glory, power, and strength. Well, the flip side of learning to glory in your weakness is to learn to glorify God for your strengths, and that is our final point.

I believe it's our final point. Yes. Learn to glorify God for your strengths. I like what Priolo says here. While the realization of God-given strength is not necessarily pride, the propensity to use it in dependence on the flesh or for fleshly purposes or with fleshly motives necessarily is.

[36 : 14] God-given God-given God-given God-given! I will then be free to recognize and use the truly marvelous strengths and gifts that God has given me.

I will cease being embarrassed by those abilities because I will understand that they're not my own. They're a gift from God. And they have been leased to me by God for a specific purpose.

And that purpose is the doing of his preordained work. Ephesians 2.10 For we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Do we realize that a response of embarrassment to a compliment is often just a subtle expression of pride? Why should I be embarrassed over a skill or personality or ability that is not my own but that was fully given to me by my God for the service of his creatures?

Who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it why do you boast as though you did not? Why am I embarrassed when I am praised as if what is being complimented were my own possession?

[37 : 31] If I were about to die but a dear friend donated an organ to me and somebody were to stop by the next day and say boy you're looking so good today would I be embarrassed by such a compliment?

Or would I instinctively heap praise upon my dear friend who gave so much that I might live? When someone comes by and says you're such a good piano player or you're such a good manager or you're such a marvelous mechanic you're such a gifted hostess fill in the blank is not embarrassment over such compliments really just exposing a heart that has secretly assumed credit for those gifts and accomplishments?

If however I'm overwhelmingly convinced that all such abilities have been received from God my instinctive response will be a heart of thanksgiving and praise to him for enabling me to serve him and to do good to others through their usage.

We can't end this without addressing the how question. How do I learn to glorify God for my strengths? Well this brings us back to that single word thankfulness.

Thankfulness Priolo says is the key to keeping your strengths in proper biblical perspective.

Thanking God regularly for the gifts and abilities he has given you will help you remember where they came from and safeguard your heart from proudly misusing them.

[39:09] Each time I feel the ugly head of pride rising from within my heart I should use it as a call to thankful prayer. Whenever I experience success of any kind it should be a call to thank the giver of the success.

When a particular skill reaps me great reward I need to thankfully return to God who is both the giver of the gift and the skill and the reward.

Priolo continues and when you consider that he has placed all these treasures and more in such a weak and wretched vessel as yourself it should further humble you and motivate you to glorify him.

I'm not one that makes much of parallel passage references but I found the parallelism between 1 Corinthians 4.7 and 2 Corinthians 4.7 helpful.

Again we just read 1 Corinthians 4.7 for who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it why do you boast as though you did not?

[40:16] And 2 Corinthians 4.7 5.7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from ourselves.

Everything we have and are aside from our sin has been received from God and these treasures have been put in clay jars for a purpose.

That purpose is that it would be evident to all that this all surpassing power is from God and not from ourselves which will result in God justly receiving all the praise and honor and glory for all the good deeds done in my flesh through his blessed power and for his name.

Amen.