Level 2 Lesson 1

SELF-CENTEREDNESS
By Andrew Wommack

Self-centeredness is the source of so much of what we experience. There is a verse in Proverbs 13 that you really ought to look up, because you wouldn't believe it if you didn't read it in your own Bible. Verse 10 says, *"Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom."* Many people at first would take issue with this and say, "Wait a minute. Pride can't be the only thing that causes contention or strife. Proverbs 17:14 says that contention is the beginning of strife, so strife has to be caused by more than just pride. It's what so-and-so has done to me." Others will say, "You don't understand; this is just the type of person I am." No, the scripture says that *only* by pride comes contention. It's not one of the leading causes; it's the only cause. Some people again would take issue and say, "I've got all kinds of problems, but pride isn't one of them. If anything, I've got such low self-esteem, there's no way anybody can accuse me of pride."

We have to redefine what pride is. It's is not just thinking you're better than somebody else, but in the simplest terms, it is seeing yourself as the center of everything. Self-centeredness is really the root of all pride. In Numbers 12:2 Miriam and Aaron, Moses' sister and brother, came against him, criticizing him because of an interracial marriage, saying, *"Hath the Lord indeed spoken only to Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us?"* The Scripture then says in parentheses in verse 3 that Moses was the meekest man on the face of the earth. Instead of taking offense at what they said, he began to pray and intercede for them.

When it says Moses was the meekest man on the face of the earth, stop and think about that. We don't know how many people there were on earth, but surely there were millions, and Moses was the meekest man of all these people. What makes this a really amazing statement is that he was the one who wrote it. Most people think if you're truly humble or meek, you won't even know it. That's a false impression of what arrogance really is. Pride isn't just thinking you're better than everybody else—it's self-centeredness. It's like having a stick with arrogance on one side and low self-esteem on the other side. Those are opposite expressions of the same thing, but they're both on the same stick. It's self-centeredness. It doesn't matter if you think you're better than everyone else or worse than everyone else, you're absolutely self-centered. Everything gets filtered through that. A timid, shy person is very proud and self-centered, thinking only about self.

The point I'm making is that self-centeredness is really the root of all pride, and if you plug that back into Proverbs 13:10, *"Only by pride cometh contention,"* what this says is that it is our own self-centeredness that makes us angry, not what people do to us. It's our self-centeredness that causes us to react to what people do. You will never be able to stop people from rubbing you the wrong way; it can't happen. Faith is not to

control other people but to help you deal with yourself and deal with the things that are inside you. So it doesn't matter what people do to you.

As Jesus was being crucified, He was able to turn to the very people who were crucifying Him and say, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He didn't control those people but instead had control over Himself. It's self-centeredness that makes us angry. Jesus didn't come here for Himself, but He so loved the world that He came here for us. He thought of His mother as He hung on the cross and spoke to one of His disciples about taking care of her. The reason Jesus was able to forgive and operate in love—in the midst of intense agony, injustice, and everything that came His way—was because He was not self-centered.

It's your own selfishness that makes you angry, yet the Scripture says you're supposed to be dead to yourself. If I had a corpse in front of me, I could insult it, kick it, spit on it, or ignore it, but if it's truly a corpse, it wouldn't respond. The reason you respond the way you do to the things around you is not because of those external things but because of what's on the inside of you. You will never be so strong in faith that you can remove all obstacles and everything that rubs you the wrong way, but you can deal with yourself. You can come to a place where you make Jesus Lord of your life and love Him, His kingdom, and other people more than you love yourself. You'll find that when you do that and deal with self that the strife and contention in your life will cease.

One of the great keys for applying all of these things God has done in your life is to realize that He didn't give you the kingdom for selfish purposes. He didn't do these things just so you could have every need supplied. You need to learn it's in denying yourself and losing your life that you really begin to find out what life is all about. It's in loving other people and God more than yourself that you'll begin to defuse your anger and hurt, all those things that are inside you.

I pray that today God will take these few things I've said and use them to open your heart to realize that it's your own self-centeredness that causes you grief. Instead of placing the blame somewhere else, you need to accept the responsibility, face it, humble yourself before God, and ask Him to come in and make Himself big in your life. That's the way for you to walk in victory.

Discipleship Questions

1. Read Mark 9:33-34. What were the disciples arguing about on the road going to Capernaum? _____

2. Does this reflect the selfishness in all of us? _____

3. Read Mark 9:35. According to this scripture, if someone wants to be first, they must become what? _____

4. Explain in detail Jesus' teaching in Luke 22:24-27.

_____

5. Read Proverbs 13:10. What is the only thing that causes contention? _____

6. Read Galatians 2:20. How should we live our lives? _____

7. Read Matthew 7:12. What is the antidote for self-centeredness?

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Scriptures to Use with Questions

Mark 9:33-34 – "[33] *And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?* [34] *But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest."*

Mark 9:35 – *"And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all."*

Luke 22:24-27 – "[24] *And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.* [25] *And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.* [26] *But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.* [27] *For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth."*

Proverbs 13:10 – *"Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom."*

Galatians 2:20 – *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."*

Matthew 7:12 – *"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."*

Answer Key

1. Read Mark 9:33-34. What were the disciples arguing about on the road going to Capernaum? **They argued about who was the greatest.**

2. Does this reflect the selfishness in all of us? **Yes.**

3. Read Mark 9:35. According to this scripture, if someone wants to be first, they must become what? **Servant of all.**

4. Explain in detail Jesus' teaching in Luke 22:24-27. **"And they began to argue among themselves as to who would be the greatest in the coming Kingdom. Jesus told them, 'In this world the kings and great men order their people around, and yet they are called "friends of the people." But among you, those who are the greatest should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant. Normally the master sits at the table and is served by his servants. But not here! For I am your servant'" (Luke 22:24-27,** *New Living Translation***).**

5. Read Proverbs 13:10. What is the only thing that causes contention? **Pride.**

6. Read Galatians 2:20. How should we live our lives? **By the faith of Christ (or faith in Christ), not centered on our own strengths or weaknesses.**

7. Read Matthew 7:12. What is the antidote for self-centeredness? **To be God centered and others centered. Treat others like we want to be treated.**

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