



i

the root of sin
EXPOSED

Steve **Gallagher**

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i: the root of sin exposed

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endorsements

“There is a common thread that runs through every broken relationship, international war, church split, ministry scandal, or social conflict: Human pride. It is so insidious that we seldom see it in ourselves, so universal that no heart is immune, and so destructive that no nation is safe from its fury. While the topic of pride is central to the human condition, it is one of the least discussed sins in the Christian world. Steve Gallagher extracts the truth of this topic with the precision of a skilled surgeon. His goal is to identify the roots and fruits of this heart condition, that God truly hates, and enable us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to root it out and replace it with Christ’s humble nature. If you want to gain victory over sin, you will never be able to do so without dealing a death-blow to your pride. You need the truth contained in this book more than you need air, for it can save your very soul. This book is the definitive work on the topic of pride for our day. I highly recommend you read this vital work!”

Israel Wayne, Christian Worldview

“‘I can do all things.’ These five words introduce one of the most-often quoted verses from Scripture (Philippians 4:13) but they also form the thesis for one of the most toxic and least talked about issues in the American church—pride. In clear, direct language, Pastor Steve Gallagher surgically exposes the self-absorbed, ‘what’s in it for me’ attitude that lurks within every human heart. ‘I’ is a gut-punch to the selfie-soaked world we live in. Pastor Gallagher gives his readers a clear diagnosis for that which ails us and a posture for the cure: flat on our faces, bowed low before Almighty God.”

Chris McKenna, Covenant Eyes

“Searching in the Bible for the words ‘pride’ and ‘proud’ reveals a startling fact—the power of pride is the power of personal destruction. It has been said that the cross of Christ is the big ‘I’ crossed out. In this book, author Steve Gallagher faces the problem of the big ‘I’ and pride. This is a must read for pastors, biblical counselors, and others called to Christian ministry. It is also a place for those who suffer from personal destruction to begin the journey away from stumbling to one of victory through the cross of Christ.”

Dennis D. Frey, Th.D., President, Master's International University of Divinity

“Steve leaves no stone unturned. The only question you have to answer as you read this book is if you want to change. If you do, Steve’s book will help you accomplish that great goal. Steve tackles pride from every possible angle and follows the ‘put off’ section by giving you the Bible’s answer, which is the hope found in ‘putting on’ the humility of Christ. His book is full of Scripture, which will equip the new Christian while affirming the faith of the tenured soldier for Christ. You will not be disappointed for addressing our problem with pride.”

Rick Thomas, Author, Podcaster, and Speaker

“In *i: the root of sin exposed*, Steve Gallagher cuts through the thick of our sinful tendencies/habits and gets to the root of the matter by offering a lucid look at what separates us from enjoying our gracious God. In this book, Gallagher walks the reader through original pride/sin, explains how pride manifests itself in various ways, offers vivid examples from both Scriptural and modern times, warns of pride’s inevitable end, and offers the vital solution to our pride/sinful nature. This natural pride is humanity’s greatest delusion—the epitome of our deceptive nature—and is also the cause of our greatest destruction. If you are looking for a book with a biblical perspective on pride, I encourage you to read this enlightening book.”

Dr. Daniel R. Berger II, Author of *Mental Illness*
(Vol. 1-5), Director of Alethia International Ministries

“In Steve Gallagher’s new book, *i: the root of sin exposed*, the reader is introduced to the root of all sin: pride. He successfully shows how the faithful follower of Christ can change from one who worships self to one who pleases the Lord through a life of humility. By carefully defining his terms and illustrating the various forms pride takes, Gallagher helps those who truly want to follow Christ to enjoy a much closer relationship with God and thus fulfill the great commandment to love God with all that we are, heart, soul, mind and strength. I heartily recommend this book to every believer who desires to live to the glory of God.”

Bill Hines, D.Min., President, Covenant Ministries,
Inc. and Author of *Leaving Yesterday Behind:
A Victim No More*

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foreword

Christians and non-Christians alike have bought into the increasingly popular craze of self-aggrandizement. This multibillion-dollar-a-year industry promotes weight loss, dressing for success, positive thinking, developing a winning attitude and a plethora of other self-centered goals. Television and online ads relentlessly try to convince us we need their products in order to be happy, look good and achieve success. Nothing could be further from the truth!

I want to commend Steve Gallagher for speaking out against this tidal wave of deception that seeks to make *self* the ultimate object of our worship while reducing God to being our ultimate personal trainer. In recent years, the words *your destiny* have been preached, prophesied and promoted throughout the Body of Christ, to the point where self has become the center and focal-point of life rather than Christ and His Kingdom.

We've been deceived into believing that we are the most important people in the universe. This I, Me and My mentality has caused us to spend our lives on serving our own egos rather than Christ. Any message to the

contrary is labeled old-fashioned and met with hostility and rejection. “*Long live I!*” has become our new motto and creed. This is the diametric opposite of what Jesus said when He taught that the way to true happiness was to lose your life rather than seek to save it.

The Puritans had a saying: “Pride is the last thing to leave the heart but the first thing to return.” Pride truly is the mother of all sin. Lucifer, the anointed cherub of old, turned his eyes inward and began to admire his great beauty, power and wisdom. This eventually led him to believe he should be in charge of Creation rather than God. Little wonder that after a day of successful ministry, seeing demons cast out and bodies healed, Jesus warned His disciples not to glory in their newfound power and authority but to rejoice in the fact that their names were written in heaven. He then reminded them that He saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning. The clear implication was that the disciples had opened the door to the same dangerous pride that had caused Satan’s downfall.

i: the root of sin exposed delves into the root and fruit of evil in a way that very few books do. It is extremely rare to find any book dealing with the sin of pride. I appreciate Steve Gallagher’s willingness to expose this sin and show us how to achieve victory over it.

This book needs to be read at least once a year to remind us that Jesus said, “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me for I am meek and lowly in heart...”

David Ravenhill, Author, Itinerant Teacher
Siloam Springs, Arkansas



introduction

It was 1970 and I was 16-years-old. Two years of intense involvement with sexual sin and hardcore drugs had left me an emotional shambles. Then, as a juvenile delinquent, I found the Lord during the Jesus Movement.

I was excited about my newfound faith and threw myself into it with all my heart. During this time two important things occurred that would have a tremendous influence on my later years. First, I began reading the biographies of godly men of the past such as Jonathan Goforth, William Carey, and Hudson Taylor. The quality of their spiritual lives had a great and lasting impact on my perspective of Christianity. Second, the Lord called me into the ministry. Unfortunately, I was an emotional wreck and too young for Bible school. Over time, my struggles with lust and self-gratification wore down my resolve. With no one to disciple me, I fell away from following the Lord and plunged into ten years of terrible sin (1972-1982).

In 1982 I had a dramatic experience with God and my faith was restored. I continued to struggle with the horrible addiction to sexual sin that gripped my life, but gradually

the Lord helped me overcome it. Before I knew it, I was in Bible school and had started Pure Life Ministries—a work to help other men caught up in habitual sexual sin.

In the intervening years, however, the Church culture had undergone a drastic change. Christian media had exploded, and was re-shaping the dominant mindset within the evangelical community. Psychologists had been given unprecedented respect and were playing a major role in shaping believers' perspectives about sin. The “seeker sensitive” philosophy was spreading through the ranks of ambitious pastors. Preaching against carnality, worldliness, and sin had been discarded in favor of a more positive message designed to attract larger crowds.

To my dismay, everywhere I turned, biblical truth was overshadowed by a more comfortable message. I found myself drawn down a very different path than nearly everyone around me. The modern teachings which populated the Christian bookstores were like old, stale bread in comparison with the rich feasts set before me in the writings of men like Charles Spurgeon, Andrew Murray, A.W. Tozer, and Leonard Ravenhill. These saints had clearly lived a vastly more consecrated life with God than what I was seeing all around me.

Ravenhill was one who lived to see much of this spiritual deterioration in the Church. He preached against the worldliness and prayerlessness found in American congregations. His messages resembled Jeremiah of old whom God used to thunder against the compromising preachers of his day:

They have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, Saying, “Peace, peace,” but there is no peace... Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk

in it; and you will find rest for your souls. But they said, “We will not walk in it.” And I set watchmen over you, saying, “Listen to the sound of the trumpet!” But they said, “We will not listen.” (Jeremiah 6:14-17)

In my 47 years in American Christianity I have witnessed much of this great falling away from those ancient paths. It has been a subtle but definite drift away from the truths faithfully taught by the godly men of yesteryear—and more importantly, those taught by Scripture. Little by little, biblical truths have been replaced with teachings more in line with American culture.

The effects of this new mindset in the post-modern Church are easy to see. Habitual sin is running rampant among professing Christians. Divorce rates equal those of unbelievers. Compromise and self-absorption have ruined the Church’s testimony to a fallen world groping in the dark for real answers.

Over the 30-plus years that I have spent ministering to those in habitual sexual sin (1986-2017), I have gained innumerable insights into the inner life of an addict. But one truth in particular has shaped forever the way we deal with men at Pure Life Ministries: *A man’s sexual addiction is merely the symptom of a much deeper problem.* A toxic mixture of pride and self-centeredness has created a “hothouse” where sin of every variety can thrive. If transformation is ever to occur in that man’s life, his pride and his thriving “self-life” (i.e. flesh, as Scripture calls it) must be dealt a death-blow.

The significance of this truth compelled me in 2003 to write a book entitled *Irresistible to God*. I gladly would have directed people to someone else’s book, but sadly, I could

find nothing recently written on the subject.

As devastating as pride is to the spiritual life of the believer, one would expect it to be a topic of enormous interest in the Church. Pastors would preach regularly about the need for their people to humble themselves. Christian bookstores would offer bestselling books exposing and renouncing this Christ-opposing sin. Christian radio hosts would make it a regular subject of conversation. Perhaps Christian movie producers would develop storylines to show the effects it has on the lives of believers and how they can find their way out. Instead, the modern Church is virtually silent on an issue of tremendous importance to God and His kingdom.

Rather than focus on what the Lord considers important, we have become fixated on subjects that interest *us* or even flatter our pride. And yet the subject of greatest importance—the spiritual condition of our hearts—is largely left neglected. We want to receive God’s blessings but care little about what blesses Him. We analyze the nuances of biblical doctrine but won’t examine our own hearts. We are fascinated by the end times, but have little interest in preparing to face the challenging times ahead.

Most believers today are oblivious to the presence of pride in their lives. They can easily identify it in swaggering Hollywood actors, snooty rich people, egotistical sports stars, or even a loud-mouthed coworker. But ask them if *they* struggle with pride and their response will be one of incredulity. What contemporary pastor ever encounters an anxious church member coming into his office to lament about his struggles with pride?

Whether or not we recognize its odious presence, pride lurks within every human heart. It is a corrosive agent that permeates the fallen nature and, if left undetected, will gradually destroy the soul. Indeed, there is much within the

human heart that exalts itself against God. (2 Corinthians 10:5)

This is why in 2003 I felt there was an urgent need to address this issue. In spite of the Church culture of our day, God has used that little book, *Irresistible to God*, to help many people find the joy of walking humbly with the Lord.

Now, fourteen years later, I have felt compelled to take a fresh look at the self-life (i.e. “i”) and the pride that comes forth from it. It is, after all, *the root of sin*. I have spent countless hours praying over this undertaking and studying what the Bible and the saints of yesteryear had to say on the subject. The result of all this has been a complete and thorough rewrite of that original book, including seven chapters of new material. My prayer is that *The Great Realm of “i”* will be swallowed up and taken over by the *Kingdom of Lowliness* in your life.

To begin this study, we must consider the beginning of all things...

Section

1

The Great
Realm of *i*

“Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind... each person’s pride is in competition with everyone else’s pride.”¹

C.S. Lewis

“Think of the power that turned an innocent pink-cheeked boy into a Nero or a Himmler.”²

A.W. Tozer

“Self is the root, the branches, the tree, of all the evil of our fallen state. All the evils of fallen angels and men have their birth in the pride of self.”³

William Law



chapter 3

THE HUMAN EGO AND THE GROWTH OF PRIDE

At this point, I must return to the subject of the human ego. If you recall, we took a look at this current definition: “Ego: the ‘I’ or self of any person; a thinking, feeling and conscious being, able to distinguish itself from other selves.”⁴

However, you and I both know that people simply don’t use the word “ego” that way in everyday speech. As I studied the subject, it surprised me that I couldn’t find a single modern dictionary that defines it as it is commonly understood.

The closest I came was the 1828 version of the Webster’s Dictionary. Although it didn’t contain an entry for the word “ego,” I found its definition of “egotism” enlightening: “Primarily, the practice of too frequently using the word I. Hence, a speaking or writing much of one’s self; self-praise; self-commendation; the act or practice of magnifying one’s self, or making one’s self of importance.”⁵

That nailed the evolution of the word exactly. Thinking of it in the ancient language, Noah Webster was describing Greeks walking around always talking about themselves: “Ego, ego, ego” (“I, I, I”).

That scenario really does describe an egotistical person, but it still does not define the word “ego.” So I decided to consider how we actually use the word in the English language. Here are a few examples:

- “His ego becomes more intolerable every day.”
- “Losing the match did nothing for my ego.”
- “Her ego prevented her from admitting her mistakes.”
- “Nothing would satisfy his ego short of owning the entire business.”

The thing that stands out about these usages is that in every single case, it is used in the possessive sense: His ego, her ego, my ego. In other words, it is not something that emerges from the person; it is *part* of the person in the same way one would say “my face” or “my personality.”

As I pondered the human psyche in light of how this word is used, I finally decided I would offer my own definition: “The ego is the deepest core of a person’s unregenerate being; a hyper-sensitive and fragile part of his inward life that he tries to protect from being hurt and attempts to bolster through achievement and self-flattery.”

So what is the difference between ego and pride? It really is no more complicated than to think of “self” as ego and pride as the attitude that it manifests. Let me illustrate it this way. The word “patriotic” is an adjective that describes the characteristic mindset of a patriot. So the human ego expresses itself through prideful thinking. The attitude, “I am more important than you and, if need be, I will promote my cause and protect my rights at your expense” actually comes forth from the human ego.

The more the ego is nurtured and allowed to grow, the more self-aware the person will be. Thus, one could say that an egotistical person is a prideful person—the two terms being synonymous. To say someone has a large ego

is just another way of saying he is full of himself—or, to put it more in line with biblical thinking: he is dominated by his self-life. This highlights the vast difference between Satan, whose philosophy of life is the promotion of the self-life, and the lowly Jesus, who beckons His follower to “deny himself.” (Luke 9:23)

This supposition about the human ego provides us with a sense of how pride comes about in a person’s life, but to understand how it grows, we must dig deeper. We begin our query right here in the United States.

A Culture that Fosters the Human Ego

Let’s face it: our culture is brimming with the pride of life. Female beauty is glorified from coast to coast. Physical prowess in sports is given unprecedented acknowledgement. Human ingenuity in science and technology is exalted. Corporate greed is vaunted as shrewd investing. Politicians are praised, not for their integrity but for their pragmatism. It isn’t the humble man or woman who is to be emulated but the egotist who drives himself to the heights of human success. Unmistakably, we are under the Darwinian curse of the survival of the fittest.

Almost everything in our culture caters to and incites man’s ego: entertainment, advertising, the media, academics, business, and the home life. Now more than ever, it’s all about image and personal achievement. This, in turn, has created an overwhelming pressure to out-do the next man—to be smarter, stronger, more capable, more attractive, and wealthier.

In an environment that exalts and glorifies achievement, strength, and beauty, children learn quickly that it feels good to be praised and hurts to

be criticized or unnoticed. They are taught to be proud of who they are and what they can do. This mentality is reinforced at every stage of development and throughout adulthood.

Take school for instance. As a means of motivation, the first thing teachers appeal to in a child is his pride by sending the message that if he wants to be rewarded by the system, he must *strive* to be the best. He must *out-do* others. He must show a *competitive* spirit. In other words, he is taught to strive to become superior to every other student.

Early on in life, ambition and vainglory are instilled in children and are considered acceptable motives for doing their best.* Teachers attempt to awaken and stir up the pride that is already inherent in every youngster. Rather than teaching them godly principles that promote the importance of others, kids are taught that their value comes from *excelling* others. Competition becomes the means of inducing young people to do their very best. They are encouraged to put themselves in the position of receiving man's applause regardless of how it may affect others. They are told to be content with nothing less than the highest distinction. Our country is a country of winners. Losers are second-rate citizens.† Therefore, a person's value is often determined by achievement rather than by moral character. It is this thinking that paves the

* It goes without saying that a parent or teacher ought to inspire children to do their best. Kids *should* be encouraged to put value in the quality of their work. They are *supposed* to urge young people to become accomplished in a field of interest. However, the current practice of using pride as the primary tool of motivation is not only unnecessary but can be dangerous.

† Some in the field of academics attempt to correct this through humanistic methods, i.e. refusing to fail a child who has not met the minimal scholastic requirements.

way for the formation of bloated egos.

If a young man shows an interest in some profession, he is taught to emulate successful people in his field: study their lives, imitate their practices, and follow in their footsteps. And the rewards of success—pleasure, possessions, and power—are always kept in the forefront of his mind. It should come as no surprise that the world would promote these objects as life's rewards. John said, "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." (1 John 2:16) This temporal and worldly thinking urges him forward and compels him to work harder. Above all else, this determination to be the top in his field must be accompanied by a positive mental attitude. What glorious things await those who refuse to settle for second best!

Of course, one would expect unbelievers to promote this sort of ego-building mindset. What is unspeakably tragic, however, is that this same mentality is even encouraged in seminaries and Bible schools. Godly characteristics such as love, humility, and kindness tend to be impatiently brushed aside in favor of the outward signs of success that inflate one's ego. It is usually the most talented preachers who are put on a pedestal. Therefore, our young people aspire to imitate those with the biggest churches, the most popular radio shows, the bestselling books, and the most prestigious positions. Bible school students quickly learn that the evangelical system in America richly rewards its darlings. This worldly mindset permeates much of the Church in the United States.

After years of such thorough indoctrination, the majority of young people are governed by greed, envy, and self-glory. William Law, writing in the 18th century, asks some troubling questions:

You teach a child to scorn to be outdone, to thirst for distinction and applause; and is it any wonder that he continues to act all his life in the same manner? Now if a youth is ever to be so far a Christian, as to govern his heart by the doctrines of humility, I would fain know at what time he is to begin it: or, if he is ever to begin it at all, why we train him up in tempers quite contrary to it? How dry and poor must the doctrine of humility sound to a youth, that has been spurred up to all his industry by ambition, envy, emulation, and a desire of glory and distinction! And if he is not to act by these principles when he is a man, why do we call him to act by them in his youth?...

Let those people who think that children would be spoiled, if they were not thus educated, consider this: Could they think, that, if any children had been educated by our Blessed Lord, or His Holy Apostles, their minds would have been sunk into dullness and idleness? Or could they think, that such children would not have been trained up in the profoundest principles of a strict and true humility? Can they say that our Blessed Lord, who was the meekest and humblest Man that ever was on earth, was hindered by His humility from being the greatest example of worthy and glorious actions, that ever were done by man? Can they say that His Apostles, who lived in the humble spirit of their Master, did therefore cease to be laborious and active instruments of doing good to all the world? A few such reflections as these are sufficient to expose all the poor pretenses for an education in pride and ambition.⁶

The Average Joes

In our society, if you want to be respected and admired, you must be the best. The problem is that not everybody can be the best. For every person who is recognized for some achievement, there are usually hundreds whose efforts go unnoticed.

Just as parents reward good behavior and punish bad behavior, pride too is motivated by positive and negative factors. There is an unspoken threat that accompanies the promise of reward for the achiever: if he doesn't succeed, he won't be rewarded. He won't receive the accolades, nor will he reap the benefits of success. He won't be admired by others. He won't be *lifted up* as a shining example for others to imitate.

Most children learn to accept the fact that they were not destined to receive the applause of man. They may secretly envy those who are distinguished, but otherwise, they are content to grab whatever leftovers might be found.

It wouldn't be so bad if this were all the Average Joe types had to deal with, but unfortunately, the problem goes much deeper. Humans are born with a deeply felt need to be loved and respected. This desire runs so deeply that the lack of noticeable appreciation by others—especially immediate family members—can be emotionally damaging to a young child. A youngster's dependence upon the approval of others or his need for affirmation often creates an overwhelming sense of insecurity. Rather than being naturally confident, he tends to be awkward around others and can easily become dominated by the fear of man.

Not only does a lack of positive affirmation affect a child, but the insults and ridicule from others can intensify feelings of insecurity. He learns early in life to avoid anything that might hurt his ego.

The natural way to deal with the fear of being ridiculed is to become someone who is admired or respected. Such prominence grants him a certain degree of freedom from the abuse others suffer. His social position is thereby strengthened in the hierarchy of his peer group.

When a child feels as though he is not receiving the love and acceptance he desires, a sense of inferiority develops within him. This so-called “inferiority complex” is reinforced each time he experiences rejection or is emotionally hurt in some way. The more inferior the youngster is made to feel by the rejection of others, the more his ego will feel compelled to protect itself from those who threaten it.[‡] The child will often seek something—anything—to distinguish himself from others. In other words, he learns to protect and bolster his ego.

Parental Upbringing

Nothing can prepare a child for the challenges and trials of growing up in a pride-driven culture like being raised in a loving, godly home. The affection and affirmation he receives from his parents meet his emotional needs. The joy he witnesses in his mom and dad teaches him that fulfillment will never be found in the empty things of the world. Such a youngster can begin life without a driving compulsion to prove himself.

Unfortunately, this kind of solid home life is the rare exception. Most children haven’t been blessed with godly parents. Their fathers and mothers have their own emotional and spiritual baggage. They have long since developed lifestyles of nurturing and bolstering their

[‡] Proponents of the “Self-Esteem Movement” rightly see the truth of this, but their solution of promoting self only exacerbates the problem.

egos while attempting to achieve satisfaction through the things of the world.

In a thousand subtle ways this mindset is taught and passed along to their children. Parents are often manipulative and use sarcasm and anger to coerce their children to behave. The unspoken message is, "Don't do anything that irritates me or upsets my lifestyle." The pride behind such a "me first" attitude comes across loud and clear to the child. There is but one conclusion to derive from such an upbringing: "I am not going to receive unconditional love from my parents. They don't really care about me; they only care about themselves. Therefore, I will find my acceptance and worth from other people and from the world."[§]

The children then live with a constant, nagging sense of rejection. The more deeply a child has been hurt, the more pronounced and fragile his ego will become. Consequently, as a youngster develops, several things happen. Certain forms of pride will surface within him in conjunction with his individuality: i.e., his strengths, abilities, looks, etc. If he is a sensitive person by nature, he will display self-protective pride to ward off any pain or rejection by others. If, on the other hand, he is naturally cocky, he will tend to be conceited and arrogant. The level of his insecurity—his thwarted desire to be thought of highly—usually determines the strength of his pride. Like sin of any kind, pride creates a downward spiral of soul degradation. The more one caters to ego's demands,

§ It should be noted that, while the field of psychology has done much to shed light on the emotional damage that can be inflicted on a child through a poor upbringing, it has few answers for the adult who has been emotionally damaged as a youngster. The coping skills and emotional coddling promulgated by psychology are incompatible with the humility that is really needed.

the more demanding it will become. In other words, it strengthens itself as it is indulged.

The child—who is only doing what comes naturally—gradually develops defense mechanisms to cope with being hurt in life. Unfortunately, these defense mechanisms are the embryos of pride that begin in childhood, are developed in the teen years, and are perfected in adulthood.

In the meantime, the youngster is completely unaware that he is a prime target of lurking demons, watching for every opportunity to teach him how to better protect and bolster his ego. Without a doubt, such fallen spirits are intimately acquainted with everything about the child.[¶] They watch for budding forms of sin and how the ego is taking shape. This helps them to strategize about how to gain an ever-deepening foothold in the child's life. As the youngster grows and suffers the inevitable pains of life, demons introduce prideful responses into his mind to help him limit how much others can hurt him. Pride is the devil's solution to emotional pain. In a fallen, sin-cursed world in which the pride of man is exalted, this ungodly attitude is carefully cultivated as the young person grows into adulthood.^{**}

A Lifelong Pattern

Life is a long journey, made up of millions of daily decisions. A person's path can be altered at any time,

¶ Perhaps this explains why the King James Version translators often referred to demons as "familiar spirits."

** In Matthew 18:10, Jesus made an enigmatic statement that gave rise to the common belief that children are assigned guardian angels. Since Satan mimics nearly everything God does—with his own malignant twist—it only stands to reason that he, too, would assign his own (fallen) angels to monitor and influence children.

but the longer he goes in a particular direction, the more inclined he will be to continue in it. Just like an addiction to drugs or sexual activity, the passion of pride can so dominate a person that it dictates the course of his life. The longer he persists in this mindset, the more deeply entrenched it will become and the more difficult it will be to break its hold.

Those deemed insane by society typically have a long history of making decisions that were strongly influenced by pride. If their lives could somehow be examined from beginning to end, one would most likely find crucial points along the way where choices were made that further solidified their insanity. The movie *A Christmas Carol* masterfully shows—through the Spirit of Christmas Past—how a young Ebenezer Scrooge made one greed-driven decision after another early in life, eventually leaving him a bitter, tight-fisted miser.

Every person alive today—whether young or old—is on some course in life and is a product of a lifetime of daily decision-making. People are in a constant state of transition: always changing by small degrees in some particular direction. Consequently, their egos are either mushrooming or diminishing. A. W. Tozer put it this way:

Men and women are being molded by their affinities, shaped by their affections and powerfully transformed by the artistry of their loves. In the unregenerate world of Adam this produces day-by-day tragedies of cosmic proportions. Think of the power that turned an innocent pink-cheeked boy into a Nero or a Himmler. And was Jezebel always the “cursed woman” whose head and hands the very dogs, with poetic justice, refused to eat? No; once she dreamed her pure girlish dreams

and blushed at the thoughts of womanly love; but soon she became interested in evil things, admired them and went on at last to love them. There the law of moral affinity took over and Jezebel, like clay in the hand of the potter, was turned to the deformed and hateful thing that the chamberlains threw down from the window.⁷

Dear Lord, *I now understand more fully why pride has developed within me. Help me to escape the world's system of rewarding pride. I don't want the devil's ugly solution to emotional pain. I want to suffer like a good soldier of Christ, if need be. I don't want to resemble the devil in any way. I want to be conformed into the image of Christ. Make it so, Lord. Amen.*