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Respectable Sins Pride

PUBLISHED
November 25, 2026

REFERENCE
#1795582188886623

The Silent Epidemic: Understanding Respectable Sins Pride

Pride is often portrayed as a loud, boastful vice—the arrogant executive, the self-congratulating celebrity, or the politician who cannot admit a mistake. Yet the most dangerous form of pride is rarely so obvious. In his seminal work *Respectable Sins*, author and theologian Jerry Bridges explores a category of transgressions that many Christians and thoughtful people overlook precisely because they are socially acceptable. Among these, pride stands out as the most pervasive and subtle. **Respectable sins pride**is not about the obvious swagger of an egoist; it is the quiet, interior elevation of self that infects even the most devout and well-meaning individuals. This article unpacks the nature of this hidden pride, why it remains invisible to us, and how we can begin to address it honestly.

What Makes Pride a “Respectable” Sin?

The term “respectable sin” was popularized by Bridges to describe habitual failings that believers often tolerate within themselves—things like gossip, worry, impatience, and ingratitude. Unlike murder, theft, or adultery, these sins do not usually provoke public scandal or church discipline. They are respectable because they can be rationalized. **Respectable sins pride**fits this category perfectly because it is both universal and invisible. We rarely call ourselves proud; we are more likely to accuse others of it. Yet pride is the root of countless other sins, from resentment to envy, from self-righteousness to a refusal to forgive. It is the original sin that led to humanity’s fall, and it remains the most stubborn barrier to genuine spiritual growth.

What makes pride particularly respectable is its capacity to masquerade as virtue. We might call it “healthy self-esteem” or “taking pride in our work.” We can spin it as righteous indignation when our opinions are challenged. We can dress it in religious language, thanking God that we are not like other sinners. This chameleon-like quality allows pride to thrive in churches, families, and workplaces without being confronted.

The Many Faces of Respectable Sins Pride

To recognize pride, we must learn to see its subtler forms. Below are several manifestations that are especially common among people who consider themselves moral or spiritual.

1. Self-Righteousness and Comparison

One of the most common expressions of **respectable sins pride**is the habit of comparing ourselves favorably to others. This can be as simple as thinking, “I would never treat my spouse that way” or “At least I don’t lie as much as that coworker.” While we may not say it aloud, our hearts internalize a ranking system. We feel a quiet satisfaction when we see someone else fail. This pride is especially dangerous because it feels like moral discernment. In reality, it is a rejection of the gospel’s core message: that we are all equally in need of grace.

2. A Critical and Judgmental Spirit

Closely related to self-righteousness is a critical spirit. When we are quick to point out the flaws of others—

whether about their parenting, their theology, their lifestyle choices, or even their political views—we are often feeding a hidden pride. The critic assumes a position of superior insight and righteousness. This is not the same as healthy discernment; it is a posture of the heart that subtly elevates self above neighbor. Respectable sins pride in disguise is one of the most overlooked

3. The Need for Approval and Recognition

Pride can also manifest as an excessive need for praise. We work hard on a project, then feel disappointed if no one acknowledges our effort. We post on social media and check for likes. We fish for compliments. While it is natural to desire affirmation, an obsessive need for approval reveals a heart that derives its worth from others' opinions rather than from God's unconditional love. This form of pride is respectable because it looks humble—we want to be liked, after all. But underneath is a fear of obscurity, a refusal to be content with being unseen.

4. Impatience and Anger When Things Don't Go Our Way

Another subtle indicator of **respectable sins pride**is a quick temper when we encounter delays, interruptions, or contradictions. Impatience says, "My time is more valuable than yours." Anger at a slow driver or a long line often rises from an unspoken belief that we deserve better treatment than we are receiving. Pride inflates our sense of entitlement. When someone disagrees with us and we respond with hostility, it is often because our pride perceives the disagreement as a personal attack.

5. Hypocrisy and Image Management

One of the most exhausting expressions of pride is the relentless effort to manage our image. We want others to see us as successful, virtuous, and put-together. This leads to hypocrisy—saying one thing but doing another, or hiding our struggles to maintain a facade. This is a respectable sin because society applauds self-presentation. Yet it is a lie that distances us from authentic community and from the grace that is offered to broken people. Pride fools us into believing that admitting weakness would be catastrophic.

The Spiritually Dangerous Impact of Hidden Pride

Why is it so important to confront **respectable sins pride**? Because pride is the enemy of grace. It blocks our ability to receive help, to repent, and to grow. The proud person cannot learn, because learning requires acknowledging that someone else knows more. The proud person cannot apologize, because apologizing feels like losing. The proud person cannot truly worship, because worship requires focusing entirely on Another who is greater.

Moreover, pride isolates us. It makes genuine relationships impossible because we are always on guard, defending our image. It also robs us of peace. We carry the burden of always needing to be right, to be praised, to be first. The humble person, by contrast, is free—free to fail, free to ask for forgiveness, free to serve without needing recognition.

Overcoming Respectable Sins Pride: Practical Steps

Addressing this deeply entrenched sin requires more than a resolution to "be more humble." It demands honest self-examination, community accountability, and a fresh encounter with the gospel. Below are steps that can help.

1. Cultivate Self-Awareness through Scripture and Prayer

The first step is to ask God to reveal our pride. The psalmist prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts" (Psalm 139:23). We can adopt a similar posture, asking specifically: Where do I feel threatened? When do I become defensive? Whom do I secretly disdain? The Bible is a mirror that exposes our true condition. Reading passages about humility—like Philippians 2:3-11 or Jesus' teaching on

the first being last—can recalibrate our hearts.

2. Practice Confession to a Trusted Friend

Because pride thrives in secrecy, one of the most powerful antidotes is to confess specific instances of pride to another person. This might feel embarrassing—and that is precisely the point. When we humble ourselves enough to say, “I realize I was prideful in that conversation; I wanted to look smart,” we break the power of secrecy. A trusted friend can also help us see blind spots we cannot perceive on our own.

3. Embrace the Discipline of Serving Without Recognition

Another practical way to fight **respectable sins pride**is to do good deeds that no one will ever know about. Clean up after an event without being asked. Send an anonymous gift to someone in need. Serve your family in small, unnoticed ways. This practice trains the heart to find satisfaction in the act itself, not in the applause it generates. Over time, it loosens pride’s grip on our identity.

4. Cultivate Gratitude

Gratitude is a direct assault on pride. When we thank God for every good thing—our talents, our opportunities, our health, our salvation—we acknowledge that we did not earn these blessings. They are gifts. A grateful heart cannot be a proud heart. Make a habit of listing specific things you are thankful for each day, and include the people and circumstances you might otherwise take for granted.

5. Meditate on the Cross

Ultimately, the cure for pride is the gospel. At the cross, Jesus died not only for our “big” sins but for our respectable ones as well—including our pride. When we see that we contributed to the death of the Son of God by our self-centeredness, any grounds for boasting crumble. Yet the cross also shows us that we are infinitely loved despite our sin. This double truth—that we are both sinful and beloved—creates genuine humility. We have nothing to prove, and we have nothing to fear.

Conclusion: The Liberating Path of Humility

Respectable sins pridemay be the most stubborn obstacle to spiritual maturity and authentic relationships. It hides in our self-righteousness, our critical spirits, our need for approval, our impatience, and our hypocrisy. Yet we need not live under its tyranny. By naming it, confessing it, and turning to the grace of God, we can walk the liberating path of humility. Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less. It is the freedom to serve, to learn, to apologize, and to rest in the love of Another. Let us commit to rooting out the respectable pride that remains, and to embracing the joy that comes when we let go of our own glory and receive the glory of God.

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