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Public Enemy No. 1



I. Introduction

Each one of us fights a powerful, but unseen enemy, every day of our lives.

In many respects he could be called, “Public Enemy No. 1.”

There’s a Biblical “bounty” out for this enemy.

He’s wanted, dead or alive. Preferably, dead.

The enemy is called your “ego.”



II. Definition and Characteristics of Ego

A. Definitions

Ego = the self, especially as contrasted with another self.

The ego is totally fascinated and consumed with itself.

It’s favorite question is, “What about me?”

Ego can also be equated with an “endless wantingness.”

Ego is the voice of the flesh, and what it wants, it wants right now!

Egocentric means limited in outlook or concern to one’s own activities or needs. Selfish.



B. Characteristics of the ego.

1. Ego feels it should be able to do anything it wants to do, anytime it wants to do it.

James 4:3 “ . . . You're spoiled children, each wanting your own way.” (THE MESSAGE)

2. Ego clamors for attention and feeds off of the praise and approval of man.

Matthew 6:1, 5, and 16 "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them . . . And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men . . . "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting . . . " (NKJV)



3. **The primary goal of ego is to seek pleasure and do what it “thinks” will make it happy.**

However, ego is not aligned with truth, and cannot “think” clearly.

“A philosopher once observed that there are two great tragedies in life. The first tragedy is not getting the desires of our heart. The second tragedy is getting them! The problem is that we think we know what we want, but when we finally get it, it is not what we thought it was going to be. We are disappointed and become disillusioned.” (Bill Gothard)

Sometimes when we’re totally intent on having our way, God will give it to us.

Numbers 11:18-20 “**You cried to the LORD, “We want meat! We were better off in Egypt!”** So now the LORD will give you meat to eat. You will eat it not for just one, two, five, ten, or even twenty days, but you will eat that meat for a whole month. You will eat it until it comes out your nose, and you will grow to hate it. **This is because you have rejected the LORD**, who is with you. You have cried to him, saying, “Why did we ever leave Egypt?”” (NCV)

Psalm 106:15 “**And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.**” (KJV)



4. **Ego seeks to control and fights and wars to get it’s own way.**

James 4:1-2 “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from Your desires for pleasure that war in your members?” (NKJV)

5. **Authority is always a threat to ego, because it can get in the way of what ego wants to do.**



6. **Ego, in order to survive, must believe that it is right.**

The voice of ego: “**We are the only ones who are right.**”

“Be right, always right, perfectly right all the time. Be the only one who is right, and be rigid about your rightness.” (This kind of attitude is a sure prescription for unhappiness.)

7. **Ego believes that anyone who cuts in and out of traffic, or who pulls out in front of you and then drives too slow, deserves to die.**

8. **Ego claims to be the originator. It claims ownership of everything. But ego is a liar.**

Daniel 4:30-32 “The king spake, and said, **Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?** While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; **The kingdom is departed from thee.** And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, **until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.**” (KJV)



A Christian man who did not smoke was critical and verbally abusive of another Christian who **did** smoke. When he persisted in his criticism of the man who had been unable to stop smoking, he heard the Lord say to him, “**Don’t attribute to your character the working of My grace.**”

9. Ego wants to be like God.

Genesis 3:4-5 “Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, **and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**" (NKJV)

The ironic thing is that we already are like God!

Genesis 1:26 “And God said, Let us make man **in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion . . .**” (KJV)

All God asks is that we subordinate our will to His will, stay in communication with Him through the Holy Spirit, and give God the glory for whatever is accomplished.



10. Ego, however, claims to be God, and wants the world to recognize its divinity.

Isaiah 14:13-14 “For you have said in your heart: '**I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.**' ” (NKJV)

Psalms 100:3 “**Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;**” (NKJV)

Two facts: There is a God.
You are not Him.



11. Ego wants to be worshipped.

Matthew 4:9 “And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You **if You will fall down and worship me.**" (NKJV)

12. When ego doesn't get what it wants, it goes into grief.

“**All pain and suffering arise solely from the ego and not from God.**” (David Hawkins)

People often blame God for what their ego has done to them.

Psalms 107:10-11, 17 “Those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and irons — **because they rebelled against the words of God, and despised the counsel of the Most High . . . Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, were afflicted . . .**” (NKJV)

III. The Problem

A. Your ego can get you killed!

Acts 12:21-23 “So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, "**The voice of a god and not of a man!**"

Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.” (NKJV)



B. The ego has an insatiable appetite for “more.”

1 Kings 11:1-5 “But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites — from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, “You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. **And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines;**



and his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David.” (NKJV)

The problem with ego is that it can never be satisfied. It can never get enough of whatever it wants.

C. Ego is fed by the praise of man.

Proverbs 27:21 “Fire tests the purity of silver and gold, but **a person is tested by being praised.**” (NLT)

Proverbs 27:21 “The purity of silver and gold is tested by putting them in the fire; the **purity of human hearts is tested by giving them a little fame.**” (THE MESSAGE)

Proverbs 29:5 “**To flatter people is to lay a trap for their feet.**” (NLT)

Rudyard Kipling says it like this: “. . . If you can talk with crowds **and keep your virtue**, or walk with kings – **nor lose the common touch**, If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you, **if all man count with you, but none too much . . .**” (*If*, by Rudyard Kipling)

Praise given to man that is not deflected to God only strengthens the ego and makes it more unmanageable.



D. Ego's goal is to turn God's glory in you to shame.

Psalm 4:2 "How long, O you sons of men, will you turn my glory to shame?" (NKJV)

IV. The Root Cause of Man's Ego Problem: Pride.

A. The vehicle which gives life to ego is pride.

Pride is the author and the finisher of ego.

"Pride is the sin that God hates the most and judges the quickest."

(Bill Gothard)

Proverbs 16:5 "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD . . ." (KJV)

B. "Pride is the treason of the creature against his Creator." (Arthur Burt)

Psalm 10:4 "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." (KJV)

C. Pride opens the door for Satan to deceive man, and ego greases the skids.

Obadiah 3-4 "The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; you who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?'

Though you ascend as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down," says the LORD." (NKJV)

D. When man allows his ego to lead, guide and control his actions, God resists him.

James 4:6 "... God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (NKJV)

Luke 1:51 "... he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." (KJV)

Proverbs 16:18-19 "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." (NKJV)

V. The Solution: Overcoming Ego Is a Continuous Exercise in Humbling Ourselves

A. Humble ourselves to read, believe and act on the Word of God

Alignment with Truth is the real beginning of maintaining power over the ego.

Romans 12:2 "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (NKJV)

"Wisdom is seeing life from God's point of view and tracing problems to violations of His principles." (Bill Gothard)



The Truth:

1. **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.” (KJV)



2. **Ephesians 4:22** “You were told that your foolish desires will destroy you and that **you must give up your old way of life with all its bad habits.**” (CEV)

3. **Romans 6:11** “In the same way, you should see yourselves as **being dead to the power of sin and alive with God through Christ Jesus.**” (NCV)



4. **Colossians 3:5** “You must put to death, then, the earthly desires at work in you, such as sexual immorality, indecency, lust, evil passions, and greed (for greed is a form of idolatry).” (TEV)



5. **Luke 9:23** “Then Jesus said to all the people: If any of you want to be my followers, **you must forget about yourself.** You must take up your cross **each day** and follow me.” (CEV)

Recall the story of the conquering Roman general, returning in his chariot after a great victory, receiving the adoration, accolades and praises of the cheering crowds that lined the road on the way back to Rome. A servant was placed beside him in the chariot with instructions to continuously say to the general, “**Remember, you’re just a man . . . you’re just a man . . . you’re just a man!**”



B. Set your ego aside. When ego gets out of the way, “grace” happens.

Grace = the **divine influence upon the heart** and its reflection in the life;
the **desire and power to do God’s will.**

James 4:6 “. . . God resists the proud, **but gives grace to the humble.**” (NKJV)

1 Peter 5:6-7 “**Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,** that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” (NKJV)

Daniel 2:26-28, 48 “The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are **you** able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?" Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers **cannot** declare to the king. **But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days . . .** Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon.” (NKJV)



Proverbs 15:33 “The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; **and before honour is humility.**” (KJV)

1 Corinthians 4:7 “What makes you better than anyone else? **What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God, why boast as though you have accomplished something on your own?**” (NLT)

Bottom Line: Surrender early! Play “Taps” for your ego by humbling yourself before God.

C. Obey the legitimate authority figures in your life. (God, boss, civil and governmental authorities, pastor, parents if underage, husband if married, etc.)

Because when you rebel against authority, you are rebelling against God.

Romans 13:1-2 “**Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.** Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.” (NKJV)



James 4:7 “**Submit yourselves therefore to God.** Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (KJV)

Submit = to stand fully erect **under the protection of someone or something greater than you; to trust God to do that which you cannot do.**

D. Seek to please God, not man. Work for God’s approval, not man’s approval.

Colossians 3:23-24 “**And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,** knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.” (NKJV)

Ephesians 6:7-8 “Do your work with enthusiasm. **Work as if you were serving the Lord, not as if you were serving only men and women.** Remember that the Lord will give a reward to everyone, slave or free, for doing good.” (NCV)

1 Thessalonians 2:4 “For we speak as messengers who have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Good News. **Our purpose is to please God, not people.** He is the one who examines the motives of our hearts.” (NLT)



E. Avoid the ego-driven behavior of the rulers and Pharisees.

John 12:42-43 “Nevertheless, many did believe in Him even among the rulers, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, so they would not be banned from the synagogue. **For they loved praise from men more than praise from God.**” (Holman Christian Standard Bible)



VI. The Indicator

An indicator in everyman’s heart that lets him know whether he is **bowing in humility** or **rising in pride** is **peace**.

Isaiah 26:3 “**You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.**” (NKJV)

How is your peace today? Are you walking in fear, distress, anger, hurt?

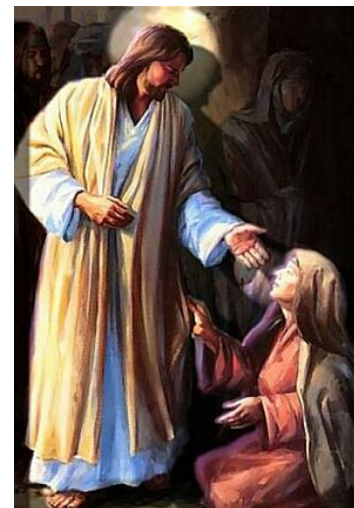
If so, could it be that ego is still trying to assert itself, to fight, to war and to try to control the situation?

Ego works through the flesh, and gives birth to Ishmaels.

God works through the spirit, and gives birth to Isaacs.

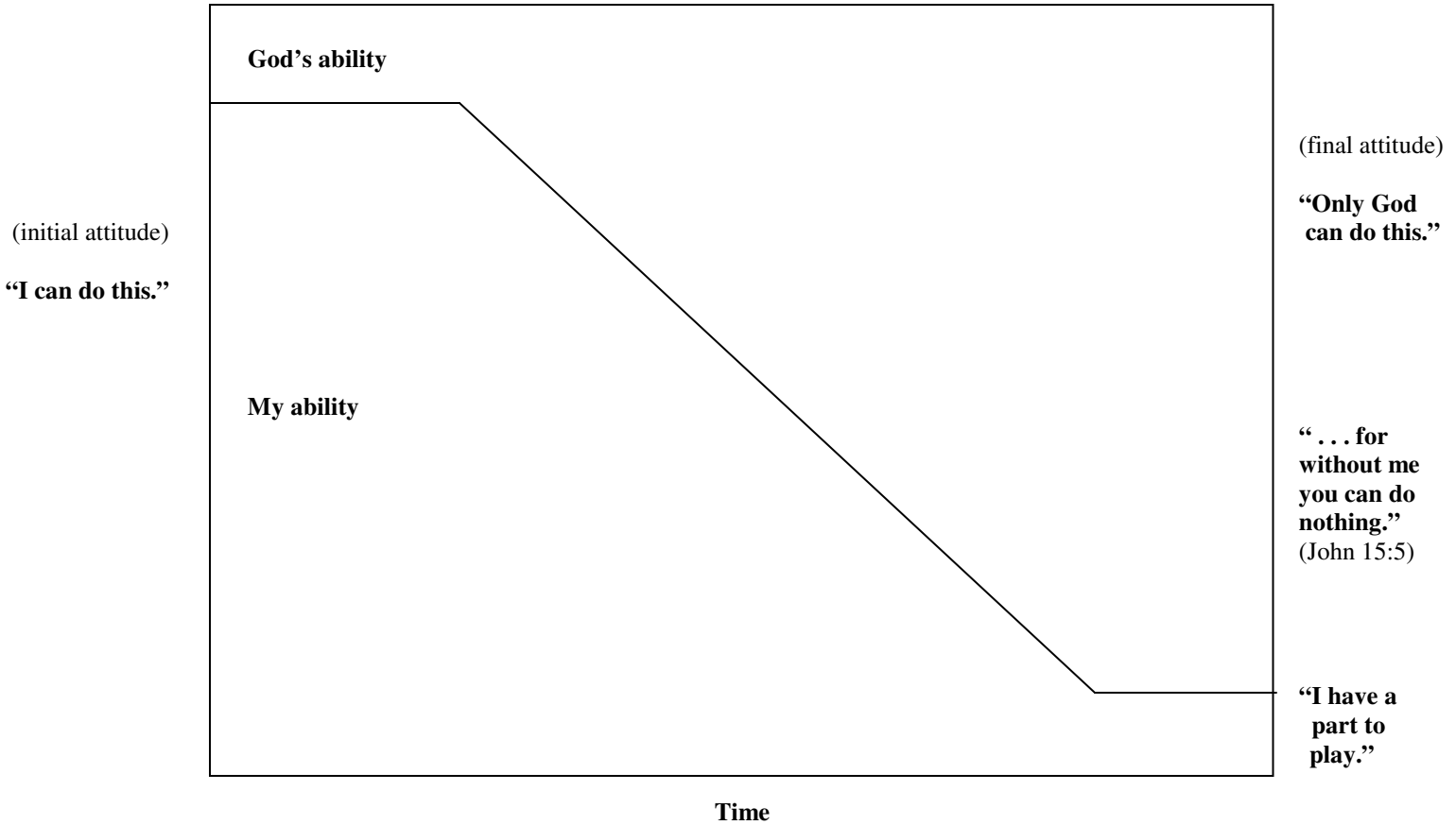
Why not lay your ego down, surrender the situation to God, and believe that He is working all things together for your good. Go to a quiet place, listen for His voice, and do that which He tells you to do.

John 16:33 “**These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace.** In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (NKJV)



VII. Close

Major Task to Accomplish



(Special thanks to Julian Watts, CEO of Markets Unlocked, for the use of this chart)

Our entire purpose, mission, and destiny in life is to glorify and honor God . . . not ourselves.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; **therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.**" (NKJV)

God will not share His glory with anyone else.

Isaiah 42:8 "I am the LORD. That is my name. I will not give my glory to another; I will not let idols take the praise that should be mine." (NCV)

The choice lies before each one of us. Which will we choose: **God?** Or ego?
Humility? Or pride?
Life? Or death?



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