

## FAME BECOMES ME

The Broadway buzz this week is the opening of Canadian funnyman Martin Short's comedy/musical, *Fame Becomes Me*, previously titled *Martin Short: If I'd Saved, I Wouldn't Be Here*. Guest shots by Short's Jiminy Glick and Ed Grimley plus surprised celebs in the audience add to the zaniness.

Superstars' insatiable egos sell tabloids, tell-alls and TV mag shows. Their craving for VIP treatment is notorious. But they're not alone.

**QUESTION: Are you and I prone to inflate our importance? When? Is it healthy, or necessary, to have high self-worth?**

### *EGO Defined*

In *A RESILIENT LIFE*, Gordon MacDonald writes, "The ego exists in the interior life. It is the centerpiece of the self, and it has an entrepreneurial passion to expand itself, even at the expense of others .... Ego is part of the creative handiwork of God in the making of humanity, but the ego is affected by a spiritual virus ever since evil infected the world. From that point on ego has been both a problem and an asset."

The Bible says God created man and woman in His likeness. They and our planet were, at first, sinless and pristine. **Here's their "birth" announcement in Genesis 1:26, 27 and 31 (p. 1).**

**QUESTION: What was our ego designed to do?**

With the earth as their own private arboretum, unspoiled by anything, Adam and Eve blew it for all of us. But would you and I have handled it any differently? **Let's read their – and our – undoing in Genesis 3:1-7, 21-24 (p. 2).**

**Ego run amok produces self-absorbed pride which God frowns on, noted in Isaiah 2:11-12 (p. 511).**

### *EGO Recognized*

Arrogance thrives when we stiff-arm God in favor of our alleged self-sufficiency or our attempts to impress Him by being "religious." A telltale indicator of pompous pride is its headlong trajectory toward red-faced humiliation. We find Jesus noshing on the Sabbath while His Pharisee/critics who, with his cronies, were scrutinizing the Nazarene Carpenter's every syllable and twitch. **We look in on them in Luke 14:1 and 7-11 (p. 777).**

The late New York Philharmonic maestro, Leonard Bernstein, was asked which instrument is the most difficult to play. “Second fiddle,” he replied. And without it “we have no harmony.”

The now-fallen angel Lucifer, aka Satan, tops that list of All-Time, At-Large Egos. **His pride-slide from heaven’s morning star to hell is in Isaiah 14:12-15 (p. 520).**

O-D-ing on pride is an evil that’s covered in depth in the book of Proverbs. Author Solomon warns that a swelled head triggers disgrace (11:2, 29:23), quarrels (13:10) and destruction (16:18).

**QUESTION: Checking your ego tank, where’s the line between a healthy and unhealthy sense of who you are?**

### ***EGO Tamed***

MacDonald continues: “Resilient people understand that ego has an insatiable desire for enlargement. Left undisciplined, it becomes addicted to expansion. The interior side builds a false view of self until there is *hubris*, a Greek term describing a person so full of himself that he loses touch with reality. The exterior side adorns the ego with every symbol of glamour, power and notoriety ....”

**QUESTION: Are high achievers doomed, or entitled to have super-sized egos? How do you rein in your ego-creep?**

Each of us wants control and power. God’s antidote for pride is not self-dependence. It’s God confidence. And it’s called HUMILITY.

**QUESTION: We can let God humble us, or pro-actively pursue it. Which is more appealing? How do we do it?**

**David’s formula for humility is in Psalm 8:1-9 (p. 403).**

God is all-knowing, all-powerful, everywhere-present, has no beginning or end, and His love never ever expires. When we think of God, humility should *ipso facto* follow. But hey, who *wants* to be humble! A little phony meekness now and then can serve our purposes, but non-stop modesty is not atop our Covet List. However, a second glance reveals some amazing advantages.

- Humility is a spiritual hearing aid, helping us hear God’s voice.
- Humility makes our prayers more honest, highlighting our utter reliance on God, bypassing the games we play to avoid that reality.
- When it comes to God’s love for us, humility informs us that we’re totally unworthy, but not worthless.

- Humility is God’s boot camp for promotion to higher service.
- God saves the humble (Psalm 18:27), sustains the humble (Psalm 147:6) and gives grace to the humble (Proverbs 3:30).

### ***EGO’s Spellchecker***

Humility comes from a realistic assessment of self -- when we see others as having great worth to God, and ourselves as their servants. And we have no finer example to turn to than Jesus. How would you like to be Creator of the Universe (a few rungs higher even than King of All Media!), then be plopped in a barn down here to catch three years of abuse, then jeered by a blood-thirsty mob that demanded the release of a convicted felon in return for His cruel crucifixion? This is the thanks the Son of God got for His trouble. **Here’s how He dealt with it: Philippians 2:5-11 (p. 873).**

### **Doesn’t this inside look at Christ’s humility lend meaning to His wise words in Matthew 6:1-6 (p. 720)?**

Jesus had His twelve amigos. Who do you have to walk through life with? “Happy Few, band of brothers” is a phrase memorialized by Shakespeare to describe his close-knit corps before the Battle of Agincourt. Life in any century is just that – a series of confrontations. Your 4-6-person circle of intimate, same-gender friends is a continuing forum for accountability, wise counsel and caring correction. We may even come to realize that criticism from those who *don’t* love us is often a gift in disguise!

In 1783 Charles Simeon was the target of cutting remarks by a fellow pastor who’d characterized his sermon as “sloppy.” Would you have written to your critic as Simeon did here: “What a blessing – an inestimable blessing it is to have a faithful friend! Satan is ready enough to point out whatever good we have; but it is only a faithful friend that will screen that from your sight, and show you your deficiencies. Our great apostasy seems to consist primarily in making a god of self; and he is the most valuable friend who will draw us most from self-seeking, self-pleasing and self-dependence, and help us to restore to God the authority we have robbed him of.” (Gordon MacDonald, A RESILIENT LIFE)

### ***So, Where Do My EGO and IGO?***

We all have résumés – some may be Hall of Fame-ish. So should we burn them? **Here’s Paul’s solution in 2 Corinthians 10:17-18 and 11:16-12:10 (p. 863) and Galatians 2:20 (p. 866).**

If you start with what Jesus dubbed “the two greatest commandments” and overlay EGO, this acrostic represents what should be a balanced and perfectly calibrated (Matthew 22:36-40):

# **E**levate **G**od and **O**thers

**Jesus' advance guy, his cousin John "The Baptist," modeled this acronym as well as anyone in John 3:22-30 (p. 791).**

Elevating God begins with letting Him *be* God in *your* life by telling Him, in your own words, "Dear God, You've done the heavy lifting by loving me, pursuing me all the way to this very moment, offering me total forgiveness of my sins forever. All you ask of me is that I, by faith, put my trust in You and in Christ's sacrifice on the cross for me. I can do that. And I do it now. Thank You for welcoming me into Your family, and for sending Your Holy Spirit to live in me until You and I meet in person! Whoa!! And amen!"

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(From gotquestions.org)

**Author:** Ephesians 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of Ephesians as the Apostle Paul.

**Date of Writing:** The Book of Ephesians was very likely written between 60-63 A.D.

**Purpose of Writing:** Paul intended all those that long for Christ-like maturity to receive this writing. Enclosed within the Book of Ephesians is the discipline needed to develop into true sons of God. Furthermore, a study in Ephesians will help to fortify and to establish the believer so he can fulfill the purpose and calling God has given. The aim of this epistle is to confirm and to equip a maturing church. It presents a balanced view of the body of Christ and its importance in God's economy.

**Key Verses:** Ephesians 1:3, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."

Ephesians 2:8-10, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Ephesians 4:4-6, "There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to one hope when you were called - one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Ephesians 6:10-11, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."

**Brief Summary:** Doctrine occupies the greatest portion of the Book of Ephesians. Half of the teaching in this epistle relates to our standing, and the remainder of it affects our condition. All too often those who teach from this book bypass all the foundational instruction and go directly to the closing chapter. It is this chapter that emphasizes the warfare or the struggle of the saints. However, to benefit fully from the contents of this epistle, one must begin at the beginning of Paul's instruction in this letter.

First, the follower of Christ must fully understand who God declares him to be. He must also become grounded in the knowledge of God's accomplishment for all humanity. Next, our present existence and walk must become exercised and strengthened. This must continue until we no longer totter or stagger back and forth with every spirit of teaching and subtlety of men.

Paul's writing breaks down into three main segments. (1) Chapters one through three introduce principles with respect to God's accomplishment. (2) Chapters four and five put forth principles regarding our present existence. (3) Chapter six presents principles concerning our daily struggle.

**Practical Application:** Perhaps more than any other book of the Bible, the Book of Ephesians emphasizes the connection between sound doctrine and right practice. Far too many people ignore "theology" and instead want to only discuss things that are "practical." In Ephesians, Paul argues that theology is practical. In order to live out God's will for us in our lives practically - we must first understand who we are in Christ doctrinally.

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