

THE SIN OF PRIDE

What is sin?

Sin is those attitudes and behaviors that separate us from God's love - the essence of our own true nature. When we do not act out of love for ourselves, others and God, in harmony and in accordance with the will of God, then we feel guilt and remove ourselves from God's presence and are alienated from our own true nature.

What is forgiveness?

Forgiveness is the moment at which we are able to confess that our intent and behavior were not in accordance with the intent of God and Self and know that we are still loved and accepted. At this point we once more feel in harmony with God and Self. If, on the other hand, we refuse to confess our mistakes, or continue to believe God's love for us is conditional on us never making mistakes or doing wrong then we do not heal from our shame and continue to remove ourselves from the presence of God. This is a refusal to recognize our own true nature or God's true nature. Forgiveness is accepting God's grace. (divine, unconditional love). It is *acknowledging* our own guilt and *healing* from our own guilt which is only possible if we accept God's unconditional love for us and learn to love ourselves unconditionally.

Forgiveness also includes healing from the intents and actions of others which have created harm, damage, pain and suffering in our lives. It is something we do for ourselves. *It is about our own healing and growth.* As we heal from the wounds that have been inflicted on us we are free again to love the other person. This may be a long process. It does not mean excusing the behavior that caused the harm. The other person benefits from our healing because we no longer seek revenge on that person - only justice for their behavior. We are mandated to forgive which means we are mandated to heal and grow past our own suffering. Forgiveness is *for* us.

What is pride?

Pride is the sin of defending ourselves against our own shame and sense of worthlessness by denying that we have done anything wrong or behaved in a way that was not in keeping with the intent of God. Instead of feeling appropriate guilt for wrong behavior we feel overwhelming SHAME and believe the lie that *who we are* is BAD. We do not see that we are good and loving and that out of unawareness or ignorance, we make mistakes. Since we see ourselves as bad and evil, we believe that all that emanates from us must also be bad. Every wrong-doing or criticism becomes proof of our badness. The shame of this false belief is so great that in defense we pretend that we are perfect. We say, "there is nothing wrong with me," and "I did nothing wrong." It is a deathlike feeling to admit sin when we believe it to mean we are evil because it is antithetical to who we really are. The defense of a false, perfect persona can become so great that it can take over the personality. Then all that others see is grandiosity, arrogance and a false kind of self-confidence and charm. Even the person themselves becomes fooled. When we do this we have adopted a stance of *self-righteousness* and *hypocrisy* that sets us apart from knowing God's unconditional love and acceptance of us. If we cannot acknowledge a mistake before others and God, how can we ever hear that we are loved and loving despite our sins? Pride is the one sin that we choose that sets us apart from God and the possibility of forgiveness, healing and grace. It is the one sin that angered Jesus. All that is acknowledged in the knowledge that I am loved and lovable is forgiven. It is what is not acknowledged that cannot be forgiven - not because God withholds it, but because we refuse it. Jesus was righteously angry because it meant that the pharisees in the church put themselves beyond the possibility of hearing God's infinite love for them. They believed themselves ministers of God but were further from God than the imperfect sinners in the streets.

In what ways are we ordinary sinners loved by God and in what ways are we self-righteous pharisees parading as holy persons removed from God?

