

MONDAY MANNA

4 November 2019

THE PERILS OF OVERBLOWN SELF-IMPORTANCE

By Rick Boxx

My son-in-law, Brian, met with a mutual friend who previously had served as CFO for a well-known, publicly traded company. When I asked how his meeting went, Brian replied, "He shared an idea with me that I will never forget: 'You are never as important as you think.'"

An older, wiser businessman of this man's stature sharing this insight with Brian was both profound and helpful. The executive knew well what it was like to hold a role of considerable power and prominence. However, he had also learned firsthand how fleeting influence and prestige can be. Without even a moment's notice, it can all be stripped away.

That day, Brian learned no matter how high or low on the corporate ladder it may be, every position is vulnerable and replaceable. This is true for top executives, baseball managers and football coaches, elected officials, restaurant managers and construction foremen. No one is indispensable. For this reason, it is crucial that we guard our hearts against pride, especially when we have experienced some successes in life.

The executive wisely said, "You are never as important as you think." In the Scriptures we find similar words of caution. For instance, the apostle Paul in Romans 12:3 offered this admonition: *"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you."*

In numerous passages, the Bible uses the term "puffed up" to describe people who have gotten caught up with pride and the delusion of self-importance. Colossians 2:18 warns of becoming deceived of people with wrong motives and beliefs: *"Do not let anyone who delights in false humility...disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind."*

How can we avoid these pitfalls – becoming "puffed up" or thinking more highly of ourselves than we should? Some other passages are helpful in this respect:

Recognise the pitfalls of pride. We all have encountered people that seemed convinced that no one in the room was as important as they were. Often these same people experience humiliation when they fail, or someone proves their self-assessments were greatly exaggerated. *"When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom"* (Proverbs 11:2).

Make a conscious effort to show deference to others. Numerous studies have shown that the most effective leaders, the ones that succeed in motivating and inspiring those they lead, are those who exhibit humility and genuine concern for other people. *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others"* (Philippians 2:3-4).

Remember how fleeting praise can be. It can be gratifying to receive compliments and commendations, but they can also become stumbling blocks if we start taking those good words too seriously and start pounding ourselves on the back. *"The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but man is tested by the praise he receives"* (Proverbs 27:21).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

The executive stated, "You are never as important as you think you are." Do you agree with this? Can you think of any exceptions? Explain your answer.

Who can you think of that at one time or another has exhibited the "puffed up" attitude described in this Monday Manna? What was that individual like – and how did you respond to him or her?

Have you ever struggled personally with an exaggerated sense of self-importance? If so, in what ways – and how have you dealt with it?

What, in your opinion, is the best way to remember we are not as important as we might think we are? How would you communicate this to someone else?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 12:9, 16:5,18, 18:12, 21:4,24, 26:12

Romans 2:8, 12:10

Ephesians 5:21