

INTRODUCTION

Before I moved to Texas 17 years ago, I thought every Texan was an arrogant, braggadocios, blowhard. Since moving here I’ve discovered it’s true! Texans love to boast. I love the funny story about the Texas rancher who was visiting his cousin who was a farmer in Vermont. He looked at his cousin’s small acreage and said, “Why, son, in Texas, I can get in my pickup and drive all day and I won’t get to the end of my property!” The Vermont farmer said, “Yeah, I used to have a truck like that!”

I used to also think the only rednecks were in Alabama, but I’ve discovered the proudest rednecks are in Texas. I’ve put together a list of the top ten things you’ll never hear a Texas redneck say:

10. “I thought Graceland was tacky.”
9. “We don’t keep firearms in this house.”
8. “I’ll have the fruit plate instead of the biscuits and gravy.”
7. “You can’t feed that to the dog.”
6. “I’ll take Shakespeare for \$1,000 Alex.”
5. “The tires on that truck are too big.”
4. “Those Little Debbie cakes have just too many fat grams.”
3. “I don’t have a favorite football team.”
2. “Checkmate.”
1. “Duct tape won’t fix that.”

Boasting is a real problem today, but it’s nothing new. Two thousand years ago the Apostle Paul was writing to a group of dysfunctional Christians in Corinth and one of the problems he addressed was how there were people in the church who were suffering from the disease I called “Comparisonitis” in the last message. And when they compared themselves to each other, they started boasting about how great they thought they were.

2 Corinthians 10:12-18. “We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise. We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the field God has assigned to us, a field that reaches even to you. We are not going too far in our boasting, as would be the case if we had not come to you, for we did get as far as you with the gospel of Christ. Neither do we go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand, so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in another man’s territory. But, ‘Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.’ [Jeremiah 9:24] For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.”

Have you ever known someone who had to always boast that they were better than everyone else? If you tell a joke, they try to tell a funnier joke. If you talk about taking a trip to New York, they want to talk about their trip to Paris. One of my favorite characters on Saturday Night Live

is Penelope, played by Kristen Wiig. Penelope is caricature of a boaster. She inserts herself in a conversation, twists her hair, and talks about how she is so much better than the others. In one episode, a guy says, “I’m going to work out at my health club; it’s a 24-hour fitness club.” And Penelope says, “I’m going to work out at my club and it’s a 25, 26, 28-hour fitness club, and I like work out 28 hours a day.” He says, “Next week I’m going to Hawaii to spend a couple of weeks there.” Penelope says, “So, I’m going to Hawaii and I’m spending like four, six, maybe twenty weeks there.” He says, “I’m flying first class.” Penelope jumps in and says, “So, I’m flying ... best class, in a private jet all by myself.” The guy says, “I’m taking my dad with me.” Penelope says, “Well my biological father is George Washington, and he’s on the one dollar bill—and I’m on the one dollar bill, that’s my eye on the pyramid.” She is absolutely obnoxious in her boasting. Chances are, most of us know someone like Penelope who always has to get “one up” on everyone else.

When Paul addressed boasting he quoted a passage from Jeremiah 9, which I believe is the best verse in Bible about boasting. “This is what the LORD says: ‘Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight.’” (Jeremiah 9:23-24) There’s a kind of boasting that is destructive, but there is also a kind of boasting that is delightful. And there’s a kind of boasting that should be delayed. First let’s talk about:

I. DESTRUCTIVE BOASTING—BRAGGING ABOUT MYSELF

There is a kind of arrogant boasting that destroys good relationships. Nobody really likes being around someone how is constantly talking about how great they are. Truly great people don’t brag about themselves. The English philosopher Francis Bacon said: “The less people speak of their greatness the more we think of it.” There are three kinds of boasting that should be avoided.

(1) Don’t brag about your brains!

The Bible says, “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom.” Have you known people who quickly tell you how many degrees they’ve earned? Or they want to tell what score they made on the SAT or ACT test. Education is wonderful, and you should get all you can, but not for bragging purposes. I remember country comedian Jerry Clower used to say, “Some people have been educated beyond their intelligence!”

There’s a funny story about a pastor, a Boy Scout and a scientist who were on a private plane. The plane experienced some mechanical problems in flight. The pilot came back into the cabin and explained that the plane was going down but there were only three parachutes and there were four people. The pilot said, “I should have one of the parachutes because I have a wife and two children.” So he took one of the parachutes and jumped out of the plane. The scientist said, “I should have one of the parachutes, because I’m one of the smartest men in the world and everyone needs my intelligence.” He grabbed one of the parachutes and jumped out. The pastor turned to the Boy Scout and said, “You are young and I’ve lived a full life, so you take the one remaining parachute and I’ll go down with the plane.” The Boy Scout said, “Relax, Pastor, the smartest man in the world just jumped out with my backpack, so we still have two parachutes

remaining!”

We all have the sinful tendency to compare ourselves with others and consider we’re smarter. Any time you put someone down by saying something like, “He’s not the sharpest knife in the drawer” or “he doesn’t have both oars in the water” what you’re really doing is boasting that you think you have more brains than they do. So, stop boasting about how smart you think you are!

(2) DON’T BRAG ABOUT YOUR BRAWN!

The Bible goes on to say, “or the strong man boast of his strength.” Since the time of Samson in the Old Testament, folks have been showing off their muscles and bragging about their strength. We tend to idolize the athletes who are the fastest, biggest, and the strongest. Our culture is so obsessed with muscles, that we even have contests to judge the most defined musclemen and women.

Before there was Oprah, Johnny Carson or David Letterman, the first talk show host was Merv Griffin. In one of his first shows, Merv was interviewing a professional body builder. During the interview Merv asked, “Why do you develop those particular muscles?” In response the body builder stepped forward and flexed those muscles. Merv said, “No, I mean *what* do you use those particular muscles for?” Again, the body builder flexed his muscles, and Merv persisted, “No, I asked you *what* do you use those muscles for?” The body builder was bewildered and didn’t have an answer because the only reason he developed his muscles was to show them off for competition. He was proud of his strength.

Today, there’s another kind of strength people brag about, we call it power. People who have certain jobs sometimes try to throw their power and authority around by verbally abusing the people who are under them. But the best bosses are those who don’t abuse their power, or brag about their authority, instead they use it for the good of the organization.

When I was a kid, I can remember playing a game called “King of the Hill.” There really wasn’t much to it. You just found a little rise or a pile of dirt and stood there and yelled, “I’m the king of the hill.” And then the guys you were playing with would try to dethrone you by running at you and trying to tackle you or knock you off the hill. It was great fun! The sad thing is that little boys and girls grow up and still try to play King of the Hill in their jobs and in their relationships, but God’s Word says, “Don’t boast about your strength.”

(3) DON’T BRAG ABOUT YOUR BUCKS!

God’s Word says we shouldn’t boast about our wisdom, our strength, or “or the rich man boast of his riches.” It’s easy to boast about money.

Those “high-society people” who have a lot of money often look down their noses at poorer people. They boast about being “the upper crust.” Again, Jerry Clower had a good definition of the upper crust. He called them “a few crumbs held together by a little dough.”

Don’t brag about the money you have, because money can be here today and gone tomorrow.

Someone said that “money talks” and what it says a lot of the time is “bye-bye.” Jesus said a person’s life doesn’t consist of the abundance of riches one possesses. In Luke 12 He told the story of rich farmer who had such a great harvest that he had to tear down his old barns and build bigger barns to store all his stuff. When he filled all his barns he decided to retire. He said, “I’m going to just take it easy and eat, drink, and be merry.” But that very night God came and said, “You fool! This very night your life is demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?” Then Jesus said, “This is how it will be for anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:20-21)

It’s human nature to want to brag, but remember our human nature is also our sinful nature! There’s an ancient Mongolian fable called “The Frog and the Geese” that illustrates the dangers of bragging. Once upon a time, some geese had a frog for a friend. They told him of the warm summers they enjoyed every year, while the frog had to endure the frigid winters. The frog really wanted to go south, but since he couldn’t fly, there was no way he could make the trip. Mr. Frog was pretty smart, so he devised a plan that might work. He found a nice strong stick and suggested two geese take the end of the stick in their beaks and meanwhile he would grab the center of the stick with his mouth and he would hang on while they flew carrying the stick. The plan worked like a dream and before long you could see the two geese flying side by side carrying a stick and in the middle of the stick was the frog hanging on with his mouth for dear life. As they flew south, it was an interesting sight. Other geese flew by and commented how smart the two geese were to come up with such a brilliant idea. Of course, this made Mr. Frog angry, because it was his idea! As they flew low over a wetland area, other frogs looked up and cheered at the flying frog. They shouted, “Those geese are brilliant to think up such a smart idea.” Mr. Frog became angrier by the minute—it was his idea, after all—nobody else should get the credit. Finally he could take it no longer, Mr. Frog opened his mouth to say, “It’s myyyyyyyyyy idea!” as he fell from the sky. The moral of that fable is that it’s amazing how much can get accomplished with you don’t care who gets the credit!

The reason we can’t brag is that every blessing in our life comes from God. The Bible says it this way, “Does the ax raise itself above him who swings it, or the saw boast against him who uses it?” (Isaiah 10:15) If you used a saw to cut a board, what right would the saw have to say, “Look what I just did?” A saw is only a tool in the hand of a carpenter. Without the carpenter, what could the saw do? Nothing. In the same way, we shouldn’t boast because we are simply tools in the hands of the Carpenter from Nazareth. Jesus said, “Without me you can do nothing.” There is another kind of boasting that is not destructive—it is:

II. DELIGHTFUL BOASTING—BOASTING ABOUT GOD

The Psalmist sang, “My soul will boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice.” (Psalm 34:2) In Jeremiah 9 God said we should boast that we can understand God and know Him. Isn’t that the most revolutionary concept you’ve ever encountered? That you can know God? People often wonder, “HOW can I know God?” To me, there are at least three different levels that represent ways people try to know God.

LEVEL 1: IMAGINATION—This is where we construct our own do-it-yourself God

Philosophers have long asked the question, “Did God create man in His own image, or did man create God in his own image?” Well, the answer to both of those can be “yes.” Every person, even an atheist, carries around a mental image of God. For the atheist, the image is just a blank screen. Our mental image of God is influenced by many factors as we grow older. As children, we instinctively project our feelings about our parents onto our image of God. Then we add other impressions to our Deity database from our exposure to teachers, churches, friends, world events and personal experiences. Basically, all of life’s impressions go into our brain and we mix them all up and develop our own image of what we think God is like. That’s why some people imagine God is bad cop god who patrols the universe with a big stick waiting to whack anyone he catches breaking His law. Or others see God as a Mr. Goodwrench-God who has a tool box full of tools to fix life’s problems. Mr. Goodwrench-God is only consulted when you need something fixed. Or others see God as a grandfatherly God, sitting on his porch rocking away, just enjoying his creation. Because of his age and senility he’s either unknowing of our needs, or unable to do anything to help us.

Everyone first creates their own image of God in their imagination. This image of God may be factual or faulty. But if all you are using is your brain—your imagination—to construct some image of God, you must be willing to admit you might be deceiving yourself and believing God is someone other than who He really is. But fortunately, you aren’t left to the whims of your imagination alone because there is another level of knowing God.

LEVEL 2: INVITATION—It’s possible for you to enter a relationship with Him

Do you know God or do you just know *about* God? What if I decided I wanted to get to know Tiger Woods? He has such layers of security and protection around him that I couldn’t just show up at his front door uninvited. Now, I can imagine what Tiger is like, because I’ve watched him on television and read articles about him and by him in *Golf Digest*. I can tell you a lot of things about him. He’s won 14 major golf tournaments and 65 PGA events. He’s married to Elin and they have a daughter, Sam Alexis. But if you ask me if I know Tiger Woods, I’d have to say, “No I don’t. I know about him, but I’ve never met him.”

But what if I got an invitation from Tiger to join him for a round of golf when he recuperates from his knee surgery? I’d do everything I could to accept that invitation because I’d love to meet him and tell him what a difference Jesus can make in his life! Now, I’m not holding my breath until I get an invitation from Tiger, but you and I have already received a more valuable invitation. The God of the Universe has issued an invitation for His children to get to know Him. The invitation is repeated throughout the Bible, but here’s one version of it: “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost ... give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live.” (Isaiah 55:1, 3)

This isn’t about a religion, it’s about a relationship. God invites us to enter into a love relationship with Him. Eternal life is NOT living forever. Eternal life is knowing God.

J.I. Packer wrote: “What were we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight, and contentment,

than anything else? Knowledge of God.” Have you accepted God’s personal invitation to get to know Him? When you do, then there’s even another level of intimacy that you can experience.

LEVEL 3: INVESTIGATION—Once you accept His invitation then you can explore God’s revelation

What if Tiger Woods invited me to do more than just play a round of golf with him? What if he invited me to be his friend? I’d want to learn everything about him I could. I’d be asking about his life growing up in LA and his relationship with his dad. I’d want to know about his relationship with his little girl, Sam, and I’d sure ask him for a few tips about my golf swing for sure!

God has invited us to get to Him in a way that has no boundaries or limits. He wants us to grow in our relationship with Him. If you want to know God better, then devote yourself to investigate the three main ways God has revealed Himself. God has revealed Himself through (1) His Creation. The heavens declare the glory of God; the stars are His handiwork. God has revealed Himself through (2) His Word. The Bible is more than a history book; it’s a collection of God’s love letters to His children. You could learn a lot about me by reading my letter. In the same way you can learn more about God by reading His Word. God has most perfectly revealed Himself through (3) His Son, Jesus. Jesus said, “When you see me you’ve seen the Father.” In Jeremiah, God said He is “the Lord who exercises kindness, justice, and righteousness on earth.” Jesus was the greatest expression of God’s kindness, righteousness, and justice.

So if you want to boast, go ahead and boast! Boast about knowing God. Brag about what a great God we serve! Whenever you shout, “God is good all the time and all the time God is good” you’re boasting in the Lord.

III. DELAYED BOASTING—BOASTING WHEN MY RACE IS FINISHED

There’s one final kind of boasting I want to mention. The title of this message is “Saving the **BOAST** for last.” The Bible says, “Do everything without complaining or arguing ... as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing.” (Philippians 2:14-16) Paul said he was not going to boast about any of his accomplishments in this life, but there will be a time when he could boast. But that time would be delayed until “the day of Christ.” That could either mean at the time of the return of Christ, or, as in Paul’s case, when he died and stood before the Lord. For sure, we know that it is when he realized he “did not run or labor in vain.”

The reason we cannot boast about anything we’ve done so far is that we aren’t finished yet! We’re still on the track. The race is still going on. What runner would stop on the track at a race and say, “Well, I’ve won” even though he hadn’t crossed the finish line yet?

The Bible tells us we’re in a race so we must lay aside every weight and the sin that easily entangles us. We must run with patience looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Only when we stand before the Lord and hear Him boast about us, “Well done, good and faithful servant” can we breathe a sigh of relief and boast in the Lord that we finished the race He set out

for us. So save your boast for the last, because it will, indeed be the best boast when you save it for last.

CONCLUSION

But even then, our boast won't be about us, it will be about Jesus in us, for without Jesus we are nothing. Paul had plenty to brag about. In Philippians 3 he wrote that if anyone *could* boast in the flesh, he would qualify. He was of the tribe of Benjamin, circumcised the eighth day, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, highly educated, and when it came to keeping the legalistic rules he was faultless. But once he came to know Jesus, these things became worthless. In fact he wrote, “These things that I once thought were gain I now consider them to be loss—to be worth less than sewage [he used a common word for “dung”] when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 3:7-8) And in the last chapter of his letter to the Galatians he wrote, “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” (Galatians 6:14)

On the morning after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the little donkey awoke, still savoring the memory of the most exciting day of his life. Never before had he felt such a rush of pleasure and pride. The donkey walked into town and found a group of people by the well. “I'll show myself to them,” he thought. But they didn't notice him. They went on drawing their water and paid him no mind. “Throw your garments down,” he said crossly. “Don't you know who I am?” They just looked at him in amazement. Someone slapped him across the haunches and ordered him to move. “Miserable heathens!” he muttered to himself. “I'll just go to the market where the good people are. They will remember me.” But the same thing happened. No one paid any attention to the donkey as he strutted down the main street in front of the market place. “The palm branches! Where are the palm branches?!” he shouted. “Yesterday, you threw palm branches in front of me!” Hurt and confused, the donkey returned home to his mother. “Foolish child,” she said gently. “Don't you realize that without Jesus, you are just an ordinary donkey?” And brothers and sisters, the same is true of us. Without Jesus we are nothings, so let's save the **BOAST** last, because the Boast is yet to come!

OUTLINE

I. DESTRUCTIVE BOASTING—BRAGGING ABOUT MYSELF

Don't brag about your:

- (1) Brains!
- (2) Brawn!
- (3) Bucks!

II. DELIGHTFUL BOASTING—BOASTING ABOUT GOD

Ways people try to know God:

Level 1: Imagination—Do-it-yourself “DIY” God

Level 2: Invitation—Enter a relationship with Him

Level 3: Investigation—Explore God's revelation

III. DELAYED BOASTING—BOASTING WHEN MY RACE IS FINISHED



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes