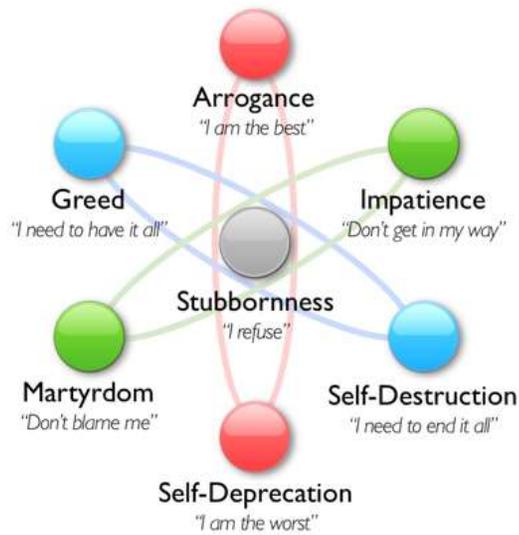


## The Heart of Suffering: Resistance to Change



“Seven Chief Features of the Ego” from: <http://personalityspirituality.net>

The ego is that part of our psyche that sees itself as autonomous and separate from others: things, people, the earth, and God. The ego does this so it can exercise maximum control over a perceived hostile environment in order to survive. Psychologists sometimes call this our “lizard brain”. It is competitive and anxious. Biblical authors use words like “flesh” and “sin” to describe much of the ego’s behavior. It wants to be in the driver’s seat all the time! Yet, when properly “managed”, the ego does provide helpful insights for successful living. The only effective manager for the ego is God’s Spirit. The only way to come under that kind of management is to trust like a little child, kindly letting the ego off his/her throne and letting the crucified Christ begin to release a new kind of peace and direction into our lives. We become a new creation.

The graphic above helps us to understand some of the key dimensions of the ego. Jesus responds to each of these in his famous Sermon on the Mount:

- **Arrogance: Matthew 5:5** Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.
- **Impatience: Matthew 6:34** So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself.

- **Self-Destruction: Matthew 7:11** "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!"
- **Self-Deprecation: Matthew 6:26** Look at the birds of the <sup>1</sup>air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?
- **Martyrdom: Matthew 7:3** "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?"
- **Greed: Matthew 5:3** Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

At the very center of the ego’s character is “stubbornness”. It resists accountability or any kind of dependence. It says “No!” to any kind of personal change. The ego vigorously defends its right to “do it my way” (sorry Mr. Sinatra), expending energy trying to change *others* rather than be transformed itself. It believes it is autonomous, after all! Yet, the whole point of life is to be transformed more and more into the image of God. Only the Spirit can do this.

The Spirit teaches us about living in an intimate love-connection with God, ourselves, other people, and all of creation (Mk. 12: 29-30). This love-connection is so important that Jesus tells us to “love our enemies” and even not to “resist an evil person” (Mt. 5: 38-48)! Learning to surrender our resistance to trying to change others means I am fully committed to letting God change me from the inside out. I move from *stubbornness* to *surrender*, learning to fully trust God’s provision for me, one step at a time, in the midst of painful circumstances. Thus, the pain itself is transformed into something *shared* (with God & all creation) and something that will ultimately change us more into His Image (Rom. 8: 16-29; Phil. 3:10). Suffering is replaced by brokenness more aware of God’s healing embrace (Ps. 34:18).

Let us know if we can help in any way:



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