

Choosing Humility

Lesson 7

Unit Two: Self-Esteem

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:5, 6; Proverbs 16:18, 19

Life Focus: God wants us to be humble, not proud.



Today's Challenge

How can we have healthy self-esteem but not be filled with pride? Participate in these activities and learn how humility is part of self-esteem.

Step 1

Setting the Stage

Describe how arrogant people behave.

Step 2

Searching the Word

Contrast pride and humility.

Step 3

Making It Real

Illustrate pride and humility with specific, present-day situations.

Step 4

Living It Out

Look for ways to increase your humility.

Impossibly Proud

It is said that 80 percent of Americans consider themselves to be above-average drivers. (Do the math!) Similarly, several years ago a study showed that American students scored far lower than their peers in many other countries when tested for their knowledge of math and science. Yet when responding to the statement "I am good at math and science," a much higher percentage of American students agreed than did their more competent counterparts!

The fact of the matter is, many of us think more highly of ourselves than the evidence indicates. The Bible helps us distinguish between pride and humility: one is *selfish*; the other, *selfless*.

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Hide It in Your Heart

In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

—1 Peter 5:5

For a pre-session or take-home activity, lead kids in memorizing this key verse, using the puzzle found on your *Young Teen Resources* CD.

1 Peter 5:5, 6

⁵In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,

"God opposes the proud
but shows favor to the humble."

⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Proverbs 16:18, 19

¹⁸Pride goes before destruction,
a haughty spirit before a fall.

¹⁹Better to be lowly in spirit along with the oppressed
than to share plunder with the proud.

Encountering God's Word

SELFISH Proverbs 16:18, 19

God formed Adam and Eve in His own image. But in attempting to become like God, the parents of all humankind rebelled, separating themselves—and all who would follow—from God's grace. Solomon echoes that truth, saying, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). Other verses in Proverbs declare that pride is an evil to be hated (8:13), leads to disgrace (11:2), and breeds quarrels (13:10). The arrogant are humiliated when their pretensions overreach their true status. They may suffer public embarrassment in this life and certainly will go down to destruction in the life to come.

Pride uses blessings to achieve personal comfort and power.

We also have self-esteem because of a position God gives us in this life. Peter was chosen by Jesus to follow and learn from Him.

But distortion of that privilege turned to pride. By the time he had spent most of three years following Jesus, Peter boldly promised, "Even if all fall away, I will not. . . . Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you" (Mark 14:29-31). But a few hours later that same night, Peter denied Jesus three times.

Thirty years later, as a respected apostle and leader, Peter remembered his own pride in his younger days. Aiming his words first to youth, Peter said, "Submit yourselves to your elders" (1 Peter 5:5). He used a term that was often found in a military context, where it meant "put yourself under the authority of" a superior officer. (The same word was used by Paul in Romans 13:1, where he told Christians to "be subject to" the authorities in their government.) As Peter himself finally had learned, if we want to follow in the steps of Jesus, we have to learn that neither our nature nor our position is a license to feel superior to others.

Ty Cobb is known as one of the best baseball players who ever lived. He also is known as one of the least likable players ever. He was known to sharpen his spikes to injure other players. He fought with players, umpires, and even fans. He was openly racist. His career .367 batting average may never be surpassed, but his reputation will always be tainted by his pride.

SELFLESS 1 Peter 5:5, 6

Humble people recognize that creation in God's image and a calling to His service are not earned but granted. Therefore, they rejoice in what God has made them and find their worth in being His children.

This leads to a healthy relationship with God. God

loves humility. He "takes delight" (finds something pleasing and acceptable) in His people; He "crowns the humble with victory" (Psalm 149:4). Though proud and wicked people have "no room for God" in their hearts (10:4), humble people are glad to embrace God and accept His help. More importantly, God is glad to embrace them! Peter had heard Jesus himself say, "All those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Luke 14:11). He also recalled the words of Solomon in Proverbs 3:34, "God mocks proud mockers but shows favor to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5). When people are full of pride, they become rivals with God for the right to sit on the throne of their lives. On the other hand, when people humble themselves, they are in a position to receive God's grace. Therefore, it only makes good sense to humble ourselves and admit that all power is in the mighty hand of God (v. 6). Then, just as Jesus and Solomon promised, God will lift us up.

Humility also leads to a healthy relationship with other people. When we recognize that who we are is a gift of God, we are more likely to see God's goodness in others. Counseling humility for all Christians, Peter commanded, "Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another" (v. 5). Compare the similar statement of Paul, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21).

This lesson of humility went against the typical thinking of the day. Both Greek and Roman writers confined this word *humility*

Humility uses blessings selflessly.

to slaves and low-class people. People who could hold their heads high in society did not need to debase themselves by practicing "humility." But society's way is not God's way. Since value comes from God alone, we are free to embrace others, regardless of social or economic status. For that reason it is better to ignore social station than to use position arrogantly as a way to exploit (Proverbs 16:19).

Sammy Morris was a young man from Africa who came to the United States to go to school. When he arrived at Taylor University in Indiana, the school's president asked him what room he wanted. Sammy said simply, "If there is a room nobody wants, give it to me." In that simple statement, Sammy demonstrated a humble spirit and showed where his priorities lay.

By knowing who we truly are in God, we can have self-esteem without arrogance. Humility goes hand in hand with healthy self-esteem.

Life Focus: God wants us to be humble, not proud.

Use one of the following activities to help your students describe how arrogant people behave.

QUICK STEP You Might Be Arrogant If . . .

After all students arrive, turn with them to page 28 in the student book. Read aloud the humorous list there. Then discuss:

- **Is it easy to identify people who are arrogant? Without naming any names, describe things people do that are arrogant.** (If they want, have your class come up with their own funny things to add to the list in the student book.)

- **Do you want to be around arrogant people? Why or why not? Have you ever caught yourself acting arrogantly? How did you feel once you realized how you were behaving?**

Lead into Bible study by saying: **Some people believe they are wonderful and talented and generally better than everyone else. Pride is an easy thing to develop. Today we're going to look at a biblical perspective of the trap of pride vs. the blessings of humility.**

"Good Manners"

Begin the *Mr. Deeds* video clip when Deeds says, "This is wicked nice for you guys to invite us over here." In this scene, the New York City elitists ridicule a naïve Mr. Deeds. Stop the video as Deeds says, "I hope I didn't embarrass you." (Note: At the time of publication, this clip titled "Good Manners" was available from www.wingclips.com.) You may wish to show our classic TV clip "A Lesson in Arrogance" instead. Discuss either clip with these questions:

- **Who in this clip would you describe as being arrogant? Have you ever seen someone in authority act this way? Tell about it.**

- **List some characteristics of arrogant people. Do you want to be around arrogant people? Why or why not? Have you ever caught yourself acting arrogantly? How did you feel once you realized how you were behaving?**

Lead into Bible study by saying: **Some people believe they are wonderful and talented and generally better than everyone else. Pride is an easy thing to develop. Today we're going to look at a biblical perspective of the trap of pride vs. the blessings of humility.**

The Scene

For an opening activity based on a current events, download The Scene online. Go to <http://www.21stcc.com/> and click on "Downloads." There you'll find a free article with discussion questions to begin this week's lesson.

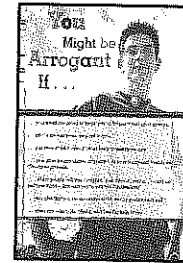


Time
10 minutes

discussion

Materials

Young Teen Student



Time
10 minutes

video

Materials

copy of *Mr. Deeds* (2002) (or *Young Teen Resources CD*), audiovisual equipment



news



Step 2 Searching the Word

Life Focus: God wants us to be humble, not proud.

Use one of the following activities to help your students contrast pride and humility.

Time

20 minutes

puzzle

Materials

Young Teen Student, Bibles, pens, dictionaries



Time

20 minutes

creative writing

Materials

Bibles, paper, pens

QUICK STEP Translation Match

Turn with students to page 29 in their student books. Make sure Bibles, pens, and dictionaries are available to all. Have students match the wordy translations of portions of Scripture to the actual translations and references. After work is done, have students share their answers. Correct responses follow:

1. Pride goes before destruction (Proverbs 16:18).
2. God crowns the humble with salvation (Psalm 149:4).
3. God opposes the proud (1 Peter 5:5).
4. Humble yourselves, that God may lift you up in due time (1 Peter 5:6).
5. God gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5).

Discuss the content of the verses by asking: **How does pride affect our relationships with others? with God? How does humility affect our relationships with others? with God?**

Close discussion with these words: **Pride is distorted self-esteem. We place ourselves in a higher position among others than we deserve, which damages our relationships. We even challenge God's authority in the process. On the other hand, humility is self-esteem clearly understood. We rejoice in being created in God's image and thank Him for His grace. We recognize that same image in others and refuse to feel superior to those also created in that image. Let's explore more of what it means to act with humility.**

Similes

A simile is a comparison that uses the words *like* or *as*. For example, "The round, yellow harvest moon looked *like* a wheel of cheddar cheese" is a simile. "The call of the barn owl sounded *as mournful as* a funeral dirge" is also a simile. Divide students into groups of three to five students, giving each Bibles, pens, paper, and one of these Scripture assignments: 1 Peter 5:5, 6 or Proverbs 16:18, 19. Ask each group to read its Scripture and create one or more similes describing proud or humble people, based on what their Scripture says.

As groups work, move among them, helping them as necessary.

Encountering God's Word and these sample similes may help:

The humble are like those dressed in modest clothing, not trying to make themselves look better than everyone else (1 Peter 5:5).

Being proud is like driving a car while wearing a blindfold, because a crash is coming (Proverbs 16:18).

Have students share completed similes and explain them. Close discussion with these words: **Pride is distorted self-esteem. We place ourselves in a higher position among others than we deserve, which damages our relationships. We even challenge God's authority in the process. On the other hand, humility is self-esteem clearly understood. We rejoice in being created in God's image and thank Him for His grace. We recognize that same image in others and refuse to feel superior to those also created in that image. Let's explore more of what it means to act with humility.**

Life Focus: God wants us to be humble, not proud.

Use one of the following activities to help your students illustrate pride and humility with specific, present-day situations.

QUICK STEP Scenarios

Divide your class into four groups. Have everyone turn to page 30 in the student book. Assign each group one of the four scenarios. As instructed on the student page, each group should come up with two skits. The first skit should demonstrate how the situation would happen if the person in the scenario acted selfish and proud. The second skit should demonstrate how that same situation would be different if the person acted selfless and humble.

Allow the groups time to work, and then have the groups perform their skits. Then ask: **Do you know anyone who has faced similar situations to what is described here in the book? Did they respond with pride or humility? How would you respond in these same situations?** Lead into the final lesson step by saying: **We all are tempted to be more prideful than we should be. Let's look at what we can do to increase our own humility.**

News Analysis

Divide your class into small groups, giving each a section of a newspaper. Ask them to do the following: **Find an article about someone who has a great blessing (power, wealth, talent, etc.). Determine whether the person is using that blessing with pride or with humility. Retell the same story, showing the person using that blessing with the opposite trait.**

Help groups with their assignments as necessary. They may find an article about a sports figure using his ability to demand a huge salary. They may retell the story, having the sports figure giving his time to visit children's hospitals. A computer expert may use knowledge to create a damaging virus, but that same person might use that knowledge to write a program to improve education.

When assignments are complete, have groups report. **If you had the abilities or opportunities that the people in these articles had, would you be tempted to use them selfishly for your personal gain?** Lead into the final lesson step by saying: **We all are tempted to be more prideful than we should be. Let's look at what we can do to increase our own humility.**

Time
20 minutes

drama

Materials
Young Teen Student



Time
20 minutes

report

Materials
several newspapers

Step 4 Living It Out

Life Focus: God wants us to be humble, not proud.

Use one of the following activities to help your students look for ways to increase their humility.

Time

10 minutes

self-evaluation

Materials

ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine*
for each student, pens



Time

10 minutes

challenge

Materials

whiteboard, dry-erase markers, pens,
index cards

QUICK STEP "Do You Understand Humility?"

Distribute copies of this week's issue of ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* and instruct your students to take the quiz "Do You Understand Humility?"

After giving everyone time to answer all the questions, go over the given answers to the quiz together. Lead discussion by asking these questions: **Are any of these scenarios at all like anything you've experienced? How so? Does anyone disagree with one of the answers provided in the quiz? In what kinds of situations do you find it most difficult to determine what it means to be humble or to act in humility?**

Ask each member of the class to choose a prayer partner. Ask partners to share the situations they have difficulty with. Close the class by asking partners to pray for each other.

To-Do List of Humility

Say: **Let's brainstorm some practical things we all can try this week to increase our humility.** Write the students' ideas on the board. Pull from these ideas if students get stuck:

- At the store, let someone go in front of you in line.
- When you work on a group project at school, give your partners credit for their work by complimenting their efforts to your teacher.
- Do a few extra chores around the house without being asked and without telling anyone that you did them.
- Spend a day with your friends and listen to their problems without ever mentioning any of yours.
- When you pray, praise God for His greatness rather than just asking for stuff.

After you are finished, challenge your students to jot down some ideas and put them into action this week. Close in prayer.

Distribute ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine*. You can either print these articles and hand them out or e-mail them to your students each week.

ENCOUNTER™

Here's what's in ENCOUNTER—*The Digital Magazine* this week:

- Quiz: Do You Understand Humility?
- "Two Kinds of Pride"
- "The 'Bad Boy' Experiment"