

## **LESSON 3** \*April 11–17

# Pride Versus Humility



## Sabbath Afternoon

**Read for This Week's Study:** [1 John 2:15–17](#), [Luke 18:9–14](#), [1 John 1:9](#), [Heb. 11:24–26](#), [Luke 22:24–27](#), [Phil. 2:3–8](#).

**Memory Text:** “ ‘For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted’ ” ([Luke 14:11, NKJV](#)).

We've all known people with big egos, those who think they are never wrong. Or perhaps you know someone who wants to be in control, who never is open to instruction or constructive criticism. Or someone who seems to be constantly in conflict or is a master of putting others down. Our minds might immediately think of others, but the real question is: What about each one of us? By pointing the finger at others and denying pride in our own life, we deceive ourselves.

We've all battled with pride. We've all experienced times we want to look, act, speak, or appear better than those around us because we believe that we are better than they are, at least in some way. Someone once said that pride emerges from the desire to show that our lives have value. Yet, we should already know that our lives have value because we were created by God, and we are those for whom Christ died.

This week we'll explore the impact that pride can have on our relationships with God and with others, and we'll look at what the Bible teaches us about humility before others and, of course, before God.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 18.

# SUNDAY April 12

## The Tight Fingers of Pride

*Pride.* When you think of this word, you might picture a proud politician, a rich or famous person, or a peacock. Pride is a feeling that you are more important or better than other people. Indeed, pride is a feeling—one that cannot, and should not, be relied upon.

Pride first began with Lucifer, the covering cherub, who was in close service to God. We don't know when or how those thoughts of selfishness crept into his heart, but we do know that these thoughts propelled the universe into what we know as the great controversy. We see that Satan is the opposite of God. (Compare [Isa. 14:12-14](#) and [Phil. 2:5-11](#).) As a result, our world has battled the consequences of sin ever since Satan planted doubt in Adam's and Eve's minds and then tempted them to love and trust self above God.

**Read** [1 John 2:15-17](#). **What three main points does this passage teach you about pride and loving the world?**

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Can pride ever be positive? Perhaps not in the context that we know it, although we might use the word positively, when speaking about a person's achievements or in the context of a deep appreciation for something someone has done ("I'm so proud of you!"). It's important to understand that pursuing excellence and acknowledging and appreciating the gifts and abilities God has given us is not necessarily being proud. According to Scripture, there is a proper kind of self-love (think about Jesus' command in [Mark 12:31](#), where He says to love others as we love ourselves), but this is always unselfish love. People are also not proud when they have God's presence in their lives and have a purposeful direction (see [1 Tim. 3:1](#)). People are proud when they don't give God the glory for what He is doing in their lives.

We should be careful to remember that our possessions, abilities, and accomplishments don't determine our value. Instead, our value should always come from God, because everything that we have, even that which tempts us to pride, comes only from Him anyway. This is a point we must never forget.

**Ask yourself: How prideful am I, really? How might personal pride be impacting my relationship with God and others?**

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# MONDAY April 13

## Know Yourself

Two men go to church to pray. One is a respected elder who stands at the front before church begins, in front of the congregation so they can see him. He prays aloud, thanking God for his own perceived goodness. The other man, a fringe dweller of society, stands at the very back of the church. His eyes are blurry with tears because of the weight on his shoulders from his sins. In the back corner of the church, he falls to his knees, whispering in desperation, “Please, Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner!”

**Read [Luke 18:9–14](#). What do you think of these two men? What did Jesus think? What important lesson is here for us all?**

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It’s very easy for us to exalt ourselves. Sometimes it becomes second nature to let others know of our accomplishments and how good we are. But these things, in and of themselves, make no difference to our reputation in heaven’s eyes. In fact, it’s actually contrary to what we might think, because “ ‘everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted’ ” ([Luke 18:14, NKJV](#)). Jesus also counsels us to take the lowest seat and let the host elevate you if he or she so wishes ([Luke 14:8–10](#)). This upside-down kingdom that Jesus teaches is the opposite of what we expect. “It is only he who knows himself to be a sinner that Christ can save.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 158.

In first realizing our true state of sinfulness and our desperate need of Christ, we can come to Him knowing with confidence that if “we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” ([1 John 1:9, NKJV](#)).

The closer we draw to Christ, the more we realize our sinfulness and unworthiness. “In one way only can a true knowledge of self be obtained. We must behold Christ. It is ignorance of Him that makes men so uplifted in their own righteousness.”—Christ’s *Object Lessons*, p. 159.

So, what does God think of the proud? [First Peter 5:5](#) tells us that “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” It couldn’t be clearer.

**When did you last experience God’s grace in your life? (Indeed, we should experience this grace daily.) We should also show grace to others. Spend some time in prayer right now, asking God to humble you under His mighty hand, that He alone may exalt you in due time.**

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## TUESDAY April 14

### Moses, Humble Servant

The grand halls of the Egyptian palace boasted of opulence, pleasure, and ease. “‘Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds’” ([Acts 7:22, NKJV](#)). A life of power, riches, and popularity were his for the taking; yet, Moses chose something very different. “As historian, poet, philosopher, general of armies, and legislator, he stands without a peer. Yet with the world before him, he had the moral strength to refuse the flattering prospects of wealth and greatness and fame, ‘choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.’”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 246.

**What** does [Hebrews 11:24–26](#) tell us about why Moses chose a different path and humbled himself?

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Moses’ later humility is remarkable, considering the powerful man he was and where he had come from. Yet, through an impulsive sinful act ([Exod. 2:12](#)), he lost his self-confidence and self-sufficiency. With mountains as his classroom walls and with pride swept aside, for 40 years Moses was taught by God what he needed to know to lead a nation out of slavery into the Promised Land. The power and riches of what could have been another life in Egypt paled in significance when Moses considered eternity. God had called him very specifically, and Moses followed.

Perhaps most significantly in light of this topic, [Numbers 12:3](#) tells us: “Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth” (NKJV). Moses, one of the great patriarchs of the Bible, is known for his humility, his meekness. Consider how different his life and leadership would have been had pride crept into each of these big events in his life: the burning bush, the plagues in Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, manna falling from heaven, talking directly to God, receiving the Ten Commandments, and hearing God’s words after he struck the rock.

**Reflect back over your life. If someone were to describe you, would they include “humble” or “meek” in the list of adjectives? Why or why not? The truth is that we can’t be humble in and of ourselves. Sin is part of our lives, which is why we need Jesus so much. Listen to, read, or sing the words in the hymn “I’d Rather Have Jesus,” and consider these words in relation to Moses’ life and yours.**

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# WEDNESDAY April 15

## The Greatest Offense

Imagine being a disciple of Jesus. You travel with Him, eat with Him, sleep near Him, and learn from Him as He transforms countless lives, including yours. People clamor after Him, and you realize how special it is that He chose you to be one of the 12 closest to Him. Then you start to wonder: Who really is the greatest of all the disciples?

**In [Luke 22:24–27](#), read Jesus’ response to the disciples’ dispute about what greatness means. Which statement captures the heart of Jesus’ message in these verses?**

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One would have thought that after all this time of being close to Jesus, this kind of debate would have been the last thing on their minds. But that is not what happened.

Instead of these men being content with their calling, pride rose in their hearts to where each one thought he was better than the others. It’s easy to allow such thoughts to dominate our minds. But we are told that “there is nothing so offensive to God or so dangerous to the human soul as pride and self-sufficiency. Of all sins it is the most hopeless, the most incurable.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 154.

This is very serious for us. Our pride offends God more than anything else, and it’s a character trait that is difficult to overcome because we often don’t see it for what it is. In our state of self-sufficiency, we choose not to self-evaluate, for surely pride is king. We need to stop, self-diagnose, and ask that God will open our eyes to our true state, because pride may be the number-one factor that keeps us from having a close relationship with Him today.

**If you realize that God alone can do the work to remove pride and selfishness from your soul, pause and pray this prayer right now: “Lord, take my heart; for I cannot give it. It is Thy property. Keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for Thee. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, unchristlike self. Mold me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the rich current of Thy love can flow through my soul.”—Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 159.**

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# THURSDAY April 16

Look at Him

**Read** [Luke 22:27](#) again. What is the key message for all of Christ's followers here?

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In stark contrast to the disciples' desire to be superior and their belief that they were better than the next guy, we see Jesus—the ultimate example of humility. Jesus, who said, “ ‘Yet I am among you as the One who serves’ ” ([Luke 22:27, NKJV](#)). Jesus, who every day gave to those in need around Him because He was filled with compassion and saw the multitudes as sheep without a shepherd. He knew that humanity needed Him more than anything else in life, though few realized this simple truth. Jesus, who gave up heaven to die for the human race in the hope that they would understand His act of grace and respond to His invitation to have a relationship with Him.

**Read** [Philippians 2:3–8](#). What do these verses tell us about how we should live in light of the Cross?

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Jesus did it *all*. He bore all. When we pause long enough to see Him—truly and purely—we can't help realizing our impurity, our filth, and our desperate need of Him in our lives today.

When we look to Him, everything else (especially ourselves and our own perceived greatness) pales into complete insignificance. Who Jesus is, what He has done, and how much He loves His creation becomes front and center. Self will surely disappear when we look at Him.

*Jesus*. What a beautiful, mighty name. He is the epitome of humility. When our open hearts learn about Him, when we understand what He has done for us, and when we allow His words of life to seep into our minds, we realize how proud and wretched we really are. If His own disciples, who lived and learned from Him, struggled with pride, we can't fool ourselves that we are any different. Ultimately, we can grow in our relationship with Jesus only when we are humble.

**Spend some extra time with Him right now. Take your Bible, a pen, and a journal or some paper and find somewhere quiet— perhaps even outside. Invite God to soften and speak to your heart. Write out Psalm 138, word for word. As you write, what words especially stand out to you?**

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## **FRIDAY** April 17

**Further Thought:** “The nearer we come to Jesus and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly we shall discern the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the less we shall feel like exalting ourselves. Those whom heaven recognizes as holy ones are the last to parade their own goodness.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 160.

“Before honor is humility. To fill a high place before men, Heaven chooses the worker who, like John the Baptist, takes a lowly place before God. The most childlike disciple is the most efficient in labor for God. The heavenly intelligences can co-operate with him who is seeking, not to exalt self, but to save souls. . . .

“When men exalt themselves, feeling that they are a necessity for the success of God’s great plan, the Lord causes them to be set aside. . . .

“It was not enough for the disciples of Jesus to be instructed as to the nature of His kingdom. What they needed was a change of heart that would bring them into harmony with its principles. . . . The simplicity, the self-forgetfulness, and the confiding love of a little child are the attributes that Heaven values. These are the characteristics of real greatness. . . .

“The sincere, contrite soul is precious in the sight of God. He places His own signet upon men, not by their rank, not by their wealth, not by their intellectual greatness, but by their oneness with Christ.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 436, 437.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1. What additional insights do the following verses have about pride and humility: [Matthew 23:12](#); [Psalm 25:9](#); [Psalm 149:4](#); and [James 4:6, 10](#)?**
- 2. Think honestly: When did you last “parade your own goodness”? How did this impact your relationship with God or those before whom you paraded it?**
- 3. What might you need to change in your life to humble yourself before God in order to strengthen your walk with Him?**

**Summary:** Pride can be one of the greatest blocks to growing in a relationship with God. If we feel self-sufficient and don’t realize our need of this relationship, we simply won’t pursue it. In contrast, Jesus was the humblest Man on earth and the most perfect example of how to have a close relationship with God.

## **INSIDE** **STORY**

### **“We Like to Help”**

A mother with three little girls walked up the path to Iolanda’s home in Belo Jaridin, a Brazilian city of 80,000 people.

Iolanda saw them coming. She was standing at the door, giving rice and beans to a stranger who had stopped by to ask for food. Her house was located on a busy street, and people regularly came to the door to ask for help. She was sure that the approaching visitors also needed a hand, so she waited after the stranger left.

When the mother and girls reached the door, Iolanda’s eyes fell on the children’s feet.

“Why are your children barefoot?” she asked.

The woman explained that her eight-year-old daughter’s sandals had broken, so she had asked her four- and six-year-old daughters to remove their sandals so their older sister wouldn’t feel ashamed.

“I’ll get a pair of sandals and some food,” Iolanda said.

She disappeared into the house and returned a moment later with sandals for the eight-year-old girl and a snack of plain crackers, plain cookies, and cold water.

The little girls beamed with joy. “Can we call you Grandma?” one asked.

The mother was surprised at Iolanda’s kindness.

“Why are you doing this?” she asked.

“I’m a Christian from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and we like to help people,” Iolanda said. “I sew clothes for children, and church members bring me many donations. So, I have lots of sandals and clothes.”

“I want to be part of this church,” the mother said. “I want to study the Bible with you.”

A year later, the mother was baptized and joined the Adventist Church.

Iolanda Xavier, an 86-year-old great-grandmother, believes that nothing is more important than obeying Jesus’ command, “ ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you’ ” (Matthew 28:19, 20; NKJV).

“Mission is really important,” she said. “All of us were born of God to be missionaries.”



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*Part of last quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, also known as the Quarterly Mission Project Offering, went to open a church at Pernambuco Adventist Academy in Brazil's state of Pernambuco, where Iolanda lives. Thank you for planning a generous offering for this quarter's projects. Watch a YouTube video of Iolanda at [bit.ly/Iolanda-IS](http://bit.ly/Iolanda-IS).*

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**Provided by the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission, which uses Sabbath School mission offerings to spread the gospel worldwide. Read new stories daily at [AdventistMission.org](http://AdventistMission.org).**