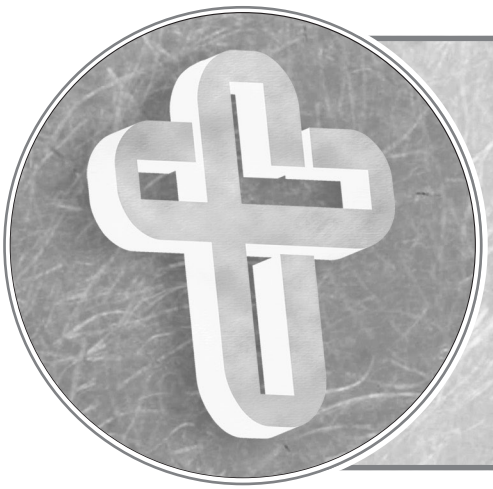


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
SEPTEMBER 27 2025

you first

Scripture Story: Matthew 17:22-27; 18:1-20; 20:20-28.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 48; 60.
Key Text: 2 Corinthians 10:5.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The story on the conversation Christ had with His disciples on pride, ambition, and humility brings to light issues that are connected to human life today. The three are major human characteristics, with one standing out against the other two. In the real sense, humility as a virtue of Christ is evident in the life He lived among men. "He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly" (Isaiah 53:7, GNT).

On the other hand, selfish ambition and pride are qualities that originated with Satan (Revelation 12:7, 8). Speaking to His disciples on these three issues, Jesus assured them that humility is part and parcel of a true Christian's life, as contrasted to selfish ambition and pride, which are characteristics of our enemy.

Christ goes on to instruct His followers that greatness in the kingdom of heaven does not come through pride, arrogance, and selfish ambition. Rather it comes through a humble, contrite heart, likened to that of a small child (Matthew 18:2-4). For this reason, we realize that humility is locked up in a desperate combat against selfish ambition and pride, to perpetuate the great controversy between right and wrong—Christ and Satan.

Ellen White offers a summary of the whole thing: "Jesus had told them that He was to die for their sake, and their selfish ambition was in painful contrast to His unselfish love. . . .

". . . The kingdom of Satan is a kingdom of force; every individual regards every other as an obstacle in the way of his own advancement, or a stepping-stone on which he himself may climb to a higher place" (*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 434, 435).

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the connection between humility, pride, and ambition. Conversely, they will see how humility stands out against the other two. *(Know)*
- Sense the greatness that ultimately comes with humility. *(Feel)*
- Seek to be humble and shun pride and ambition. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Nature of Humanity, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 7: "Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called

to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7, 15; 3; Ps. 8:4-8; 51:5, 10; 58:3; Jer. 17:9; Acts 17:24-28; Rom. 5:12-17; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; Eph. 2:3; 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 John 3:4; 4:7, 8, 11, 20.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

Give each student in your class a piece of plain paper to respond to the statements in the *What Do You Think?* section. After all the students have finished the exercise, divide the class into small groups with their responses at hand. On a whiteboard, write each group's response. For example, "Group A, B, etc." Let each group discuss their answers.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words.

"At a reception honoring musician Sir Robert Mayer on his 100th birthday, elderly British socialite Lady Diana Cooper fell into conversation with a friendly woman who seemed to know her well. Lady Diana's failing eyesight prevented her from recognizing her fellow guest until she peered more closely at the magnificent diamonds and realized she was talking to Queen Elizabeth! Overcome with embarrassment, Lady Diana curtsied and stammered, 'Ma'am, oh, ma'am, I'm sorry ma'am. I didn't recognize you without your crown!' 'It was so much Sir Robert's evening,' the queen replied, 'that I decided to leave it behind.' "[1]

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Queen Elizabeth had every reason to show up at this reception in her regal attire. Yet for the sake of the honored musician, she chose to remain out of the limelight.

We sometimes tend to think of ourselves first before we consider the welfare of others. This happens throughout society: family, school, workplace, church, etc. However, as Christians, God requires us to possess the virtue of humility to help us think of others first before ourselves. Christ said, "Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:4, NIV).

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

Circle the main characters in these Bible passages.

As you read through them, identify the minor characters as well. Share how each of the actors, both major and minor, contributes to the overall development of the key subject of these stories.

_____

_____

_____

Is there any part of the story that you don't understand? *Underline* the words and phrases that may be new to you. Is there any new thing you have learned about God from these stories? Explain.

_____

_____

_____

Read Mark 9:33. Why do you think the disciples kept quiet when Jesus asked them about their argument on who should be the greatest in the new kingdom?

_____

_____

_____

In a short sentence write what you think the good news is in those passages.

_____

_____

_____

Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today's story: Luke 22:24-27; Isaiah 57:15; 2 Corinthians 12:6-10; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:2-6; Philippians 2:1-11; Proverbs 22:4; Psalm 131:1; Proverbs 18:13.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on specific aspects of the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. **Ambition**. The feeling of self-worth that was expressed by Zebedee's sons is pertinent to the character of the prince of darkness. The return journey to Jerusalem was done on a level ground, with Christ Himself according each of His disciples equal value. However, James and John thought above the level of the rest of the disciples. With their mother they became too ambitious for a higher place in the would-be kingdom that was to be established by Christ after His death. Thinking of themselves first before others, they rushed to Jesus with their mother as their spokeswoman to plead with Him regarding their selfish deals.

But Christ, being a Servant to all, challenged them to overcome the temptations of Satan first as He also did, before they could talk of being next to Him in the new kingdom (Revelation 3:12-21).

The ambitious feeling that filled the heart of James and John is characteristic of what happens in our present societies. We rush for higher positions in our churches, schools, and workplaces, without consideration of others.

2. **Pride.** As Christ toured the cities of Galilee, Capernaum, and Jerusalem, He was touched by the manner in which the Jews carried themselves high under the umbrella of religion. They had heard the message that Christ was spreading across the cities, that all should acknowledge the love of Christ among themselves and uphold the instructions according to the Scriptures. However, their hearts remained hardened. They looked for ways and means by which they could lead Christ into sin, but found none, being ignorant of the fact that He was "divine-human."

On many occasions and with hearts full of pride, they demanded that Jesus follow their laws and pay taxes, and He did according to their wishes. But Christ, with a contrite and a humble spirit, took a low profile on every issue and situation that came into view. The main reason for Jesus to do all this was to expose the humility and love and service that were needed for Christian work.

Little did they know that Christ had all the ability and love to bring every situation under control, but they considered themselves seniors, untouchables,

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

One-Sentence Summary

The one-sentence summary is one of the proven classroom assessment tools. The teacher challenges the students to answer the questions "Who does what to whom, when, where, how, and why?" These questions are based on a given topic, and the teacher synthesizes the answers given by students into a simple, formative, grammatical, and single long-summary sentence. It is easy to remember and memorize, and helps to recapture the major concepts of the lesson subjects.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* The Desire of Ages. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quotes in Further Insight *convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

and leaders in whatever they did. Pride caused them to refuse the charge that was brought to their doorsteps by Christ Himself, and pride followed them to their graves.

3. **Humility.** The following is Ellen White's commentary on humility: "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. He who feels most deeply his need of divine aid will plead for it; and the Holy Spirit will give unto him glimpses of Jesus that will strengthen and uplift the soul. From communion with Christ he will go forth to work for those who are perishing in their sins. He is anointed for his mission; and he succeeds where many of the learned and intellectually wise would fail" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 436).

What does it take for us to score the goal of humility?

III. CLOSING

Activity

Organize a small debate with your class for about 10 to 15 minutes on the topic "Humility is better than ambition and pride." Allow the students to choose sides, and note the number of proposers and those in the opposition wing. Move the motion, and let the speaker open the floor for each side to speak out their points for or against the motion. At the end of the debate, let the secretaries from both sides read aloud the points noted from each respective side. Which side wins the motion?

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words: "Most sins turn away from God, but pride is a direct attack upon God. It lifts our hearts above Him and against Him. Pride seeks to dethrone God and enthrone itself. How can Christians fight against this sin and develop genuine humility?"[2]

A. W. Tozer once wrote an article called "Humility True and False," and concluded: "I have met two classes of Christians: the proud who imagine they are humble, and the humble who are afraid they are proud. There should be another class: the self-forgetful who leave the whole thing in the hands of Christ, and refuse to waste any time trying to make themselves good. They will reach the goal far ahead of the rest."[3]

Based on Tozer's suggestions, in which category do you find yourself?

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[1] *Today in the Word*, April 3, 1992.

[2] Wayne Mack, *Humility: The Forgotten Virtue*, 2005: christianbooks.com (product description).

[3] A. W. Tozer, quoted at John Mark Ministries (jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/2267.htm).



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*),* chapters 48; 60.

*A special adaptation, *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
SEPTEMBER272025

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Matthew 17:22-27; 18:1-20; 20:20-28.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 48; 60.

you first



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keytext

"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

(2 Corinthians 10:5, NIV)

flashlight

"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.

". . . [Jesus'] kingdom is not characterized by earthly dignity and display. At the feet of Jesus all these distinctions are forgotten. The rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, meet together, with no thought of caste or worldly preeminence . . . [but] as blood-bought souls, alike dependent upon One who has redeemed them to God" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 437).

what do you think?

True or False

____ Before honor and wealth comes humility. (true/false)
____ Corruption, pride, and arrogance lead to worldly wealth. (true/false)
____ Humility leads to worldly poverty. (true/false)
____ A humble person is a servant to all. (true/false)
____ All humble people are great people. (true/false)

Explain the reasons for your answers.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

did you know?

The following are definitions of pride, ambition, and humility, according to the *New Choice English Dictionary* (Peter Haddock Publishing, UK [1999], Geddes & Grosset, David Dale House, New Lanark ML11 9DJ, Scotland).

- Pride—A feeling of self-worth or esteem; excessive self-esteem; conceit; a sense of one's own importance
- Ambition—Desire for power, wealth, and success
- Humility—The state of having a low estimation of one's abilities; modest; unpretentious.

INTO THE STORY

"After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma temple tax came to Peter and asked, 'Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?'

"'Yes, he does,' he replied.

"When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. 'What do you think, Simon?' he asked. 'From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own children or from others?'

"'From others,' Peter answered.

"'Then the children are exempt,' Jesus said to him."

(Matthew 17:24-26, NIV)

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?'

"He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'"

(Matthew 18:1-4, NIV)

"Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.

"'What is it you want?' he asked.

"She said, 'Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.'

"'You don't know what you are asking,' Jesus said to them. 'Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?'

"'We can,' they answered.

"Jesus said to them, 'You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.'

"When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'"

(Matthew 20:20-28, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What does the story of James and John (Zebedee's sons) teach us about ambitions?

_____
_____
_____

Based on Christ's reaction toward their mother's request, what is the best antidote for ambition?

_____
_____
_____

How would you define the following in your own words?

1. Indignant _____

_____

2. Slave _____

_____

3. Ransom _____

_____

If you were to pick between pride, ambition, and humility, which one would you choose and why?

_____
_____
_____

"Pride goes before a fall." How would you justify this statement on the basis of Christ's teaching in Matthew 17:24-27?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"Pride leads to destruction, and arrogance to downfall.

"It is better to be humble and stay poor than to be one of the arrogant and get a share of their loot" **(Proverbs 16:18, 19, GNT).**

"My heart is not proud, LORD, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me" **(Psalm 131:1, NIV).**

"Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight" **(Isaiah 5:21, NIV).**

"He said to them, 'You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight'" **(Luke 16:15, NIV).**

"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" **(Romans 12:3, NIV).**

further insight

"Jesus had told them that He was to die for their sake, and their selfish ambition was in painful contrast to His unselfish love."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 434

"Christ was establishing a kingdom on different principles. He called men, not to authority, but to service, the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak. Power, position, talent, education, placed their possessor under the greater obligation to serve his fellows."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 550

Sabbath

Read Proverbs 16:18, 19.

In the *What Do You Think?* section you were challenged to discuss whether the written statements are true or false. From your own understanding of pride, ambition, and humility, which statements do you find most applicable in your case? In the wider circle of your community, is there one individual with whom you can share what you have learned from the discussion based on these statements?

Sunday

Read 1 John 3:11, 16.

Read the commentary on *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 48, and think about how Ellen White shares deep insights on humility and selfish ambition. Reflect on these questions:

Is there a situation in which I have shown selfish ambition against the will of my parents, peers, workmates, or teachers? What must I do to help those who are bound by the chains of pride and ambition?

_____
_____
_____
_____

The following is a quote from *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 60: "The plan and ground of salvation is love. In the kingdom of Christ those are greatest who follow the example He has given, and act as shepherds of His flock" (p. 550).

Read 1 John 3:11, 16 and connect it to this quote. Then reflect on the qualities of a good shepherd, asking God to help you to be one.

Monday

Read 2 Corinthians 10:5.

In this week's *Key Text* Paul defends his ministry by arresting every proud obstacle that is raised "against the knowledge of God" (NIV). Write this verse in your own words. Think about how you, as a young person, can help perpetuate Paul's statement in the present society, keeping in mind that humility is the best antidote for pride and ambition.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Tuesday

Read Luke 16:15.

The *Flashlight* passage from *The Desire of Ages* contains guidelines and deep insights on how to achieve greatness in this life and beyond.

Review chapters 48 and 60 and list the virtues and vices that are cited therein. From your list, identify the virtues and vices that speak to you personally—and think of the steps you can take to improve the development of the virtues and to suppress the growth of the vices in you as a person.

Wednesday

The *Punch Lines* for this week are a wide array of selected Bible texts that punctuate the key concepts of the lesson. Apply the following selected verses into your own life by filling in the blank spaces.

"Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes" (Isaiah 5:21, NIV). How can I avoid being wise in my own eyes?

"It is better to be humble and stay poor than to be one of the arrogant and get a share of their loot" (Proverbs 16:19, GNT). How can I balance humility and being poor at the same time?

Think of people in your community who appear to be arrogant and have selfish ambition. Consider praying for these people.

Thursday

Read Jeremiah 31:33.

Speaking of any bad habit that may lead to sin, Ellen White writes: "Our Lord is put to shame by those who claim to serve Him, but who misrepresent His character; and multitudes are deceived, and led into false paths" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 438).

Based on the context of the lesson this week, how can you as a young Christian in the Adventist faith help in combating pride and arrogance in your society? What does God require of you when you go about this exercise? When you misrepresent Christ in any way, what is the impact on the larger picture of your society?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Friday

Read Romans 12:3.

It is pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men into angels." Consider this statement and ask yourself:

How often have I been proud this week? How can I humble myself before God and allow Him to change my heart into that of an angel in my society?

_____
_____
_____
_____

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 48; 60.

*A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*, entitled *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.