CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
AUGUST 01 2026

great humility

Scripture Story: Isaiah 57:15; James 4:6; Isaiah 41:10.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire),* chapters 9, 10.
Key Text: James 4:6.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The stories of the Reformers remind us that God often chooses the humblest folk to accomplish the most extraordinary things. Through the influence of common men such as Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Luther, and Oecolampadius, God changed the destiny of nations.

Still today, God calls young men and women to stand with uncompromising courage and defend His loving character. Young people in your Sabbath School class could make the same kind of impact as did the Reformers of old.

What God needs in young people today is no different than the virtues He looked for in His servants during the Reformation—humility, courage, and faith. Ellen White emphasizes that "the leading Reformers were men from humble life—men who were most free of any of their time from pride of rank."[1] To be used by God in supernatural ways begins with a humble spirit, completely yielded to following His biddings. This was true for the Reformers; it is still true for you and me.

Another theme weaving through the stories of the Reformers is that of courage. Ellen White writes: "Zwingli at Zurich was smitten down; he was brought so low that all hope of his recovery was relinquished. . . . In that trying hour his hope and courage were unshaken. He looked in faith to the cross of Calvary."[2] If you can inspire your youth group to live with the same humility and unshakable courage and remain focused on the cross of Calvary, you will optimize the teaching opportunities of this lesson.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Hear stories of the Reformation. *(Know)*
- Sense the work of God through those who are humble. *(Feel)*
- Be invited to live with the same humility and courage of the Reformers. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

Growing in Christ, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 11

"By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. We are also called to follow Christ's example by compassionately ministering to the physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of humanity. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around

us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience" (1 Chron. 29:11; Ps. 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12; Matt. 20:25-28; 25:31-46; Luke 10:17-20; John 20:21; Rom. 8:38, 39; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Gal. 5:22-25; Eph. 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; Phil. 3:7-14; Col. 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; 1 Thess. 5:16-18, 23; Heb. 10:25; James 1:27; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 1 John 4:4).

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Use an improvisation game as a fun activity to introduce the topic of humility. Ask for a volunteer to share a personal story of doing something that was humiliating or a personal illustration of the folly of pride. Get as many details in the story as possible. Next, get some volunteer actors to act out the same story three times. The first run through is a simple reenactment of the story that was just shared. For the second time through the story, have people assign each actor a certain emotion (e.g., angry, giddy, despondent, etc.) in which to reenact the same scene. The final run-through should be in a genre (e.g., sci-fi) How was pride displayed in the story? Now have the students pick out the various emotions that may have been felt by the different characters involved (e.g., anger, happy, sad, ashamed). Talk about the emotions the students have identified.

Illustration

Pride causes the illusion of self-sufficiency. "I made myself great. I deserve all I have. I'm better than others."

A story flying around the Internet tells of a CEO at a big corporation who possessed this spirit of self-sufficiency. One time, he was coming out of a service station only to notice his wife involved in an animated conversation with the attendant pumping their gas. Back on the road again, the CEO's wife explained how she knew the attendant. "In fact," she said, "we dated for a couple of years."

After a long pause, the husband quipped, "I'll bet I know what you're thinking. I'll bet you're thinking that you're pretty lucky that you married me, the CEO of a great corporation and not a lowly service station attendant."

"No," the wife replied, "actually I was thinking if I had married him and not you, he'd be the CEO of a great corporation, and you'd be a service station attendant."

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

As we consider the stories of Reformers such as Ulrich Zwingli, it is clear that God uses those who are humble in spirit. We all fight this illusion, however, that "I made myself great. I deserve all I have. I'm better than others."

Questions for reflection: Are you ever slow to acknowledge your limitations and dependence on God? Do you ever forget that whatever abilities you have are gifts from God? What might God dream of accomplishing in you if you manifest a character of humility?

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 the key phrases with them (NIV):*

Isaiah 57:15—"contrite and lowly in spirit"

Consider the following insight from *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. Read and discuss the Bible references in parentheses with your students.

"Contrition and humility—the spirit of sincere repentance for sin, coupled with a sense of one's inability, of oneself, to earn salvation (see Rom. 7:18)—are the two essential qualifications for acceptance with God (see Micah 6:8; see on Ps. 51:10; Matt. 11:29). Contrition prepares the way for justification, as humility does for sanctification. God can do little for the man who does not feel a keen sense of his own need and who does not reach out for power from above (see on Luke 15:2)."[3]

James 4:6—"God opposes the proud"

The *Handbook of Bible Application* offers this commentary:

"The cure for evil desires is humility (see Proverbs 16:18, 19; 1 Peter 5:5, 6). Pride makes us self-centered and leads us to conclude that we deserve all we can

see, touch, or imagine. It creates greedy appetites for far more than we need. We can be released from our self-centered desires by humbling ourselves before God, realizing that all we really need is His approval. When the Holy Spirit fills us, we see that this world's seductive attractions are only cheap substitutes for what God has to offer."[4]

Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)—"Do not fear, for I am with you"

Notice another context in which Ellen White uses this verse from Isaiah:

"In those hours that come to all, when the heart is faint and temptation presses sore; when obstacles seem insurmountable, . . . where, then, can such courage and steadfastness be found as in that lesson which God has bidden us learn from the stars in their untroubled course?

"'Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth. . . . Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.' Isaiah 40:26-29; 41:10, 13."[5]

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to provide for your students a broader perspective of pride. In your own words, share the wider context and background of what is at the root of pride.

Of Christ's disciples Ellen White writes that they "were humble and teachable. . . . So in the days of the Great Reformation. The leading Reformers were men from humble life."[6] Throughout history God has used men and women who remained humble.

The Bible warns: "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18, NIV). But where does pride come from? Is God really that concerned about arrogance?

Perhaps you're tempted to think that only Lucifer had "I" problems. "I will ascend to the heavens," he boasted. "I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:13, 14, NIV).

But in dozens of different ways, don't we do the same?

"I will do what I want on the Sabbath."

"I will eat, drink, and dress as I please."

"I will spread whatever gossip I so choose."

"I will spend my money as I see fit."

"I . . . I . . . I . . ." If we're not careful, we start sounding like Satan.

Now to fix the "I" problem in your own strength is as likely as changing the color of your eyes. The trouble lies much deeper. The only way to get at the "I" problem is to live in the presence of Jesus. That's where Satan blew it. When he left heaven, he abandoned his only hope of holiness. For it is only in the presence of the Holy One that we can radiate His holiness.

So stay close to Jesus today. Talk to Him often.

Teaching From the Lesson

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite 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 Great Controversy. *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 spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Learning From the Learners

If you're not careful, teaching kids to be humble may come across with an edge of conceit. Obviously, the best way to teach humility is to model it (i.e., to show kids what a humble spirit looks like by the way you live).

One act of humility as a teacher is to be up front with your students and admit you don't know it all. You can learn from them just as much as they can learn from you. So learn from the students in this lesson by asking them questions such as: "Who is the most humble person you know, and why? What can teachers do to humbly serve God and others? What does humility look like to you, and why?"

Listen carefully to the answers they give and by God's grace apply what you learn.

Worship Him always. Lean on Him in every moment. That is the only cure for "I" disease.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Have all the students turn on their cell phones and text their answers to the following questions. Read the answers as they come up on your phone. If the students don't have cell phones you could have them write their answers on slips of paper that you would then read.

What's the first word that comes to mind when you hear the word "pride"?

What's the first word that comes to mind when you hear the word "humility"?

What can you do this week to nurture a humble spirit?

Summary

Close by reflecting on the following statement from Ellen White:

"Lucifer in heaven desired to be first in power and authority; he wanted to be God, to have the rulership of heaven; and to this end he won many of the angels to his side. When with his rebel host he was cast out from the courts of God, the work of rebellion and self-seeking was continued on earth. Through the temptation to self-indulgence and ambition Satan accomplished the fall of our first parents; and from that time to the present the gratification of human ambition and the indulgence of selfish hopes and desires have proved the ruin of mankind."[7]

Break your class into small groups. Invite them to pray specifically that God would deliver them from this "human ambition and the indulgence of selfish hopes and desires." Encourage them to allow for a time of silence for God to impress upon them ways that they might model the humility of Jesus in the next week.

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[1] Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 171.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 179.
[3] *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* ed. *Francis D. Nichol* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1955), vol. 4, p. 303.
[4] *Handbook of Bible Application,* ed. Neil S. Wilson, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2000), p. 263.
[5] Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1903), pp. 115, 116.
[6] Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy,* p. 171.
[7] Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1913), pp. 32, 33.



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 Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire),* chapters 9, 10.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Isaiah 57:15; James 4:6; Isaiah 41:10.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire),* chapters 9, 10.

great humility



Photo by Colleen Cahill

keytext

"But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.'"

(James 4:6, NIV)

flashlight

"The heavenly Teacher passed by the great men of the earth, the titled and wealthy, who were accustomed to receive praise and homage as leaders of the people. They were so proud and self-confident in their boasted superiority that they could not be molded to sympathize with their fellow men and to become colaborers with the humble Man of Nazareth. . . . The leading Reformers were men from humble life. . . . It is God's plan to employ humble instruments to accomplish great results" (*The Great Controversy,* p. 171).

what do you think?

***Circle* the names of the following individuals that you think** are prideful. Discuss with your friends how you think their pride is shown.

- Regan mocks anyone who can't understand algebra as well as he can.
- Elizabeth wants everything in her life to be perfect—and complains when nothing goes right.
- Rafael refuses to apply himself in school, ignoring advice from his parents, teachers, and pastor.
- Natalie ignores her friends whenever there is something she thinks is more fun or important.
- Your coach ignores the feedback that you and your teammates try to give him.
- Rachael displays her straight-A report card on the refrigerator door.
- Carly is always showing off her latest electronic gadget.

did you know?

Ulrich Zwingli enjoyed music and played many instruments, including the violin, harp, flute, dulcimer, and hunting horn. He would entertain the kids in his congregation on his lute and was so well-known for his playing that his enemies mocked him as "the evangelical lute-player and fifer." Although Zwingli's hymns were not intended for music to be used in worship services, they were published in some sixteenth-century hymnals.[1]

INTO THE STORY

"For this is what the high and exalted One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy: 'I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.'"

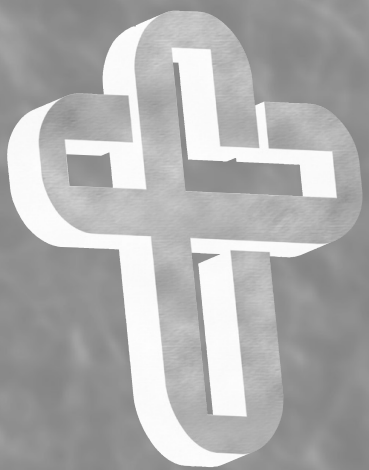
(Isaiah 57:15, NIV)

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

(Isaiah 41:10, NIV)

"But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.'"

(James 4:6, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Write a paraphrase of the Bible verses from *Into the Story* and combine the key points into one verse:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Read Proverbs 16:5, 18, 19; Proverbs 27:2; and Proverbs 29:23. What is the result of pride in your life? Do these texts point out pride in your life?

Fill in the blank and discover God's strategy on how to be humble and happy:

1. Confess my _____
Proverbs 28:13 (NIV): "Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

2. Be honest in my _____
Romans 12:3 (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."

3. Recognize the source of _____
1 Corinthians 4:7 (TLB): "What are you so puffed up about? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God, why act as though you are so great, and as though you have accomplished something on your own?"

4. Serve others like _____
Philippians 2:3-5 (NIV): "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."

5. Allow God to _____
James 4:10 (TLB): "Then when you realize your worthlessness before the Lord, he will lift you up, encourage and help you."

punch lines

"Whoever slanders their neighbor in secret, I will put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, I will not tolerate" **(Psalm 101:5, NIV).**

"The Lord preserves those who are true to him, but the proud he pays back in full" **(Psalm 31:23, NIV).**

"The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished" **(Proverbs 16:5, NIV).**

"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" **(Proverbs 16:18, NIV).**

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" **(Philippians 2:5, KJV).**

further insight

"The glory will not be given to men, but to Him who works through them to will and to do of His own good pleasure."

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy,* p. 171

Sabbath

Read Proverbs 16:5.

Rank the people in the *What Do You Think?* section. Explain your reasoning behind your ranking.

Sunday

Review the texts from *Into the Story*. Circle the text that you think is . . .

the easiest to understand:
Isaiah 57:15 James 4:6 Isaiah 41:10

the most comforting:
Isaiah 57:15 James 4:6 Isaiah 41:10

the strongest indictment against pride:
Isaiah 57:15 James 4:6 Isaiah 41:10

Review the steps to a humble and happy life in *Out of the Story*.

_____

Would you suggest any other steps? If so, what?

_____

Which step is the hardest for you to take? Why?

_____

Monday

Read James 4:6-10.

Memorize the *Key Text* (James 4:6). Compare it to James 4:10. How does the following quote from E. G. White illuminate these two verses in James 4? "True humility will lead a man to exalt Christ and the truth, and to realize his utter dependence upon the God of truth" (*Lift Him Up,* p. 282).

_____

Tuesday

Read 1 Corinthians 1:27-29.

Compare and contrast Ellen White's statement in the *Flashlight* section with other statements she makes in chapters 9 and 10 in *The Great Controversy*.

Ellen White quoting Martin Luther: "May God of His mercy preserve me from a church in which there are none but saints. I desire to dwell with the humble, the feeble, the sick, who know and feel their sins, and who groan and cry continually to God from the bottom of their hearts to obtain His consolation and support" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 191).

"The contrast between the disciples of the gospel and the upholders of popish superstition was no less manifest in the ranks of scholars than among the common people. 'Opposed to the old champions of the hierarchy, who had neglected the study of languages and the cultivation of literature, . . . were generous-minded youth, devoted to study, investigating Scripture, and familiarizing themselves with the masterpieces of antiquity. Possessing an active mind, an elevated soul, and intrepid heart, these young men soon acquired such knowledge that for a long period none could compete with them. . . . Accordingly, when these youthful defenders of the Reformation met the Romish doctors in any assembly, they attacked them with such ease and confidence that these ignorant men hesitated, became embarrassed, and fell into a contempt merited in the eyes of all'" (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 195, 196).

_____

_____

Wednesday

Read Psalm 31:23.

List the advantages of living with a humble spirit next to the disadvantages of living with a prideful spirit.

Advantages of humility	Disadvantages of pride
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Thursday

Read Philippians 2:5.

Reflect on this suggestion from Pastor Dwight Nelson: "Seek to become low and weak and nothing. Jump at the opportunity to serve someone else. You be the one to stop and help the driver with the flat tire. You give up your place in that checkout line for that impatient soul farther back. You be the one to miss your plane because the stranger at the gate is obviously sick and needs someone to get her to help. Do yourself what in the past you have delegated purely as a sign of your authority over a subordinate."[2]

Ask yourself: How can God create in me a spirit of humility?

_____

Friday

Read Mark 12:30, 31.

Dwight Nelson writes: "The cross of Jesus is proof that humility is the shining pinnacle of God's character!"[3] Do you agree or disagree? Why? How can you reflect the humility of God's character?

_____

[1] Adapted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huldrych_Zwingli.
[2] Dwight K. Nelson, *The Eleventh Commandment* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2001), pp. 34, 35.
[3] *Ibid.,* p. 35.

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 9, 10.

**Love Under Fire* is a special adaptation of *The Great Controversy*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.