

3. Pride Versus Humility (2Q 2026 Growing in a Relationship with God)

Biblical material: 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; Luke 14:11.

Quotes

- And the Devil did grin, for his darling sin/ Is pride that apes humility. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*
- It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels. *Augustine*
- You must ask God to give you power to fight against the sin of pride which is your greatest enemy—the root of all that is evil, and the failure of all that is good. For God resists the proud. *Vincent de Paul*
- Humility is the only thing that no devil can imitate. *John Climacus*
- Pride makes us artificial and humility makes us real. *Thomas Merton*
- True humility is not an abject, groveling, self-despising spirit; it is but a right estimate of ourselves as God sees us. *Tryon Edwards*
- With pride, there are many curses. With humility, there come many blessings. *Ezra Taft Benson*

Questions

What is the real problem with pride? How does pride impact relationships? Can fallen human beings of themselves change pride into humility? How would you define humility? How does pride reflect the issues in the great controversy? How best can we approach those who are proud and arrogant, and are not willing to consider the truth about God?

Bible summary

1 John 2:15–17 is a warning not to love the world. Luke 18:9–14 is Jesus' story of the Pharisee and the tax collector. 1 John 1:9 explains God's forgiveness as we confess our sins. Hebrews 11:24–26 refers to Moses who preferred to identify with the Israelites rather than be an Egyptian royal prince. In Luke 22:24–27 the disciples quarrel as to who is the greatest. Jesus humbled himself in taking on humanity (see Philippians 2:3–8). "Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." Luke 14:11.

Comment

The reasons behind Lucifer's rebellion are spelled out in Isaiah 14—personal pride on the part of Lucifer, and his jealousy towards God that leads to the ultimate insanity—thinking he could be as God.

Then there's Ezekiel 28: "You're so proud of yourself, saying, 'I'm a god!... Once you were complete and perfect, full of wisdom and flawless in beauty... You were there in Eden, God's garden... You were innocent in everything you did from the day you were created until you were found to be doing evil... You became proud because of your beauty, you ruined your wisdom because you thought you were so wonderful.'" Ezekiel 28:2, 12, 13, 15, 17.

Notice the emphasis on pride. From a Biblical perspective, pride is seen as self-esteem taken to excess, an arrogant attitude, self-centered conceit. We may sometimes see pride as something positive—such as "you should be proud of your achievements." But this is not pride as a sin, as in the case of Lucifer. His pride was in himself and in rebellion against God and his principles.

What is the real problem with pride? "Wisdom" makes it clear in Proverbs 8:13, "I hate pride and arrogance." Why? Because pride is at the heart of the rejection of God. God can't get through those with pride, because they are full of themselves. In the case of Lucifer, "The time had come for a final decision; he must fully yield to the divine sovereignty or place himself in open rebellion.

He nearly reached the decision to return, *but pride forbade him*. {PP 39} (My emphasis.) Lucifer just couldn't admit he was wrong; he had to continue in his rebellion because his pride would not allow him to do otherwise. Here's a great object lesson on the problem of pride.

In order for God to help and heal us, we have to admit our problem. If we are like the Pharisees who didn't admit they needed a doctor (Mark 2:17) or that they were blind, then God won't force himself upon us. Spiritual pride puts a barrier between us and God.

Which is where true humility comes in. Not the false kind that so often passes for being humble, like the character Uriah Heep in Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* who is proud that he is so "umble"!

As is so often said, humility is not weakness. In fact at times it requires a great deal of strength to be humble! The provocation of Jesus, especially his mocking tormentors at the cross, required a superhuman effort of will to not respond. To be truly humble and meek means a denial of selfishness, a recognition that it is the other who is loved, and not to become self-loving. God of all the thinking beings in the universe is wholly other-loving, and the life of Jesus reveals the lengths to which he is prepared to go to love us, the unlovable. This is the heart of humility, and the gift of the Spirit we so often ignore or fail to ask for. It is not "exciting" or "powerful" or "spectacular." Yet it is the heart of the kind of persons we are to become...

Humility is a word rarely heard these days. Instead it's all about doing your own thing, achieving your own dream, making a success of yourself. The odd thing is that as soon as we take the fame seriously, it goes to our heads, and we are changed. Pride means being absorbed with ourselves and our own needs/position. That is why it is so hard for God to break through such situations, and he often has to use desperate remedies. The wise will pay attention, and recognize the humility that God himself exhibits. For God himself does not seek power and position, but demonstrates a spirit that is totally selfless. God, surely, could be expected to demand his position as supreme ruler, and in reality cannot cede that because of who he is. But in the deliberate placing of all things under Christ's feet, God the Father shows how he honors true humility and selfless service (see Eph. 1). God's final goal is that all should live together in peace and harmony, following the principles of his good and just government that is based on humility and selflessness.

Ellen White Comments

A Christian reveals true humility by showing the gentleness of Christ, by being always ready to help others, by speaking kind words and performing unselfish acts, which elevate and ennoble the most sacred message that has come to our world. {CET 74}

We see the minds of many wandering through the mazes of skepticism. The causes of this are ignorance, pride, and a defective character. Humility is a hard lesson for fallen man to learn. There is something in the human heart which rises in opposition to revealed truth... {CH 415}

The life of Christ had ever been without worldly wealth, honor, or display. His humility and self-denial had been in striking contrast to the pride and self-indulgence of the priests and elders. {EW 178}

Fretfulness, self-exaltation, pride, passion, and every other trait of character unlike our holy Pattern, must be overcome; and then humility, meekness, and sincere gratitude to Jesus for his great salvation will continually flow out from the pure fountain of the heart. The voice of Jesus should be heard in the message coming from the lips of his ambassador. {GW92 28}

As we contemplate the cross, we are enabled to see the wonderful provision it has brought to every believer. God in Christ, ... if seen aright, will level human exaltation and pride. There will be no self-exaltation, but there will be true humility.— Letter 20, 1987 {1MCP 29}

There are times when apostasy comes into the ranks, when piety is left out of the heart by those who should have kept step with their divine Leader. The people of God separate from the source of their strength, and pride, vanity, extravagance, and display follow. There are idols within and idols without... {CE 95} Prepared March 3, 2025 © Jonathan Gallagher 2025