



# Sermon Growth Guide

**November 6, 2022**

**Humble Pie - Proud to be Humble**

**Proverbs 16:16-20**

**Key Verse:** Proverbs 16:18

“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”

**Big Idea:** Humility is a decision to submit to the Lord instead of your own ego.

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## Foundations

This is the first week of our new series: ***Humble Pie***. Humility is a virtue, and one of the most difficult to cultivate. To grow in humility, we need to blend truth, a little curiosity, and a lot of thinking about others more than yourself. When we grow in humility, we imitate Christ.

“Pride goes before a fall.” It is easy to trip when your nose is in the air. While humility is a chief virtue, pride is the chief of sins. Augustine said, “It was Pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels.” Aquinas wrote, “Inordinate self-love is the cause of every sin...the root of pride is found to consist in man not being, in some way, subject to God and His rule.”

The first step to growing in humility in the likeness of Christ is to eradicate pride and selfishness in our lives. Paul, in Philippians chapter 2, reminds us that Jesus exhibits overwhelming humility as He emptied Himself and was obedient to the Father even to the point of death! And yet, it is so hard to root out pride. As soon as we make strides, we're even tempted to become proud of how humble we are!

One of the most interesting ways to combat pride and develop humility is to increase in curiosity. When we practice curiosity about anything or anyone, we acknowledge that we don't have all the answers, that we are not the center of the universe, that we don't know it all!

## Understanding God's Word

Together, read Proverbs 16:16-20.

In your experience, is it easier to come by wisdom or wealth? Would you agree with the proverb in verse 16?

When have you seen pride precede a “fall” in the past?

Is there an inherent relationship between wealth and pride?

## Applying God's Word

Describe a time when you were moved to action by pride. Describe a situation in which you were marked by humility. How were those experiences similar or different?

What do you need to give up, or what practice must you adopt, in order to grow in humility in the coming month?

## Witnessing God's Word

Humility in our friendships, work relationships, leadership, etc., goes a long way in communicating the character of Jesus Christ to a world who does not know Him.

Think of a person in your life who doesn't know Jesus. How might you serve or practice humility with them in a tangible way this week? What would that look like?

## HUMBLE PIE • Proverbs 16:16-20 • Tim McConnell • November 6, 2022

November is when we like to have a little fun with a quick series. Can we have some fun? There is enough out there to be stressed with; let's gather in the smile of knowing our Lord has our lives in His care. How do you make **Humble Pie**? And would anyone like a piece? They say be careful praying for greater humility. "Lord, make me humble." It won't be long. But it is hard to grow in humility. Benjamin Franklin famously said, "There is perhaps no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride. Beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive. Even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility." How do you develop humility when you are so **Proud to Be Humble**? We are going to suggest three simple ingredients to Humble Pie: curiosity, service and gratitude. Pie is really only sugar, flour and butter. Simple ingredients, and maybe we can all take a step forward (or back) in humility this month.

Honestly, I wanted us to look at humility this year because it seems the world has gone upside down on this lately. Pride is the sin; humility is the virtue. Of course, it is important that we develop healthy self-esteem and self-respect, but pride seems to be taking over and humility is left on the side of the road. In Christian teaching, pride is a sin. In fact, it is the chief of sins. Augustine said, "It was Pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels." C. S. Lewis has a chapter in his monumental *Mere Christianity* entitled "The Great Sin." Do you know what it is? Pride. "According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere fleabites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind." Where is humility? We have an election on Tuesday. I hope you participate. I hope you take the Scriptures and vote with your Bible open. But I look at the political landscape and wonder, would it even be possible for a leader of genuine humility to rise to high office

in our current context? I'm not sure. We need a return to character; a renewed value in humility, integrity and selfless service, at least in Christian leadership. For Christians, for those who follow in the way of Jesus, humility is a strength.

I grabbed this passage from Proverbs because of the famous line in verse 18, "Pride goes before destruction." Pride goeth before a fall! I walked into worship this morning with Belle Brown. She's 94, and a member of this church for 75 years. She looked down at her cane and said, "Pastor Tim, I'm not too proud to use this cane. Pride goeth before a fall!" She didn't even know I was preaching on this today! The minute you become proud, prepare to topple over. The higher the ego, the harder the crash. It is hard to see where you are going with your nose in the air. Have you heard about the pastors who fell down the stairs? The Baptist said, "That never should have happened;" the Methodist, "A just punishment for my unholiness;" the Episcopalian said, "Pour me another," and the Presbyterian said, "Well, I'm glad that's over with." Humor is also a key ingredient to **Humble Pie**.

The Proverbs are rich with wisdom. This is wisdom literature. Collected and compiled by King Solomon, Proverbs is a collection of sayings to help us find our way. That's what wisdom is. There is a difference between wisdom and knowledge. Knowledge is the awareness of facts; wisdom is knowing what to do with them. Wisdom is knowing how to live. As Eugene Peterson said, "Wisdom is the art of living skillfully in whatever actual conditions we find ourselves." University degrees, titles, or even long years and old age are no guarantee of wisdom. It comes from a life lived in artful obedience to the Lord.

This section is in the heart of the actual sayings of Solomon himself. They are quick hits on a range of topics. "How much better to get wisdom than gold, to get insight rather than silver!" (Proverbs 16:16). How are you developing wisdom? Gold is a precious

metal. Wisdom is even better than gold, even better than lots of money. Gain wisdom, gain insight, and you will know how to live. “The highway of the upright avoids evil; those who guard their ways preserve their lives” (Proverbs 16:17). Wisdom is navigational. There is a difference between having a map and having a compass. A map can show you the details about a particular place, a moment, a context you find yourself in. A compass is navigation capability you carry with you wherever you go. Wisdom is more like that; it is a capacity for navigating through any situation, the art of living skillfully, the ability to do the right thing at the right time in the right way. Wisdom will keep you on, as it says, God’s highway. Now, without dipping into what we call “the prosperity gospel,” or the “health and wealth” mentality—those who teach that if you do what God demands you are guaranteed to have blessing—the truth is that walking in God’s ways leads to a generally happier and fuller and richer life. Wisdom is more valuable than gold.

Wisdom says, “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18). Why? Beyond the jokes about the nose in the air or falling down the steps because you refuse to look down, why is this true? It’s about selfishness. It’s about a life centered on the self as the highest and best good in the universe. Me-ville, if you were with us last week. We are living in the age of the indomitable, irrefutable, individual self. I am my own god. It leads to destruction. It leads to the collapse of yourself and the world around you. We can’t actually survive as a people trying to live as if each individual human’s perception of their self and the world around them is an irrefutable fact. We are not living in 7 billion atomized, individual universes; we are living in one universe. That’s actually what “universe” means. Self is not God. Wisdom recognizes that we are living in a universe of someone else’s making and design.

How do you get wisdom in the first place? Let me throw a few more

Proverbs your way. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7). The beginning of wisdom is reverence for God, a recognition of God, a genuine worship of God. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10). God is God; I am not. The job of God has already been taken! Maybe my life is in God’s hands in some way. Maybe I am not ultimately self-determined. Maybe I’m being written into a story larger than mine. “To humans belong the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the proper answer of the tongue. All a person’s ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the Lord. Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans” (Proverbs 16:1-3). Wisdom worships and follows the Lord; a life of artful and humble obedience. Get wisdom.

So, who do you like to associate with? That’s another key factor. We like to be around confident, conquering, triumphant individualists! But look at verse 19. “Better to be lowly in spirit along with the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud” (Proverbs 16:19). Watch the company you keep if you want to cultivate humility.

And then this last bit, which is actually where I want us to land: “Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers, and blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord” (Proverbs 16:20). Here’s the point. “Gives heed to instruction.” Full disclosure, the Hebrew is tough here and your translation might read differently. If I were translating, I would probably say “one made wise under the Word does well.” But the point of being receptive to instruction both from God and others comes through again and again in the Proverbs and that’s what I want us to absorb this morning. A proud person walks into the room certain that they already know it all. They sit down for a conversation confident they will not hear or learn anything they did not expect or already know. That’s ugly pride, isn’t it? Have

you experienced this? Humility opens the notebook. “I think I might learn something here, even from someone I disagree with.” Pride is not interested. Pride listens only to find the gaps in the conversation to drop its own remarks. Humility asks the follow-up question. Rather than thinking in your head of your quick response to what the other person is saying, how about genuinely taking an interest? How about trying to empathize with their position? How about being curious? “What got you here? What formed your opinions? What does the world look like through your eyes?” Why do the proud crash? Because they never learn anything—they already know it all! And the truth is, that is a cynical, drab, desiccated life to live. The world just goes gray.

So, here is our first ingredient for our **Humble Pie**. Curiosity! Be curious. Each week we want to give you a little practical exercise. I am about to hand you the easiest practical exercise you are ever going to receive from a pastor! Be curious. Be curious about anything at all. Curiosity is like a muscle; you have to exercise it or it will atrophy. So, I really don't care what you choose to be curious about but find something to be curious about this week and learn a little more about it. Have you always wondered about the Napoleonic Wars? Go at it! Ever been fascinated by how a microwave works? You eat out of one every day. Learn. Be curious. Wish you could name all the types of capitals on all the columns in ancient architecture? Now's your chance. Jump into something and learn. Anything. Curiosity is healthy because it reminds us we actually don't know everything. The more you know, the more you know you don't know. Cultivate humility. Be curious. For extra credit, be curious about the people around you. “Tell me more. Show me. What do you mean? How did you learn to do that?” Take someone to coffee not to tell them something, but to ask about them, to learn about them in genuine curiosity. But that's extra credit.

Humility is not humiliation. I'm not asking you to be a doormat. Humility is

not passivity even; that's sloth. Humility is a decision, a strength; a decision to submit to the Lord, to recognize that you don't actually know it all, and to walk in the way of Jesus into a more meaningful life of serving others. Rick Warren said, “Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.” Pride will shut you off and shut you down. It will close off your relationships with others and shut down your relationship with God. “As long as you are proud,” C. S. Lewis said, “you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you.”

In our search for **Humble Pie**, we look to Jesus. Always to Jesus. Can you imagine a pride-Jesus? Self-centered, self-serving, demanding and cynical? Let's just close with Philippians 2: “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: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:3-11).

