PRIDE AND LEADERSHIP
READING ASSIGNMENT

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Reading assignment should be completed on your own time, prior to your group meeting.
PRE-WORK

Read Pride and Leadership and answer the questions that follow with brutal honesty. If you’re part of a group study, be prepared to discuss at least one of your answers with the group.

PRIDE AND LEADERSHIP

It’s no secret that pride is an undesirable trait. As children and adolescents, we are taught the importance of humility and reminded what arrogance can do to our hearts and minds. Yes, pride goes before the fall (Proverbs 16:18); we’ve been told this time and again. But pride affects more than the individual, reaching far and wide to those in our circle of influence. This is never more evident than when we hold positions of leadership.

It takes hard work and great effort to lead a team, no matter the size. Heart and soul are poured into causes worthy of our time and dedication, almost always with the best of intentions. But something happens when we succeed, when we accomplish something great—we feel good about ourselves. Really, really good. Wow! All the time and effort were worth it. Look what I achieved! And though there is nothing inherently wrong with satisfaction from a job well done, we foster false pride when we fail to recognize the One truly behind our success.

“In general, pride is at the bottom of all great mistakes”

-John Ruskin
Every leader has one thing in common—followers. Whether leading two or 200, someone must be convinced of the mission you are working toward and be willing to come alongside you in it. These are the people most directly impacted when we don’t keep a watchful eye on our prideful instincts. Often, without ever realizing it, these people are pushed aside when we become driven by positive feedback alone. We thirst and hunger for more, always craving the next bit of praise or the words that tell us we’ve done well. We’re motivated upward—to do more, be more, and accomplish more—and in doing so, we push aside those we’ve been called to lead, making our work increasingly me-centered. We convince ourselves that though “the others” play a part in what we are doing, as the one in charge, it is I who must look good in the end. After all, I am the one people are depending on, right? I am the one they look to—the face of all this time and effort.

So as leaders, where do we turn? What do we do? How are we to ensure that pride, haughtiness, and arrogance don’t become the characteristics that define us? As sinful beings serving a sinless and perfect Creator, this is a battle we will always fight. Awareness of our bent toward pride is key in safeguarding ourselves. We must know the ways we are prone to fall and ask others to keep us accountable. And when they point out areas where we lack humility, we have to receive their words with grace, asking the Father to strengthen us through our weaknesses (2 Corinthians 12:9).

When called to do something for the furtherance of God’s kingdom, may we always remember where the focus should remain. False pride tells us that we are working for God, even when our hearts and minds are craving the praise of men. Never rely on your personal opinions, thoughts, or instincts—after all, isn’t it Him you want to please? In all we do and say, may He alone receive the “blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever” (Revelation 5:13).
Q: Are you aware of pride in your life? What are you doing about it?

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Q: If you had to name few prideful leaders, who would be on your list and why?

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Q: How would you distinguish between healthy pride and false pride?

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Q: Do you believe that pride is one of the root causes of bad leadership decisions? Can you think of a few examples where a person’s pride was the culprit behind a failure? (It could be someone in your circle of friends, family, school or workplace.)

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Answer each question honestly and share your thoughts freely with you group.

Suggested time limit: 35-40 minutes
There are many great leader role models worth studying, yet Jesus still remains the greatest leader role model to follow. As we go through this course, we will look at Jesus and the perfect standard of leadership He set and modeled for us. We will also look at less-than-perfect leaders in order to learn from their successes and failures. Knowing the standard and being aware of potential pitfalls will give us the foundation we need in order to increase our influence with those around us.

**THIS WEEK’S READING ASSIGNMENT REVIEW: 5 MIN**

Ask each group participant to share his/her biggest “aha” moment from the pre-work reading and questions.

**THIS WEEK’S VIDEO: 10 MIN**

You’re about to watch a video that illustrates pride and how it alienates and destroys relationships. As you watch the video, pay attention to the following and discuss with your group:

**Q:** False pride is a misattribution of credit. Think of a time you took credit for something you didn’t deserve and share the experience with the group.

**Q:** Why do you think we have a tendency to take more than our fair share of credit?

**Q:** Prideful leaders don’t acknowledge God’s work in their life. Discuss this statement with the group.

**Q:** How did Jesus, according to Philippians 2:5-7, resist falling into the trap of pride?
BIBLICAL FOUNDATION: Read Genesis 3:1-6

Answer the following questions.

Eve looked at the forbidden tree and its fruit and saw that it was desirable. What lies did the serpent use to tempt her to fall?

In what ways did her heart show signs of pride? Can you see some of those same “signs of pride” in your own life?

Can you recall a time in your life when false pride moved you away or separated you from God? Share your experience and what it taught you.

What do you think is the result of leaders who make decisions based on their own EGO and false pride while ignoring God’s truth and His counsel?

CASE STUDY: Pride Comes Before the Fall

Adam and Sam are both pre-med majors. In the last four years Adam has been one of the top students while Sam was an average B student, not bad but not great neither. After applying to few medical schools, Adam was sure all would accept him, and his main concern was how he’d decide which one to pick. To Adam’s surprise, he received only one letter of acceptance, and it was not even to one of his top picks. On top of that, Adam finds out that Sam was actually accepted to the school he’d love to attend. He is disappointed, bitter and angry. He doesn’t understand why anyone would pick Sam over him. After all Sam was just an average B student!

Rejection affects all of us, no doubt. But, do you think that Adam simply feels rejected, or is there a deeper-rooted issue?

Do you think it’s dangerous to build our confidence solely on our performance? Have you ever felt sure, just like Adam, only to find yourself disappointed? Describe the circumstances and whether pride was an issue.

God’s Word tells us that we plan a course but God actually is the one who directs our steps. How can we use this wisdom to protect ourselves against foolish pride?

SELF-EVALUATION

Discuss the following questions with your group.

On the scale 1-5, with 1 being “not at all” and 5 being “very much,” would you say you are prideful? Explain your answer.

The sin of pride is very insidious. Why do you think it’s easier to observe it in others than in yourself?
BIBLICAL FOUNDATION: Read Isaiah 14:12-20

Answer the following questions.

In Isaiah 14 Lucifer (also described as the King of Babylon), lifted up his heart in pride. Who did he want to displace?

What was his penalty and how can we fall into the same sin? What does his “fall” tell us about the way God views false pride?

What desired outcomes do you think can push us to choose pride over humility and listening to God’s counsel?

CASE STUDY: Pride on Display

While taking a math test, you realize that your professor made a mistake—one of the questions contains a blatant error. You smirk, feeling proud of the fact that you just caught your professor making a blunder, and you announce this mistake in front of the entire class. Your professor, being a first-year teacher, feels really embarrassed and apologizes to the class for making a mistake. After the test is over, and while you’re gloating over your discovery with a group of classmates, your professor asks to speak to you. He kindly thanks you for finding the error but says he would have really appreciated your coming to him first instead of making a class-wide announcement. You don’t understand why this is such a big deal.

Why do you think it was wrong to expose your professor’s mistake to the whole class? What did it demonstrate about your character?

Why do you think we enjoy focusing on and pointing out others’ errors and imperfections? How does this (secretly) make us feel?

How can the principle of “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” help us avoid foolish pride? Do you think this principle could help those in a position of power or influence lead better? How so?

SELF-EVALUATION

Discuss the following questions with your group.

There is nothing wrong with the satisfaction that comes from a great accomplishment or a job well done. How can such a positive feeling degrade into destructive pride?

Can you recall a time when a simple feeling of satisfaction drove you to pride? Share the experience and what it taught you.
BIBLICAL FOUNDATION: Read 2 Chronicles 32:23-26

Answer the following questions.

Hezekiah was a godly king, but “good times” caused him to overlook the source of his prosperity. How did God get Hezekiah’s attention? What was Hezekiah’s response?

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Dwight L. Moody, theologian and a great man of God once said: “God sends no one empty except those who are full of themselves.” What are your thoughts about this statement?

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Have you ever met someone in a leadership position so full of “self” that there was no room in his/her life for God? Without naming names, describe the individual and how you felt in his/her presence.

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SELF-EVALUATION

Discuss the following questions with your group.

Pride is often referred to as the worst of all sins. In what ways does it live up to that reputation?

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ONLY 26% OF EMPLOYEES STRONGLY AGREE THAT MANAGERS EMBODY THE VALUES THEY EXPECT FROM THEIR EMPLOYEES.
(KELTON SURVEY ON AMERICAN WORKFORCE)
Answer the following questions.

Jesus observed two men praying in the Temple with very different attitudes. Which had the correct attitude? Why?

If their prayers couldn’t be heard, which man do you think others might believe had a better standing before God? Why?

What do you think are the dangers of judging someone’s walk with God solely on his/her "religious" activities? How can those activities promote spiritual pride in us?

Discuss the following questions with your group.

What practices can we implement to help keep our focus on God and off of ourselves?

FALSE PRIDE CENTERS ON THE PROMOTION OF SELF
PRAYER
As you close your group study with prayer, here is a sample prayer you can use during the course of this week in order to reject pride and keep humility front and center in your day-to-day activities.

“Father, forgive me for my moments of pride. Help me reject pride every time it rears its ugly head and fix my thoughts on You and on the needs of others so that ‘I’ may decrease and ‘You’ may increase in my life. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”

PRACTICAL APPLICATION
This practical application section is designed to help you take one tangible step each week as you move from where you are to where you want to be as a leader and influencer. Every week you’ll be asked to focus on a single task that will help you to grow personally and to improve your marketability.

“CATCH” THEM DOING SOMETHING RIGHT
Pride is not only destructive to your relationship with God, it also separates you from others and can greatly impact your ability to succeed in any team or work environment.

Ken Blanchard, business author of over 50 titles, including The One Minute Manager® and Lead Like Jesus, often talks about the need for leaders to “catch” their followers doing something right and then complimenting them on it.

This week we’d like you to apply Ken’s advice. Each day try to find something good and positive about at least one person around you and verbally compliment them and encourage them with your words.

This may seem like a small thing, but if you acquire this habit of catching others doing things right, you’ll reap great benefits in both your personal and professional life!

MORE PASSAGES ON FEAR
Nebuchadnezzar thought he was “king of the world” until God set him straight (see Daniel 4). What key elements of pride stand out in his declaration of his greatness?

Haman hated Mordecai because he refused to bow when Haman passed by (see Esther 3:5-6; 7:6-10). To what lengths did Haman go to try to get retribution? Name some ways God works to ensure that justice eventually prevails.

In the Parable of the Guests (see Luke 14:7-9), Jesus taught a powerful lesson about pride and humility. How could this lesson be applied in your workplace? How about in your family?

Jesus gave a strong rebuke to the church of Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-21. How did their pride manifest itself? What parallels do you see in our own society?