

*Jacob's Well***Lesson Title:** Biblical Principles—Honest Humility

**Key Concept:** Applications may change, but biblical principles are useful in all times and locations. Humility is an important principle to recognize, but like all good principles, it demands balance rather than excess.

**Scriptures:**

<sup>6</sup>But he gives greater grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.” <sup>7</sup>So submit to God.

(James 4:6–7 *New English Translation*)

For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.

(John 4:24 *New Living Translation*)

**Context Scriptures:** Genesis 1:27; Psalm 139:13–14; John 1:1; John 17:17; Romans 9:1; Galatians 6:3–5; 1 Peter 4:10

**Lesson Thoughts:**

Pride is a problem in the world. People exaggerate their own accomplishments even as they put down others'. They speak without grace, they are rude, and they are arrogant. This is not what was intended. As James puts it, “God opposes the proud.” So what is the answer to this problem? The answer, as James also says, is humility. While pride is false, humility is real. While pride hurts both ourselves and others, humility lifts all up as equals under the authority and power of God.

The principle of humility is deeply biblical, found all throughout both the Old and New Testaments. But there is a problem with how we do humility. Humility is often misunderstood as debasing yourself: if you praise yourself you're being proud. Our understanding of humility is often that we shouldn't ever lift ourselves up, we shouldn't ever tout our own accomplishments—we should be humble.

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But if humility truly means this, there is another principle that directly contradicts it. Jesus instructed that, as we worship God, we must worship him in truth. And the truth is, we succeed. We have accomplishments. We do amazing things, kind things, and impressive things. We are valuable, and our actions have merit. To deny our own value is to deny God's plan, and to say that we don't deserve recognition is to say that God's creation doesn't deserve recognition. When we refuse to accept a compliment, when we say "it's not that impressive," when we put ourselves down, all of it is dishonest and untruthful. We aren't trying to be dishonest, and we don't want to lie, but when we succeed, honesty demands that we accept and rejoice in the fact that we have succeeded, not bury it under a veneer of humility.

So what is humility? We must be humble, and we must be honest, so how can the two coexist? The solution is in fact shown in James 4. James says that God wants humility, and directly follows it with an instruction, not to lower ourselves, but to be submitted. Humility is submission to God's plan. It is recognizing the truth of our position. The reason humility is often connected with lowering ourselves is that when we compare ourselves to God, the truth is that we are very low. We must acknowledge that fact. No matter what we do, it is worthless in comparison to the might and power of Jesus. But that doesn't mean we are worthless. When we score high on a test, when we lead a project successfully, or when we succeed in a job, we do well. And we should be honest about that. True humility is not debasing ourselves. True humility is recognizing the truth. And the truth is, we are gifted.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) What is an example of bad "humility"? Is it really humility? How or how not?
- 2) What is an example of good "pride"? Is it really pride? How or how not?
- 3) How do we tell the truth about our value while still being humble?
- 4) Sometimes we don't realize our own value. How can we tell the truth about our value when we don't even realize it ourselves?

**Next Lesson:** One Master

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**Notes and Reflections**

- 1) Search the Bible for the word “pride.” What are the biggest examples of prideful behavior, and what are the harms of pride?
- 2) Search the Bible for the words “humble” and “humility.” What does the Bible say about humility? What are the signs of humility?
- 3) Read Genesis 1 and the story of humanity’s creation, and read Psalm 139 and the description of how special God has made us. How do we balance the truth of this specialness with a life of humility?

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**Notes and Reflections, cont.**