



## seven dirty ducks

**Scripture Story:** 2 Kings 5.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings*, chapters 20, 21.

### PREPARING TO TEACH

#### I. SYNOPSIS

We live in a world that tends to be very casual about the problem of pride. We're swamped with books on how to achieve wealth, beauty, happiness, and success, but there aren't many bestsellers with titles like *Seven Steps to a Less Glamorous Life* or *How to Land the Lowest Job*. Don King, the boxing promoter, captured our culture's attitude toward humility when he said, "Sometimes I amaze even my own self . . . and I say that humbly." Let's face it—our culture is quite ambivalent about this humility deal.

This casual attitude toward pride, however, is not biblical. Listen to Scripture: "The Lord preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full" (Psalm 31:23, NIV). "Whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure" (Psalm 101:5, NIV). "The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished" (Proverbs 16:5, NIV). "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6, NIV). "And those who walk in pride he is able to humble" (Daniel 4:37, NIV).

Given the clarity with which the Bible speaks against pride, the story of Naaman offers an ideal opportunity to engage your students in a conversation about the importance of humility. While there are other directions you could take this lesson (obedience, self-image, witnessing, etc.), the issue of pride seems to be a worthwhile focus. In the end, William Barclay was right in his summation: "Pride is the ground in which all the other sins grow, and the parent from which all the other sins come."

#### II. TARGET

The students will:

- See the serious, self-destructive nature of pride. (*Know*)
- Sense the benefits of humility. (*Feel*)
- Be challenged to confess pride and walk humbly with God. (*Respond*)

#### III. EXPLORE

- Obedience
- Humility
- Self-image
- Witnessing/sharing
- Faith/evangelism

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at [www.leadoutministries.com](http://www.leadoutministries.com).

### TEACHING

#### I. GETTING STARTED

##### **Activity**

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Ask students to shout out names of celebrities and athletes whom they perceive as arrogant. List the names on a whiteboard or a poster board. The list may contain names such as Donald Trump (real estate tycoon), Terrell Owens (wide receiver in the National Football League), Rush Limbaugh (radio talk show host), etc. Next, make a list of characteristics that the

people listed share in common. Then ask your group how these characteristics relate to pride.

Discussion questions: How would you define pride? When does pride become a bad thing? Where is the line between feeling self-confident and being proud? Why is pride harmful to friendships?

### **Illustration**

*Share this illustration:*

A student applying for admission to New York University gave a creative answer to the question “Are there any personal accomplishments or significant experiences you have had that helped to define you as a person?” He answered,

“I am a dynamic figure, often seen scaling walls and crushing ice. I have been known to remodel train stations on my lunch breaks, making them more efficient in the area of heat retention. I write award-winning operas. Occasionally, I tread water for three days in a row. I can cook 30-minute brownies in 20 minutes.

“Using only a hoe and a large glass of water, I once single-handedly defended a small village in the Amazon basin from a horde of ferocious army ants. I play bluegrass cello. I was scouted by the Mets. I am the subject of numerous documentaries. When I’m bored, I build large suspension bridges in my yard. I enjoy urban hang gliding. On Wednesdays after school I repair electrical appliances free of charge.

“I am an abstract artist, a concrete analyst, and a ruthless bookie. Critics worldwide swoon over my original line of corduroy evening wear. I don’t perspire. I am a private citizen, yet I receive fan mail. I have been caller number nine and have won the weekend passes. Last summer I toured New Jersey with a traveling centrifugal force demonstration. My deft floral arrangements have earned me fame in international botany circles. Children trust me.

“I balance, I weave, I dodge, I frolic, and my bills are all paid. Years ago I discovered the meaning of life, but forgot to write it down. I have made extraordinary four-course meals using only a blender and a toaster oven.

“I breed prize-winning clams. I have won bullfights in San Juan, cliff-diving competitions in Sri Lanka, and spelling bees in the Kremlin. I have played Hamlet, I have performed open-heart surgery, and I have spoken with Elvis.

“But I have not yet gone to college.”<sup>1</sup>

## II. TEACHING THE STORY

### **Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

Like this student (who, by the way, did get accepted at NYU!), Naaman had lots and lots of skills. He was larger than life with hordes of talents, money, power, and fame. But Naaman had one other thing that all the power and fame in the world couldn’t fix—a patch of discolored skin. This little spot of leprosy would kill him. Naaman’s only hope for healing came through humbly accepting his limitations and obeying the command to go dunk in a polluted river. Only when he humbled himself before God did he receive healing.

### **Out of the Story for Teachers**

*Use the following phrases and discussion questions from the Into the Story section with your students to process the story with them.*

Verse one tells us that Naaman was “a great man in the sight of his master.” What makes a person “great” today? Might someone be great in the eyes of the world but pitiful in the eyes of God? Explain.

Another detail in verse one is that Naaman “was a valiant soldier.” In other words, he was not just a keen military strategist; he excelled in the battle. He loved a good challenge. “But he had leprosy,” the verse goes on to say. Do you know of any examples today of people who love any challenge but are brought to their knees by some seemingly small patch of discolored skin? Does God ever allow these challenges to teach us humility? Explain.

Review the reasoning of Naaman’s servants in verse 13. In what other ways might Naaman have responded to them? How open are you to confrontation? In what ways can we grow when we receive criticism with a spirit of humility?

Read verses 22, 23 and describe what kind of person you think Gehazi was when he was a teenager.

What does God’s punishment in verse 27 reveal about God? Does this punishment seem too harsh? Why or why not?

*There are many examples of prideful people in the Bible. Take some time to check out each of these verses with your students:*

Deuteronomy 8:11-14

2 Kings 20:12-18

2 Chronicles 26:16-21

Esther 3:1-6

Daniel 5:18-21

John 11:45-53

Luke 18:11-14

Acts 12:21-23

How did each person show his or her pride? What was the result of their pride? What do these verses say about pride in our lives?

*Here are some additional passages that relate to this lesson:*

Psalms 138; Proverbs 16; Proverbs 27; Proverbs 29; Romans 12:3; Galatians 6:3.

## **Sharing Context and Background**

*Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.*

### **1. Naaman's Disease**

Leprosy was much like AIDS today. It was one of the most feared diseases in the ancient world. According to Wikipedia.com, leprosy is also known as Hansen's disease. It is a chronic infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium leprae*. If left untreated, there can be progressive and permanent damage to the skin, nerves, limbs, and eyes. Leprosy has affected humanity since at least 600 B.C., and was well-recognized in the civilizations of ancient China, Egypt, and India. In 1995 the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that between two and three million individuals were permanently disabled because of leprosy. Although the forced quarantine or segregation of patients is unnecessary, and can be considered unethical, a few leper colonies still remain

around the world in countries such as India, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

In Bible times many lepers were quarantined to death camps. Because Naaman still held his post, his form must have been mild, or he caught it in an early stage. In any case, he would have interpreted the disease as a death sentence.

### **2. The Mayservant**

The name of Naaman's maid is unknown. While we don't know much about her, it was her suggestion that brought healing and faith in God to a powerful Aramean captain. We do know that she was an Israelite. For an Israelite to come into contact with a leper was strictly forbidden. If they did there were certain ceremonial washings that Jews had to perform in order to be considered clean again. Yet Naaman's maid was in contact with a feared leper.

### **3. Naaman's Pride**

The *NIV Life Application Bible* connects Naaman's story with this practical teaching on the topic of pride: Naaman, a great hero, was used to getting respect, and he was outraged when Elisha treated him like an ordinary person. A proud man, he expected royal treatment. To wash in a great river would be one thing, but the Jordan was small and dirty. To wash in the Jordan, Naaman thought, was beneath a man of his position. But Naaman had to humble himself and obey Elisha's commands in order to be healed.

Obedience to God begins with humility. We must believe that His way is better than our own. We may not always understand His ways of working, but by

## **Teaching From . . .**

*Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.*

- **Other Eyes**

*Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

- **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 Prophets and Kings. 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 read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.*

*Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.*

## Tips for Top-notch Teaching

### Teaching Through Humility

Brett Justus, an ATP and FAA Gold Seal flight instructor, links the importance of humility to teaching. Although his counsel is specifically for flight instructors, the principle applies equally to Sabbath School teachers and issues of faith. He writes:

“How does a good pilot become a good teacher? Books have been written on the subject. Learning to fly is a challenging and dynamic endeavor. Many subtle, personal skills are required to excel in fully and effectively molding safe, skilled pilots.

“I think humility should be the first skill added to an instructor’s tool belt. When this attribute is embraced, the door will be open for all the other skills necessary to be a true teacher.

“Revealing humility in your approach will help defensiveness end, so learning can begin. More of your students will complete their training if you assure them that you and others have struggled with certain areas, just as they are currently struggling. You don’t have to show your students what a great pilot you are. They already know you’re a skilled pilot. Show them what a good teacher you are by sharing specific instances of when you had problems with the current maneuver that they can’t seem to perfect. Then they will be encouraged and tell themselves, “If my instructor could get through this and get to where he or she is now, then I guess I can do it too!”<sup>3</sup>

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must remember that (1) God’s ways are best; (2) God wants our obedience more than anything else; (3) God can use anything to accomplish His purposes.<sup>2</sup>

## III. CLOSING

### Activity

*Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.*

Tell the students that they have been selected to present a seminar to the world church on the topic of humility. Their challenge is to make it as practical as possible so that everyone in attendance will leave the seminar with a clear picture of what they must do in order to grow in the area of humility. Turn the class loose to develop the curriculum and then have them share their practical suggestions on how to be humble.

### Summary

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Proverbs 16:18 (NIV) says: “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.” Pride is sin. But God will forgive us when we confess our sins. The Bible warns us that pride leads to destruction. Conceit is a cancer to Christians. It ruins friendships, damages relationships, and compromises intimacy with God.

Close with a time of prayer for your students to reflect on any pockets of pride that might hinder their walk with God. After a brief season of solitude, invite the students to ask God for forgiveness—and for strength to take the focus off of themselves and fully on God.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from “But I Have Not Yet Gone to College,” *Still More Hot Illustrations for Youth Talks* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), pp. 116, 117.

<sup>2</sup> *Life Application Bible*, New International Version (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), p. 613.

<sup>3</sup> As quoted at [www.aopa.org/asf/publications/inst\\_reports2.cfm?article=4737](http://www.aopa.org/asf/publications/inst_reports2.cfm?article=4737).

humbly obeying, we will receive His blessings. We



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 *Prophets and Kings*, chapters 20, 21.

\*A special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings* has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at [www.cornerstoneconnections.net](http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net).