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Transcript
Pride and Humility
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Today's title is *Humility and Pride*.

Here are some famous last words for you: "To whom would the king delight to honor more than me?" Do you know who said them? Do you know what book in the Bible that's quoted in? These words led directly to the death of the one who thought them. The reason for it was that the one who thought these words had made a made a serious miscalculation. He thought the king valued him more than he really did. And, to go along with that, he thought more highly of himself than was really true.

This man's name was Haman. The story of this disastrous miscalculation can be found in the book of Esther. Haman was the highest official in the government of Ahasuerus, king of Persia – a kingdom that stretched from India in the east all the way to Ethiopia in Africa. The way the story goes, on the day that he was elevated in the king's government, the king called all his servants and notables and required them to bow down and to pay homage – or to worship – Haman. And everyone in the court did this but one man. His name was Mordecai – a Jewish man whose people had been conquered by Babylon, which then subsequently conquered by Persia.

Mordecai did not refrain from worshipping Haman because he was prideful, but because he worshipped the true God. And his God said, "You shall have no other gods before Me." So, out of humble obedience to his God, Mordecai put his own life at risk and followed his God faithfully and did not bow down to Haman.

Now, because Haman was so prideful, this bothered him terribly. He thought he was better than Mordecai and deserved his worship. And because he was so arrogant and self-inflated, Haman made it a point to become an enemy, not only of Mordecai, but all the Jews in the kingdom. He hated and loathed them all. In fact, he concocted a plot to get rid of all the Jews in the kingdom. He went to the king and told him that the Jews were a people scattered all over his kingdom, who did not obey the laws of Persia. Consequently, they were useless, and worse than that, dangerous. Haman told the king that, for a reasonable sum, he could set it up so that, throughout the entire

kingdom, on a specific day, all the Jews could be exterminated from the face of the kingdom. And, of course, their houses could then be pilfered, property confiscated, all to be put in the king's treasury. And the king said, "Make it happen."

Now, Haman, we can be sure, was filled with a sense of great satisfaction, and mastery, and power, and importance, and probably righteous indignation. And to make things even better, he had been invited to a special feast by the king – a feast that was to happen in just two days.

Now, as it happened, while Haman was out and about, enjoying his vengeance and what was about to happen, he saw Mordecai at the city gates, clothed in sackcloth and covered with ashes, fasting to his God for deliverance from the death sentence that Haman had accomplished. Seeing him reminded him of how much he hated Mordecai. He went home and vented his rage to his family, and they suggested he build a gigantic, tall gallows and have Mordecai hung on it, since he was already in line to die with all the Jews. Haman was thrilled with this advice and immediately sent workers to construct the gallows. It was a one-day rush job, because on the next day, he two really important things on his calendar. One was to hang Mordecai and the second was go to the grand feast where he would, no doubt, be honored once again for his plan to eliminate the Jews.

However, there were a few things Haman had failed to take in to account. Ahasuerus had become enthralled with Mordecai's stepdaughter, Esther, who, it was said, was the most beautiful woman in the kingdom, from India all the way to Ethiopia. The second thing was, that Ahasuerus had promised that he would give her anything she wanted, to include half the kingdom, if she wanted it. He was pretty well smitten with her. All she wanted, she said, was a great feast, to which the king and Haman were both invited.

But a strange thing happened that very night. The king could not sleep. He was tossing and turning, up and down. Finally, he asked a servant to get him the chronicle of memorable date – which was a history of sorts. As he read through this history, he was surprised to learn that some years earlier, Mordecai had uncovered a plot to kill Ahasuerus. And the plot, because of his report, had been foiled. Ahasuerus asked the servant if anything had been given Mordecai for this loyal act. No, nothing had been given to him or anything done for him.

So, that morning, the king asked who was in the court and was told Haman had just arrived. The Bible tells us that he was there to ask the king if he could hang Mordecai. So you see where this is going. Right? So, the king called Haman in to ask advice. Here is the question he asked: "What should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?" And we all know how Haman answered that question in his mind. "Well, who would the king delight to honor more than me?" So, he told the king to do what he would like personally more than anything in the world – be acknowledged before everyone about how smart, how important, how powerful, how respected he was. So Haman said, "Let this man wear some of the king's best clothing, mount him on the king's favorite horse, and let him be led through the streets of the city by an honored official of the kingdom, who would cry out as they passed through the city. Thus shall it be done

to the man whom the king delights to honor.” And Ahasuerus liked Haman’s advice so well he told Haman to go get Mordecai, dress him in the king’s clothes, put him on the king’s best horse, and lead him through the streets, proclaiming just as he said.

So, instead of hanging Mordecai that morning, Haman had to walk through the streets of Susa, leading Mordecai on the king’s horse, wearing the king’s clothing, proclaiming in a loud voice, “This is what happens to people the king delights to honor.” Well, we can just imagine how bewildered Mordecai was by this, and how humiliated Haman was and how angry. We can think of dozens of scriptures that tell us how much God hates the proud and lifts up the humble.

But in the meantime, Esther had gone to Ahasuerus and told him about the gallows and how Haman had planned to hang Mordecai. So, the king hung Haman on the gallows Haman had built for Mordecai and his plan to eradicate the Jews was put a stop.

So, the book of Esther is not only a study on trusting God, and a study on how God works His will on the world over the will of any person, but it’s also a study of humility as opposed to pride, displayed in the lives of these two people.

Now, as we almost always do in these LifeResource presentations, let’s ask, “How ask we learn something meaningful – something helpful – from this story? What can we do to become more humble and less prideful?”

I’m going to make some statements now about pride. See if you find anything that they have in common. Some people think that they’re better looking than they really are. Some people think they’re smarter than they really are. Some people think they can sing better than they really can. Some think they’re more important than they really are. Some people think they deserve more than they really do. Some people think they’re kinder than they really are. Some people think their skills are better than others. Some people think they know better than God about any number of things. And we all think we’re more humble than we really are.

Did you notice anything in common there? When we are prideful, we believe things about ourselves that are positive but not true. They’re amplified. We inflate our view of ourselves. Our view of ourselves is out of touch with reality. What we believe about our abilities is not true. We believe lies about ourselves, then, that cause us to think that we’re better, more deserving, more loveable, etcetera.

When we think about ourselves, here are some more statements. See if you can see something common among them. There’s always someone smarter than I am and that’s okay. Though not as smart as some, I’m still of value to God, family and society. God guides those people who follow Him. That’s what’s important. Following God is an easier way than not following him, because he knows best about everything – our lives, the lives of everyone else – all choices and decisions.

God always knows best. My value to God is based on my character, not my intelligence, looks, net worth, fame, etcetera.

Notice how humble and true these ideas are. When we realistically consider our own abilities, see our strengths and our weaknesses, that gives us a realistic view of what we can and cannot do on our own. It's more truthful.

One of the most important things that the devil is trying to do is to cause us to be prideful, because that puts out of touch with God and out of touch with reality about the world and about ourselves. When we start listening to the devil, we're forging a relationship with him. He's our father. We do his will because of the false things we believe about ourselves and about God and about him.

Let's take an extreme example – Adolf Hitler. He thought he was superior to other people. Consequently, the devil had him believing he was a law unto himself. Hitler was trying to prove he was strong. But he was so weak that the devil used him as a pawn to kill millions of people. It was okay to murder six million Jews, countless gypsies, mentally challenged people and all his political rivals. He thought he was smarter than all his generals, so, against their advice, he made war on northern Europe, north Africa, Britain and Russia all at the same time. And this caused the US, Canada and Australia to enter the war as well. So, his arrogance lost the war for him. He wouldn't listen to reason. He thought he could pull it off because his ideas about himself were inflated. And like Haman, it cost him his life. He wasn't grounded in reality and blinded to the truth of the situation.

In Proverbs 16:18, it says:

Proverbs 16:18 – *Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.* That's certainly true.

So, we wonder why we keep having problems and then we don't ever figure it out. So, the devil weakens us through pride. But God strengthens us through humility. Now, that sounds strange to some people, because they think humility is weakness. Admitting weakness is weakness to them. But the truth of God tells us, that when it comes to the things of God, we are *completely* out of our element. And a person who is humble *knows* that. God's things are of the Spirit and make no sense to a physical being. "I mean, how can you be weak and also strong?" they ask. It's been called a paradox even, because it seems that way to us. How can you be strong when you're weak? Or, weak when you're strong? But the truth is, humans are all like blind people when working with spiritual issues. We can't understand them. We have to rely on God and follow His lead and trust Him if we want to access that realm successfully. And knowing that makes us strong, because God is strong when we're not. He gives us wisdom, that we don't have on our own, when we follow Him – if we know we need His help.

2 Corinthians 12:10 says:

2 Corinthians 12:10 – *For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

When we're small in our own eyes, as God puts it in the Bible, that's when God can use us – because we're willing to do what He says, instead of what *we* think. Notice that when Haman was going it alone, working his plots, Mordecai was fasting and praying for God's intervention, rather than trying to manipulate the situation on his own. He knew that he had *no* power to change the king's mind. But he knew that *God* would deliver the Jews somehow.

How does one become humble? We can ask God to help us be humble. But that's like trying to seek happiness. You just can't find it. Happiness is a byproduct. And humility is a byproduct too. It's a byproduct of a two-part process. Let's look at that.

The first one is to identify pride-producing lies that we believe within ourselves. "Being intelligent makes me more important than other people." "Having more money means I am better than others." "Being better looking means I have more value." "My skills and accomplishments make me more valuable than other people." None of those things are true. God doesn't look on our outward appearance, does He? He doesn't care how much money we have. Not true. So, that's part of it – identifying the pride-producing lies that we believe – that have come from the devil – that's where they come from – and refuting those lies.

And then, asking God – this is the second part – for help believing the truth. What's that? Well, here are a few things: "God loves everyone – not just me." "I'm no more, no less deserving than anyone else." "My human intelligence does not help me with spiritual knowledge or decisions." "The only way I will ever function successfully in spiritual things is with God's help and guidance." "I cannot gain eternal life with God by my own efforts." "Only faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of my sins allows me to live forever with God." We're totally helpless to live eternally on our own.

Here's what James had to say about this part of it. In James 4, verse 7, he said:

James 4:7-10 – *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Don't believe his lies. Submit yourself to God's truth and ask God to help you believe those things, and function as though you believe them. Draw near to God – and you do that by believing His truth – and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Sometimes we go back and forth about what's true. Just go with God. Forget all that other stuff that the devil throws at us. Be wretched and mourn and weep – James continues. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you. See, there it is again.*

Wisdom comes from being humble and trusting God, knowing that we don't have wisdom on our own.

One final thought: When we ask God to help us be humble, what we're really asking for is the ability to follow God's truth and avoid the devil's lies. Humility is the result of believing God's truth and pride is the result of following every lie of the devil.

So, don't be spiritually gullible or naïve – easily fooled. Be wise to both God's and the devil's ways, and then, follow God. If we do that, He will protect us and make us strong in Christ.