



2026 2Q Growing in a Relationship with God Lesson 3 Pride versus Humility

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read memory text:

- “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” Luke 14:11 NIV84

Why is this so? What is the problem with pride? Why is pride sin?

Is pride sin because God said don't do it? Is it a sin because it upsets God antagonizes Him by trying to compete with Him?

Is it because it started with Lucifer and if he started something it must be bad?

Or is there something about reality, design law, how life is created to function that makes pride wrong because in some way it is harmful, it injures, it causes death?

Does pride interfere with salvation? Yes, why? What is it about pride that, because of how reality works, causes everyone who clings to it to be lost in the end?

Pride is the sin of having an inflated, grandiose, superior opinion, attitude, or sense of self—thus pride always leads to destruction because: all created beings are finite, not supreme, limited in our understanding, and pride, making our own self the final authority, the one who knows it all, means we cut ourselves off from reality, from truth; we deny correction and therefore error after error becomes incorporated into our minds, hearts, and characters and we degrade, decay, and take ourselves out of harmony with God, heaven, reality, and life and the only result is ruin and death. And pride, being so full of confidence in self closes the heart and mind to healing and correcting truth.

Whereas the humble, those who acknowledge their limitations, their weakness, their lack of knowing all things, who acknowledge not only their need of a Savior, but their need of a living connection with Jesus become lovers of truth and have an inner framework (mind/heart) that is eager to be corrected, to update, to learn, to grow, to mature, to develop as they are able to comprehend truth. And thus, they will be exalted, not by some external award ceremony but by reality, by their actual growth in truth, and love, and likeness to God they grow brighter and more capable and more like Jesus in all things.

Read second paragraph,

- We've all battled with pride. We've all experienced times we want to look, act, speak, or appear better than those around us because we believe that we are better than they are, at least

in some way. Someone once said that pride emerges from the desire to show that our lives have value. Yet, we should already know that our lives have value because we were created by God, and we are those for whom Christ died. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 22.

What do you think about the suggestion that pride emerges from the desire to show that our lives have value?

Something doesn't quite sound right to me in this statement, what do you think?

First question—did Lucifer's pride emerge from a desire to show God that his life had value?

Could it be instead, the desire to show one's life has value emerges from pride rather than pride emerging from the desire to show our life has value? Isn't that the more pride one has the more they do to try and show, prove, and demonstrate their life has value, that they are important, that they should be recognized, that their opinions are the most valuable because they are the smartest, wisest and most valuable people—and if they don't get recognized as the most valuable they become more intolerant.?

Pride comes from valuing self more than objective reality merits and incites and then is reinforced by an inner insecurity, fear, doubt about oneself and their value and a defense against one's own insecurity. Pride is intimately connected with one's perceptions of self in relationship to others. "I am as good as they are. I could do that as good as them, in fact I could do it better than they are doing it. It's not fair that I that I never get called on, never get the opportunities to demonstrate my wonderfulness that they do. They get all the breaks."

Lucifer in heaven began to look at himself, allowed his mind to form conclusions and opinions about himself that misled himself—that his beauty, talent, skill, abilities were innately his, originating from him and not gifts from God. Taking his hearts affection and focus off of God and focusing on self he introduced error into his own heart and mind that when he compared himself to Christ resulted in jealousy. Rather than recognizing reality—that he as a created being had been blessed beyond all other created beings, he instead, having focused on self allowed his mind and heart to gravitate toward a lie that he was just as capable and worthy as the Creator God—and became ever more resistant to correcting and healing truth. He asserted that he should rise up to the station Christ held and sit on the throne only the Godhead sits upon. And he became increasingly fearful that he would not receive what he now believed was rightly due him. And he set about his warfare to lie and misrepresent God to turn the hearts and minds away from God and align with him, supporting him in his false claims designed to exalt and elevate him.

Pride is rooted in a false grandiosity about self combined with fear which results in selfishness, jealousy, and denial of truth, denial of love.

Pride is not just a rule one breaks, it is a fundamental, structural, operational, break of how God has built life to work. It cuts one off from truth and love and corrupts the heart, mind, and character and

makes the prideful unable to be reached by truth and love. Truth is not experienced with thankfulness and opportunity to grow, but is hated for it is experienced as an attack, a threat, an attempt to hurt, diminish, embarrass, or degrade them; love for others is not motivational to the prideful, but all aspects that appear to be loving are tools the prideful use to make self look better, get more followers or support, to exploit and degrade others, to get others to surrender their position, self-governance, or God-given authority to them.

The lesson said, “Yet, we should already know that our lives have value because we were created by God, and we are those for whom Christ died.”

How would the prideful hear this? Those who are prideful within the church perhaps respond with: “Oh my, you are right, God did create me and therefore I do have value. I am a member of God’s special people. I am very thankful I am not like one of these filthy unbelievers, I am a member of the remnant church and not one of those marked by the beast.”

And the prideful who have left the church perhaps respond with: “Of course I have value, like any good tool is valued by the one who needs and uses the tool. I am valued like a cowboy values his horse, or a slave owner values his slave. God created us to do His will, obey His commands, live under His authority, and if we don’t want to do that—then what? He kills us—just like the cowboy puts down the horse who breaks its leg and can’t serve him any longer. Sure, we are valued, but who wants to be valued like that?”

How do you know these interpretations, which pride might lead a person to hold, are wrong?

But Jesus, who is fully God, did not use power to punish Lucifer but left him free to rebel; did not use power to punish Adam but left him free to rebel, and when Adam rebelled, Jesus voluntarily became and human and gave His life to save us from eternal death, to deliver us from sin, to restore us to trust. What Jesus has done is not claim, it is a reality-based demonstration that God does love us and value us more than a cowboy values his horse or a craftsman his tool.

But Satan, full of pride, responds by quoting Scripture:

- Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. **For surely it is not angels he helps**, but Abraham’s descendants. Hebrews 2:14-16 NIV84.

And then the devil says, “Sure Jesus loves humans, and died for them, but He wouldn’t die for me or my fellow angels. He and His Father are exactly as I said in the beginning, unfair, play favorites, love some more than others. Even among humans that Jesus died for He isn’t fair and doesn’t love them all the same, the Bible repeatedly says He loved John more than the others. So, go ahead, believe you have value, but you only have value as long as you fit into His wants, plans, will, purposes, use your mind to think for yourself and you won’t have value anymore. You will be out here with me and my angels.”

What do you respond to the liar? How do you know this is not true? He quotes the Bible so shouldn't we believe him? How do you answer this?

If one is stuck in a rules-oriented way of thinking, trying to understand the Bible through imposed law and law enforcement, reading the Bible as a list of things to believe and do and not believe and not do, rather than a revelation of reality, then there is no answer that works.

If Jesus' death is the legal payment necessary to pay for sins—then why can it not be applied to the sins of angels if they were willing to repent? Is the blood of Christ only sufficient to cleanse the record of humans, but it is not supreme, it is more powerful than the sins of angels and is unable to cleanse the record of angelic sin? Or is the Father unwilling to accept the blood payment of His Son for the sins of angels, is His wrath and anger toward angels greater than toward humans? This is the type of conflict and error one falls into when one has the false human law penal/legal theology of the sin problem.

The truth sets free, reality is what we are describing here. Sin is not legal, it is lethal, it is a state of being out of harmony with God and operates inside living beings. Sin is distrust of God that is the internalized and applied to the self, to the mind, heart, inner being, motives, beliefs, foundations of one's individuality based upon the internalization and acceptance of lies, with subsequent incorporation of fear, and selfishness. This state of being causes ever increasing decay, degradation, corrosion, and corruption of the self which eventually results in dissolution and death—complete disconnection from God and life. Engaged in, practiced, and not corrected, eliminated, purged, removed from the being the only result is death.

What saves is truth and love, which restores of trust so that one receives the Holy Spirit who brings the life of Christ and restores within us perfect harmony with God and His design for life—and this is why Christ could save human sinners and not angels—it is how reality works.

The angels in heaven were created individually, each with their own breath of life. They all sinned from a sinless state. Further, they were presented with truth and opportunity to repent, to reject their misunderstandings, lies, false conclusions, pride, and be healed by choosing to trust and internalizing ever more truth and love from their face to face relationship with God. Metaphorically, it would be like a computer that has gotten corrupted code being exposed to the perfect original operating system and having all the errors purged and the operating system restored to perfection. But the angels refused the truth and at some point they crossed a line, and solidified into their being lies, selfishness, pride, to the degree, that in reality, as God created His intelligent creatures, their choices eventually destroyed within themselves the ability to respond to truth and love. In fact, they came to the point that they despised truth and love and now do everything they can to hide from it, and war to destroy it.

But humans are both in a different position than that of the angels in heaven and a unique creation, created in the image of God with godly capacities that angels do not have—the ability to procreate beings in our image. Angels sinned in the light of God's glory and had opportunity to be corrected in His presence—humanity did not have the same full and complete revelation and knowledge of God

that the angels had. Adam and Eve in Eden were new beings without the long experience, exposure, knowledge, and opportunity to know God that the angels had. Thus they were deceived in regard to the truth of God's character of love and there was hope for humanity in a revelation of the truth of who God is that they did not fully appreciate—the eternal gospel, the eternal good news about God, the truth that sets free.

But humans were different from angels in their capacity to procreate, we are not created individually by God, but are descended from sinful parents. God created one human from dirt and breathed one breath of life, one spirit of life into him, and made him sinless—a human animated only by the spirit of love and trust. Eve was taken from him, also animated by the spirit of love and trust.

Once they believed lies, they broke trust with God and corrupted themselves with fear and selfishness and the only life, spirit, animating energy they had to pass along to their children was the spirit of fear and selfishness. Thus, every other human descended from Adam and Eve come into the world with their unique personhood but constituted with a spirit of fear and selfishness—born in sin conceived in iniquity (Ps 51:5). We never had the opportunity of Adam, Eve, or the angels in heaven, to live in sinless perfection and choose from a sinless state who we would believe, love, and trust. We never had an opportunity to live sinlessly.

Thus, Jesus, through Mary, became incarnate and partook of that same life breathed into Adam and corrupted by Adam, but the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and Jesus' humanity was conceived with a new sinless breath of life brought by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, Jesus was tempted in all points like us yet without sin, and in His humanity, using only human abilities, Jesus chose to live in sinless perfection and He purged, killed, eliminated the spirit of fear and selfishness from the humanity with which He was born. And He rose again on the third day the second Adam, the new head of humanity and opens the way for all who trust Him to be reborn, to receive His sinless life not as a legal payment in books, but as a living reality within them, a new divine, animating, empowering, transforming, cleansing, presence within them. He is the Vine and we are the branches that when grafted in by faith receive the Holy Spirit who takes the life of Christ and reproduces it in us. Then we being motivated by love and trust grow in truth and are transformed growing, maturing, and becoming ever more like Christ.

Thus His sacrifice was for humans and not for the fallen angels. But the revelation of truth His life provides solidifies the loyal angels in their loyalty—all things in heaven and earth are reconciled to Christ at the cross.

I also want to follow up on a question that was in our Q&A last week in which someone asked about a theology put forth that suggests the crucifixion was not necessary for our salvation, that the death of Christ was only a manifestation of human abusive power dynamics, and that rather than the death of Christ being our hope it is the resurrection is the hope for salvation as it shows God over rules the abuse of power.

My view is as described above, salvation requires removing the cause of death from humanity, which is the corrupt spirit of fear and selfishness, and replacing it with a sinless spirit of truth, love, trust.

While God could have formed a new body out of dirt and breathed into it a new sinless breath of life and made a new human, that human would NOT be related to the humanity created in Eden, and would not resolve the sin problem Adam brought upon us for a variety of reasons.

The only way to save the same humanity, the same species created in Eden, was for Christ to partake of that very same life, which He did through Mary, but to introduce a new sinless breath of life, spirit, which He did through the Holy Spirit, and then live sinlessly as a human being, purge, remove, eliminate the cause of death, the spirit of fear and selfishness, and then rise again in a purified humanity.

So any attempt to remove the death of Christ as a **requirement** for salvation is misguided. And the Bible provides the evidence that the death of Christ was a requirement for our salvation in multiple ways:

- The long history of the sacrificial system in which the sacrificial animal represents Christ and is necessary for removal of sin. Prior to the Levitical law and priesthood, God had already instructed this with Adam, Abel, and the patriarchs. There is nothing in this ceremonial teaching system that suggests abuse of human authority and power. But it does teach that without the death of the Lamb of God the sin of the world could not be removed. (John 1:29).
- Jesus' teaching: "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." John 12:24-25 NIV84.
 - The seed must die in order for new life to come forth—and Jesus connects it to salvation—we must also die to the life inherited from Adam, the spirit of fear and selfishness, and be reborn with the spirit of love and trust, the life of Christ. In Jesus, these two spirits warred and Jesus died to the life corrupted by Adam and arose in a humanity animated only by the sinless life of love and trust. And thus He becomes the source of salvation for all who obey Him Heb 5:9.
- And this is further confirmed in what happened in Gethsemane—Christ became sin though He knew no sin and He fell down dying and would have died there if an angel didn't come from heaven and strengthen His humanity to be able to endure a little more.
 - In Gethsemane Christ would have achieved the purging of the spirit of fear and selfishness when He chose to surrender all to His Father. So His death would have occurred without the crucifixion had the angel not strengthened him.
 - This highlights a couple of points. Salvation required Christ's incarnation, sinless life, voluntary sacrificial and substitutionary death, and resurrection—not as a legal payment but as the only means to in reality eliminate the cause of death from humanity and restore the cause of life.
 - This answers another question many ask, *What if Christ had not died on the cross, or what if the Jews accepted Him as Savior and didn't reject Him, would He still have had*

to die on the cross? He would have died in Gethsemane revealing and demonstrating that sin cuts one off from God and causes death, and God does not lay a hand on the sinner. Jesus would have surrendered perfectly and eliminated the spirit of fear and selfishness and revealed the truth about the cause of death and that the Father is not the source of death and He would have purified humanity and rose again.

- His death would have happened in Gethsemane had He not been strengthened. Meaning, the crucifixion wasn't required for Christ to complete His mission to save us, but it was permitted by God for another reason. And that is that worshiping God, believing in the Bible, keeping the Sabbath, eating the right foods, dressing the right way, paying a full tithe, but doing so from an imposed law and law enforcement view makes one God's enemy who will use every corrupt method and practice to kill God Himself
- And the position taken and brought up in the question last week that focuses on the cross being a demonstration of demonic and human legal power to kill is correct to point out it exposes that. But it is incorrect to suggest that the death of Christ was not necessary for our salvation.

Pride closes the heart and mind to truth, thus always results in walking away from reality to fiction, fantasy, some error, falsehood which leads to destruction and death.

But the lesson seems to focus only on one manifestation of pride, what we might commonly think of as narcissism—the self-focused, grandiose, inflated sense of self.

But this is only one form of pride—there is another form, the opposite side of the same coin. While the classic narcissist is grandiose and expects everyone to recognize their wonderfulness, the other side is the narcissist who is inadequate, insecure, and devaluing of self and believes everyone will laugh at them or hate them. The classic narcissist goes into a room and expects everyone to stop and acknowledge them as wonderful, the opposite is the person who goes into a room and expects everyone to find fault with them, they see two people across the way laughing as they enter the room and immediately think that they are laughing at them.

Both of these types of people have self at the center of living with everyone else circling around them, either to admire and praise or to devalue and ridicule.

So the classic narcissist would be the grandiose Pharisees who publicly make a display of how wonderful they are and how much better they are than others.

The opposite is the Christian who makes self the center by always presenting themselves in the most abject and pitiful way, wearing no makeup, no jewelry, always wear drab clothing, straight hair, always carrying their Bible, or whatever other action they need to take to demonstrate they are the most meek, humble, self-effacing, undeserving wretch who is truly self-sacrificing, and thereby better than all the others in the church who wear jewelry, makeup, beautiful clothed, don't carry their Bibles everywhere etc.

Pride can be arrogant or self-effacing with people who are proud of their humility, it is not primarily about the external behavior, but about the internal motivation of the heart.

SUNDAY

The lesson points our attention to 1John 2:15-17:

- Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. 1John 2:15-17 NKJV.

What do you hear in this text?

What does it mean to love the world—is this talking about the same thing we read about in John 3:16 “for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son?”

The language appears similar—God loves the world and sent Jesus—but we are not to love the world—what is the difference here?

Do Jesus’ words in His prayer to His Father help us,

- I have given them your word and the **world has hated them**, for they are **not of the world** any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take **them out of the world** but that you protect them from the evil one. They are **not of the world**, even as I am not of it. John 17:14-16 NIV84

What is going on here? How are we to be in the world but not of it, to love it but not love it?

Paul wrote,

- As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the **ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit** who is now at work in those who are disobedient. Ephesians 2:1-2 NIV84.

What does this text mean and how does it apply to not loving the world, God’s kingdom, and how we are to love the world?

Does Jesus’ statement help,

- “My **kingdom is not of this world**. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.” John 18:36 NIV84

The Bible is making the distinction between two worlds, two systems, two methods, two principles, two laws, and ultimately two kings and kingdoms.

God's original creation, which was built by God to operate upon design laws, and was perfect, holy, without defect or sin, and operated upon truth, love, freedom and trust. And Satan's kingdom of lies, which broke trust, inciting fear, selfishness, guilt, shame, survival, and seeks security and stability through imposed law and coercive law enforcement.

The love of the world that we are NOT to have is the love of anything and everything that deviates from God's design—the things this world values that are used to promote, protect, and advance self.

- the lust of the flesh—which includes all the sensual self-indulgent sins used to comfort self and seek to avoid guilt and shame
- the lust of the eyes—all the sins of wealth, beauty, prizes, awards, all the things sought to make self look good or feel good in some way
- the pride of life—all the things done to inflate one's self worth, to protect the ego, to make one feel superior to others, including religious commitment, religious law keeping, fasting done for promoting self sake, offerings, tithes etc.

But all of these are manifestations of the spirit of fear inherited from Adam that drives the behaviors to attach to the heart, the self, all these things as means of protecting and comforting self, rather than coming to Christ, surrendering all in trust, dying to self and being reborn with a new life.

When we are reborn with the life of Christ, we love God and others, and love the world as God does—from a perspective of valuing others more than self and reality-based comprehension that this world is sick and dying and we want no part of pathology, sickness, disease, and death. We hate the methods and systems of this world in the same way a doctor hates pathogens and cancer, but we hate sin and death because we love God's creation and want to save it.

MONDAY

Read the second paragraph,

- It's very easy for us to exalt ourselves. Sometimes it becomes second nature to let others know of our accomplishments and how good we are. But these things, in and of themselves, make no difference to our reputation in heaven's eyes. In fact, it's actually contrary to what we might think, because “ ‘everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted’ ” (Luke 18:14, NKJV). Jesus also counsels us to take the lowest seat and let the host elevate you if he or she so wishes (Luke 14:8–10). This upside-down kingdom that Jesus teaches is the opposite of what we expect. “It is only he who knows himself to be a

sinner that Christ can save.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 158. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 24.

Why will everyone who exalts themselves be humbled? Do you see something about reality, some design law at work?

Can you think of other places Jesus taught the exact same principle?

- “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Matthew 7:1-2 NIV84.

What is Jesus describing? Is He giving a rule or describing reality?

He is describing that your judgment of others indicates your heart, mind, character, values, who you are and in reality you will be accurately diagnosed to be exactly what you have chosen to become. Thus Jesus goes on to say:

- “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye. Matthew 7:3-5 NIV84.

Other examples of this same reality—truth?

- For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Matthew 6:14-15 NIV84.

Is Jesus setting up a legal rule that must be followed and if you don’t then God will refuse to forgive you? Or is He describing reality, if you refuse to forgive then you hold fear, selfishness, bitterness, resentment in your heart, you are not renewed, reborn with love, and the Father cannot overlook reality. The Father will not say “it is okay that you remain sick and terminal,” because it is not okay, it is destructive to us to remain this way and the Father will not pretend otherwise. While the Father is like Jesus, and He extends forgiveness to all as Jesus demonstrated on the cross by forgiving from His heart His persecutors—God’s free forgiveness does not change those who don’t receive it, just as the crucifiers did not receive Christ’s forgiveness and were not reborn, and therefore remained His enemies; they remained in an unregenerate, sin-sick, terminal, state of unforgiveness despite being forgiven by God. This is what Jesus is describing, nothing penal legal, how reality works.

Others?

- “Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything

good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” Matthew 12:33-37 NIV84.

What is the judgment? Nothing more than reality—exposing what actually is, accurate diagnosis, the light of truth shining in.

When Jesus separates the sheep from the goats His actions do not make sheep into sheep and goats into goats, they are what they are, those that have rejected truth and love and chosen to be filthy and wicked will remain filthy and wicked still; and those who have chosen truth, love, and trust and become righteous will remain righteous still.

The last sentence stated that only those who know themselves to be sinners can be saved by Christ—does the Bible suggest that the Pharisees who crucified Christ believed they were sinless, unfallen beings, or would they have acknowledged they were sinners?

If they would have acknowledged they were sinners, why couldn't Christ save them?

Because they viewed sin as legal, behavioral, external, with legal, behavioral, and external solutions—animal sacrifices, legal codes of conduct, washing hands in certain ways, not touching this or that, not eating this or that, keeping the right rules on Sabbath, observing the right days. And thus, they felt quite good about themselves knowing they were sinners but because they had kept their legal rule book they falsely believed had their sins legally accounted for.

This is how much of modern Christianity functions, acknowledging they are sinners, but all set in the false imposed law model, that provides a false legal solution that keeps hearts far from God, all the while claiming, just like the Jews did, that they are serving God.

Read the third paragraph,

- In first realizing our true state of sinfulness and our desperate need of Christ, we can come to Him knowing with confidence that if “we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9, NKJV). *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 24.

Do you think that those referred to in the following passage, who Jesus says are claiming Him as their Savior, have failed to confess their sins?

- Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ Matthew 7:22-23 NIV84.

Do you think it is that there was one sin that they forgot to confess that remained on the books of heaven—that pencil they stole when in the second grade, they just never remembered to confess it after they gave their heart to Jesus and so it remains on the books and they must be punished for it—is that the problem?

What is the problem?

They were never reborn, they never surrendered their life, their spirit of fear and selfishness, but kept their spirit of fear and selfishness alive through their penal legal Christianity in which they confessed all their sins and claimed the blood of Jesus as the payment for them in the courts of heaven.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- The grand halls of the Egyptian palace boasted of opulence, pleasure, and ease. “ ‘Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds’ ” (Acts 7:22, NKJV). A life of power, riches, and popularity were his for the taking; yet, Moses chose something very different. “As historian, poet, philosopher, general of armies, and legislator, he stands without a peer. Yet with the world before him, he had the moral strength to refuse the flattering prospects of wealth and greatness and fame, ‘choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.’ ”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 246. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 25.

The lesson documents that Moses had the moral strength to refuse the flattering prospects of wealth and fame—how?

How do you think Moses got that moral strength? What does that mean?

Does that mean he had a list of right and wrong rules, the Ten Commandments and he chose to follow the rules?

No, this is talking about our internal motivations to action, what we value, from where do we derive our motivation, drive, focus, what is important and worth doing and worth giving up.

It is a manifestation of the spirit that animates and motivates the heart. It is an evidence that Moses had a heart that loved God and wanted to honor God more than gain honor for self. That his identity was not formed around fear and insecurity, seeking to make a name for himself, but was formed around who he was as a child of God.

True moral decision-making comes only from hearts that have been reborn to love God and others more than self.

Read second paragraph,

- Moses' later humility is remarkable, considering the powerful man he was and where he had come from. Yet, through an impulsive sinful act (Exod. 2:12), he lost his self-confidence and self-sufficiency. With mountains as his classroom walls and with pride swept aside, for 40 years Moses was taught by God what he needed to know to lead a nation out of slavery into the Promised Land. The power and riches of what could have been another life in Egypt paled in significance when Moses considered eternity. God had called him very specifically, and Moses followed. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 25.

Anything about this paragraph that doesn't quite sound right?

What about this sentence?

- The power and riches of what could have been another life in Egypt paled in significance when Moses considered eternity.

On the surface it sounds good, Moses valued heaven over earth—but could this statement be heard in a less than helpful way?

Was Moses making the decisions he did because he realized God could pay more, that the riches of heaven are greater than the riches of Egypt? If that is the reason—what is the motive of Moses' heart? Isn't that motive what Satan accused God of doing with Job?

Yes, there is a truth in recognizing heaven has greater value than anything of this earth, that the riches of heaven are worth infinitely more than the riches of earth, but the riches of heaven **are of a different order** than the riches of earth—the riches of heaven are not about wealth, jewelry, estates, power over others—remember in heaven gold is nothing but pavement for the streets. The riches of heaven are the riches of truth, love, connection, health, wisdom, reality-based living, mature and healthy character, not material pursuits or possessions. The riches of earth appeal to the selfish nature, the riches of heaven are what Christ had while on earth, and heaven's riches are foolishness to the unsaved. So, we must be careful with statements like this so that we don't inspire the spirit of fear and selfishness to seek the Lord for a bigger payday in the end.

And we have evidence that Moses valued the riches of love, truth, Christlikeness of character, not gold streets and gates of pearls, for Moses later was willing to have his name taken out of the book of life to save the people. Moses was not doing what he was doing because God pays more but because Moses came to love more.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on the disciples arguing among themselves as to whom would be the greatest.

Read the third paragraph,

- Instead of these men being content with their calling, pride rose in their hearts to where each one thought he was better than the others. It's easy to allow such thoughts to dominate our minds. But we are told that "there is nothing so offensive to God or so dangerous to the human soul as pride and self-sufficiency. Of all sins it is the most hopeless, the most incurable."—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 154. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 26.

What do you understand the last portion of the paragraph to be saying? Nothing is more offensive to God and dangerous to our souls than pride—why? What does this mean?

Let's read the next paragraph, do you hear the same thought conveyed or something different?

- This is very serious for us. Our pride offends God more than anything else, and it's a character trait that is difficult to overcome because we often don't see it for what it is. In our state of self-sufficiency, we choose not to self-evaluate, for surely pride is king. We need to stop, self-diagnose, and ask that God will open our eyes to our true state, because pride may be the number-one factor that keeps us from having a close relationship with Him today. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 26.

Is this saying the same thing or something different, and if different how?

Specifically, is saying, "there is nothing so offensive to God or so dangerous to the human soul as pride and self-sufficiency," the same as saying, "Our pride offends God more than anything else"

It could mean the same, but could the second mean something else?

Something being offensive is not the same thing as one being offended. If your child just came home after being sprayed by a skunk—their smell would be offensive, but would you be offended by your child?

When a doctor is treating a sick patient who has gangrene that smells and looks horrible, is the gangrene and necrotic smell that the doctor finds offensive the same thing as the doctor being offended?

Rephrasing it like the lesson has, is a common mistake made when people think though imposed law, when they think that our sins are an affront to God because He is so holy, that He gets offended. It leads to theologies like this:

- **God is personally offended by sin and thus he needs to be personally appeased in order to offer a personal forgiveness.** In keeping with his divine principles, his personal nature, and the magnitude of the sins of man, the only thing that God would allow to appease him was the suffering and death of the sinless representative of mankind, namely, Christ (emphasis mine). (Sungenis, Robert. *Not By Faith Alone*. Queenship, 1997. As quoted in Webster, William. “The Roman Catholic Teaching on Salvation and Justification.” *Christian Resources*, <https://christiantruth.com/articles/rcjustification>, pp. 108.).

But the truth is that God is Creator, and all sin is deformity, corruption, decay, necrosis, and it is offensive to God, just like gangrene is offensive to a doctor, but that does not mean God is offended. He is sad for us, not angry for Himself.

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph,

- In stark contrast to the disciples’ desire to be superior and their belief that they were better than the next guy, we see Jesus—the ultimate example of humility. Jesus, who said, “ ‘Yet I am among you as the One who serves’ ” (Luke 22:27, NKJV). Jesus, who every day gave to those in need around Him because He was filled with compassion and saw the multitudes as sheep without a shepherd. He knew that humanity needed Him more than anything else in life, though few realized this simple truth. Jesus, who gave up heaven to die for the human race in the hope that they would understand His act of grace and respond to His invitation to have a relationship with Him. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 27.

What did Jesus give to people? And I want to emphasize this—did Jesus give what people wanted? He gave what they needed but only in harmony with the design laws of reality, the laws God built reality to operate upon.

This is why sometimes He withdrew from the needy masses—because as a human He required physical rest, but also spiritual time with His Father.

He sometimes provided silence because the people He was talking to were not open to truth.

He sometimes performed not miracles because there was not trust and Jesus’ power is not primarily physical power, it is gospel power, the power of truth and love that restores trust. If there is no trust and power is exercised what happens? More fear! So sometimes He didn’t heal anyone in a town.

And then when He fed the 5000, He left quietly and stopped doing miracles, why?

The point is that if we are to use our abilities to try and bless others we must first be healthy ourselves, thus we present ourselves as living sacrifices to be renewed and restored into love and trust with God,

and then we must grow in reality based wisdom to understand the design laws of God to know what is actually good, healthy, right, and reasonable, and what is not.

The lesson also said, “they would understand His act of grace and respond to His invitation to have a relationship with Him.”

Yes, we want a relationship with Jesus, with God—for what purpose? Is just having a relationship sufficient?

Did Lucifer in heaven have a relationship with Jesus? Did Judas have a personal relationship with Jesus? And were either of them saved by that relationship? Why not?

Because the relationship isn't what saves per say, it is the trust that is to be manifest and restored through that relationships that opens the heart to be reborn with a spirit of love and truth .Thus, relationship that does not result in our trust being restored in Christ, and rebirth experience, does not lead to salvation. Am I wrong in saying that?

Read the second paragraph,

- Jesus did it *all*. He bore all. When we pause long enough to see Him—truly and purely—we can't help realizing our impurity, our filth, and our desperate need of Him in our lives today. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 27.

What does it mean “Jesus did it all”? If He did it all, then why are we still here? If Jesus did it all, then why are we told that we must

- “work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” Philippians 2:12-13 NIV84.

If Jesus bore it all, then why do we suffer in sin and why does the Scripture say:

- Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. 1 Peter 4:1 NKJV

Jesus did what no other person could do—after Adam sinned, Jesus, becoming incarnate, brought a new sinless breath of life into humanity and as a human being was tempted in all points like us, suffered the complete and full result of sin, which is the total abandonment of His Father, suffering all the anguish, guilt, shame that sin causes the heart and mind to experience, the terrible dread and sense of disintegration and fear of death. And He did this without the indwelling Holy Spirit to comfort Him. Stephen is being stone the Holy Spirit is there comforting Him. But Jesus is abandoned by His Father, not because His Father is angry at Him, or agitated, or inflicting punishment, but because the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are united in their love, mercy, grace, and plan to save sinners from sin. And the only way for that to happen in reality, with the reality that God has constructed human life to operate upon, is that Jesus must partake of the life breathed into Adam and corrupted by Adam, but also bring

a new sinless life into the species, and then, as a human live sinlessly and purge the infection of fear and selfishness. How? By refusing to respond to it in any way, and choosing only love, truth, trust, and thus refusing to act in self-interest, refusing to act in fear and distrust of God. And thus God had to release Christ so Christ's humanity could choose freely and also so Christ's humanity could die and eliminate the infecting spirit permanently. As long as the Father remained connected to Jesus' humanity Jesus humanity could not die. So the Father let Him go, and Jesus tread the winepress alone, and overcome in humanity.

So Jesus singly and alone overcome sin and purified the species, revealed the truth about God, exposed Satan as a liar and source of sin and death, but His victory has no saving power in people who refuse it. While He saved the human species in His own person, every individual is only saved by their freewill participation through trust. And that participation in healing, in cleansing from sin, requires our choice, and our willingness to suffer the pain, the loss, the heartache of detaching from our souls the unhealthy things we have sought comfort and security from and align ourselves fully with God. Ultimately, we must die to the spirit of fear and selfishness and be reborn. But we are never put in the place of Christ, when we struggle we are never alone, our Shepherd is there, the Spirit is there, God's angels are there, we always have divine power to assist us.

So Jesus won the victory alone, provides remedy alone, but Jesus alone cannot save any individual soul, we must participate with Him in the application of His truth and love and spirit into our hearts.