

Week 1: Pride & Humility

Pride is substituting ourselves for God when it comes to significance, purpose, and happiness. Many have seen pride as the foundation for all other vices. Humility, on the other hand, recognizes that we are creatures meant to find the fullness of life in God and not ourselves. This attitude enables us to truly experience the love of God and serve others with joy.

Monday: Self-Exaltation

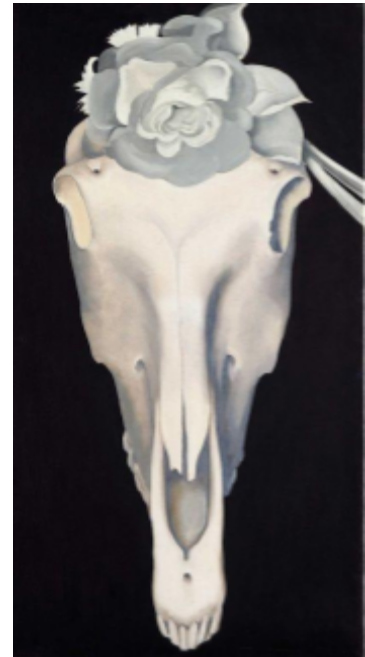
Reflection

“Show me, Lord, my life’s end
and the number of my days;
let me know how fleeting my life is.
You have made my days a mere handbreadth;
the span of my years is as nothing before you.
Everyone is but a breath,
even those who seem secure.”

— Psalm 39:4-5 (NIV)

“The unexplainable thing in nature that makes me feel the world is big fat beyond my understanding – to understand maybe by trying to put it into form. To find the feeling of infinity on the horizon line or just over the next hill.”

— Georgia O’Keeffe



Horse Skull by Georgia O’Keeffe

Confession

How have you been dependent on yourself rather than God in ways that draw you away from His presence and prayer? Is your life dictated by the tyranny of daily obligations which blind you to the eternal significance of your life and relationship with God? Have you valued your work as a divine vocation and means to serve God and others?

Action

Take sackcloth fabric and ashes or find some sand and hold it in your hand. Meditate on these items and see them as reflections of your own mortality. Likewise, you could look at the stars and ponder the size of the universe or eternity. Embrace the relative insignificance of your life while also rejoicing in the significance of God’s love for you. Take a moment to worship by listening and singing to the song [So Will I](#) by Hillsong Worship.

Tuesday: Irreverence

Reflection

Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.” When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!”

And Moses said, “Here I am.”

“Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

— Exodus 3:2-5 (NIV)

Reverence is a specific attitude toward something that is precious and valuable, toward someone who is superior. It is a salute of the soul, an awareness of value without enjoyment of that value or seeking any personal advantage from it.

— Abraham Heschel

Confession

Have you taken the true awesomeness of God for granted? Have you treated the gift of your life and surrounding world as something less than sacred? Have you been satisfied with going through the motions of life without actually seeking a relationship with God?

Action

Find a private moment on your knees and, if possible, lay face down before God. While in God’s presence, you can spend this time in silent or verbal prayer. You can also pray the words of Psalm 145 before or during this time.



By Mark Wiggin

Wednesday: Vanity

Reflection



Pride & Humility by Elizabeth Tilly

Pride is not the opposite of shame, but it's source. True humility is the only antidote to shame.
— General Iroh

In confession occurs the breakthrough of the Cross. The root of all sin is pride. I want to be my own law, I have a right to myself, my hatred and my desires, my life and my death. The mind and flesh of man are set on fire by pride; for it is precisely in his wickedness that man wants to be as God. Confession in the presence of a brother is the profoundest kind of humiliation. It hurts, it cuts a man down, it is a dreadful blow to pride...In the deep mental and physical pain of humiliation before a brother - which means, before God - we experience the Cross of Jesus as our rescue and salvation. The old man dies, but it is God who has conquered him. Now we share in the resurrection of Christ and eternal life.

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Confession

Have you harshly judged others' mistakes but excused your own? Have you quickly dismissed constructive criticism? Have you lied to others and yourself to hide wrongdoings? Have you avoided apologizing? Have you taken credit for accomplishments of others? Have you not credited God with the gifts he has given you? Have you spent much time concerned about dwelling on your personal achievements, physical appearance, or the lack thereof?

Action

Dress as plainly as possible—think simplicity, not sloppy. In conversations, practice listening more than speaking. Ask more questions and make less statements. Focus the attention on other people instead of drawing it to yourself. Lastly, practice confession. Find someone you trust and be forthright with them about a way God has convicted you about your pride. Have them pray for you. Make a plan to apologize to people where needed, with no expectation of a specific response.

Thursday: Arrogance

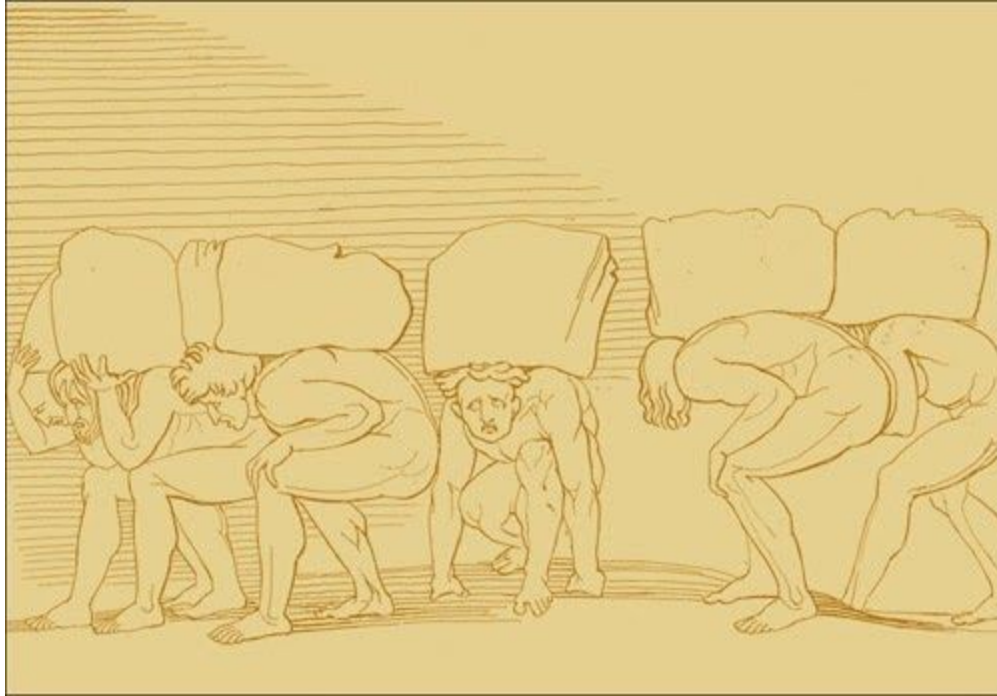
Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:
Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

— Philippians 2:5-11

“The proud person always wants to do the right thing, the great thing. But because he wants to do it in his own strength, he is fighting not with man, but with God.”

— Soren A. Kierkegaard



Proud Peninents by John Flaxman. From Dante's Purgatorio concerning the burden of pride.

Confession

Do you seek after compliments or affirmation? Does being slighted or insulted weigh heavily on you? Do you feel the need to boast or prove yourself? Are you overbearing or unnecessarily argumentative? Do you take undue pride and significance from your race, nation, position, personality, possessions, and achievements? Do you seek to put your needs above others?

Action

Put others' needs and desires before your own. Ask people what their preference is for something and serve them according to their desire. This could be something as simple as watching a show that they enjoy or preparing a meal you know they like. You can also ask them if there are meaningful ways you can serve them.

Friday: Oversensitivity

Reflection

Love does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

— 1 Corinthians 13:5

You should know that you have been greatly benefited when you have suffered deeply because of some insult or indignity; for by means of the indignity self-esteem has been driven out of you.

— St. Maximos the Confessor

“A brother came to see Abba Macarius the Egyptian, and said to him, ‘Abba, give me a word, that I may be saved.’ So the old man said, ‘Go to the cemetery and abuse [insult] the dead.’ The brother went there, insulted them and threw stones at them; then he returned and told the old man about it. The latter said to him, ‘Didn’t they say anything to you?’ He replied, ‘No.’ The old man said, ‘Go back tomorrow and praise them.’ So the brother went away and praised them, calling them ‘Apostles, saints and righteous men.’ He returned to the old man and said to him, ‘I have complimented them.’ And the old man said to him, ‘Did they not answer you?’ The brother said no. The old man said to him, ‘You know how you insulted them and they did not reply, and how you praised them and they did not speak; so you too if you wish to be saved must do the same and become a dead man. Like the dead, take no account of either the scorn of men or their praises, and you can be saved.’”

— Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Confession

Have you expected to be disliked or rejected by others? Have you been quick to interpret the actions and words of others suspiciously and taken offense? Have you surrendered yourself to pessimism and hopelessness rather than fighting to maintain hope or even cheer?

Action

Ask someone to offer you constructive criticism. Listen and write down a summary of their comments. Thank them. Later, ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with love of God and to empower you to find your significance in the perfect work of Christ. Meditate on any truth that God revealed through that conversation and thank God for it.

Saturday: Distrust

Reflection

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

— John 15:1-8 (NIV)

“It is presumptuous for me to wish to choose my path, because I cannot tell which path is best for me. I must leave it to the Lord, Who knows me, to lead me by the path which is best for me, so that in all things His will may be done.”

— St. Theresa of Avila

Confession

Have you refused to recognize God’s love, wisdom, and care for you? Have you tried to manipulate and/or bargain with God? Have you been guided by a drive for perfectionism or a fear of failure? Have you sought false security and control by means such as superstition, spiritualism, or self-help techniques? Have you anxiously tried to control others?

Action

Set aside some time for private prayer. While praying, open your hands with your palms facing upward as a symbol of your openness to God. Verbally surrender your life to God’s will, unconditional love, and purpose in Jesus. Let the anxieties of your life and the world melt away. Be filled with peace of Christ that goes beyond all understanding.