

Lesson 11: The Danger of Pride



Humility is an essential virtue of Christian character.

Golden Text:

“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” (Proverbs 16:18, KJV)

Study at a Glance: The 5 W's

KEY AREA	DETAILS AND SUMMARY
WHO (Author & Audience)	Daniel, an exiled Jewish prophet in Babylon, confronts King Belshazzar; Peter writes to suffering believers scattered across Asia Minor.
WHAT (Core Message)	Pride treats what is holy as common, blinds us to God's warnings, and invites His direct opposition; humility positions us to receive His grace and restoration.
WHEN (Timing)	Daniel 5 occurs near the end of the Babylonian Empire; 1 Peter is written in the first century to churches facing trials under hostile powers.
WHERE (Location)	Belshazzar's blasphemous feast in Babylon's royal palace; Peter's exhortation addresses scattered congregations in the Roman world.
WHY (Rationale)	Because pride is a spiritual time-bomb—"before destruction"—God warns His people to humble themselves under His mighty hand so He may lift them up in due time.

Introduction: Imagine sitting at a celebration where everyone feels untouchable—position is secure, resources seem endless, and God feels very far away, if He is considered at all. In Daniel 5, God interrupts such a moment with handwriting on the wall to show that no throne is too high and no ego too big for Him to confront. Proverbs 16:18 reminds us that pride always walks ahead of destruction, and a “haughty spirit” always walks ahead of a fall. This lesson invites us to see how pride can turn worship into sacrilege, how God exposes pride we try to hide, and how He personally opposes the proud while giving grace to the humble.

Key Terms Defined. **The Hebrew words and definition MUST relate to the text**

TERM	Transliteration	DEFINITION (Contextual)
Pride, majesty, arrogance	<i>ga'on</i>	Exaltation, glory, or pride; can describe legitimate majesty but often a haughty self-exaltation that God hates.
Arrogant pride	<i>ge'ah</i>	Pride, arrogance; used of the kind of “arrogant pride” that Wisdom says the fear of the Lord must hate.
Insolent pride	<i>zādon</i>	Insolence, presumptuous arrogance; pride that boils over into open rebellion and defiance of God’s authority and counsel.
Humility, meekness	<i>'anavah</i>	Humility, meekness, gentle lowliness; not weakness but strength that has bowed to God and depends on Him rather than self.
To be high / exalt self	<i>rum</i>	To be high, lifted up or exalted; in the reflexive sense, to exalt or lift oneself up in pride.
Low / lowly, brought low	<i>shephel / shefa)</i>	Low place or low condition; to be humbled, abased, or brought down from a higher position.

Transition into Section 1:

Belshazzar does not just sin privately—he orders that the sacred vessels from the Jerusalem temple be used as party cups while his guests praise idols of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. Pride here becomes sacrilege: treating what belongs to God as if it exists to serve our pleasure and self-display. Proverbs 16:18 warns that such lifted-up *ga'on* is already walking hand-in-hand with destruction, even while the music is still playing.

SECTION 1: Pride Leads to Sacrilege (Daniel 5:1–9)

Belshazzar’s feast shows how pride turns worship upside down—using holy things to honor false gods and ourselves, until God interrupts with a sign that brings terror and confusion. In this early scene, pride looks fun, powerful, and sophisticated, but in reality it is already under judgment.

Discussion Questions

1. **Text/Observation:** What specific actions in verses 1–4 show that Belshazzar has crossed a line from ordinary sin into sacrilege?
2. **Reflection (Accessible):**
In what ways can modern believers be guilty of “drinking from holy vessels”—using things God has set apart (time, bodies, gifts, money, ministry) for our own glory rather than His?
3. **Advanced/Word Study:**
If *ga'on* can describe both positive “majesty” and negative “pride,” how does Daniel 5 show the difference between God’s rightful exaltation and human self-exaltation?

Transition to Section 2:

In the middle of fear and confusion, Daniel is brought in as the one who carries a different spirit and remembers how God humbled Nebuchadnezzar. Pride had rewritten the story so that Belshazzar could enjoy the trophies of victory without remembering the God who gave that victory and later humbled his predecessor. Now God, through Daniel, exposes Belshazzar’s pride by naming what he knew and refused to learn.

SECTION 2: Pride Exposed (Daniel 5:10–21)

Daniel reviews Nebuchadnezzar's rise and fall, showing that God exalted him, then brought him low until he acknowledged that the Most High rules over human kingdoms. He then indicts Belshazzar for not humbling himself, even though he knew this history.

Discussion Questions

Exegesis/Theology:

1. Why is Belshazzar held more accountable because he "knew all this" and still did not humble himself?
2. **Application :**
Where might our church or ministry risk repeating Belshazzar's error—enjoying the benefits of past moves of God without learning the humble lessons those stories are meant to teach us?

Transition to Section 3:

After exposing Belshazzar's pride, Daniel announces God's verdict: his days are numbered, his kingdom is weighed and found wanting, and his rule will be divided and given to others. That very night, the word is fulfilled and the proud king is removed, showing how quickly God can oppose and overturn the proud when their judgment has ripened. The New Testament echoes this pattern: "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble...Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

SECTION 3: Pride Opposed by God (Daniel 5:22–31; 1 Peter 5:5–6)

Belshazzar is struck down in a single night, while Peter calls believers to “clothe” themselves with humility toward one another because God actively “opposes” the proud but gives grace to the humble. Proverbs 16:18 and 1 Peter 5:5–6 together show that pride not only precedes destruction; it also invites God’s active resistance, whereas humility invites His active favor.

Discussion Questions

1. Observation/Text:

How is God’s opposition to Belshazzar in Daniel 5 a concrete example of 1 Peter 5:5—“God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble”?

2. Word Study/Application:

How do the Hebrew ideas of *ʿanavah* (humility) and *shephel* (being brought low) help us understand Peter’s call to “humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time”?

3. Reflection (Accessible):

Where do you most feel the pull of *rum*—the desire to “lift yourself up” or prove yourself right—and what would it look like to practice *ʿanavah* in that area this week?

Closing: Bringing It All Together

Belshazzar’s story shows that pride can turn worship into mockery, memory into selective amnesia, and power into a trap that collapses in a single night. Nebuchadnezzar’s story shows that even the most lifted-up person can be restored if they are willing to be humbled and acknowledge that heaven rules. Proverbs 16:18 and 1 Peter 5:5–6 draw the line clearly: *gaʻon* walks in front of destruction, but *ʿanavah* walks under the mighty hand of God and receives grace. As you lead at Spotlight Deliverance Temple, you can invite both seasoned saints and novices to see where God may be writing on the walls of their own hearts—not to shame them, but to call them into the safety and strength of true humility.