**1. Motivate**

In your opinion, what are some good ways to earn the respect of others?

* mean what you say, say what you mean
* integrity – act the same when alone as what you say in front of others
* do a good job
* do what you are asked without whining, complaining
* clean up after your job
* don’t seek attention
* no whining
* generosity
* respect others
* no gossiping
* be careful in choosing friends
* respect feelings of others
* give people the benefit of the doubt
* be authentic
* express appreciation

**2. Transition**

Today we study a counter example of these practices.

* Whatever you do, do it with humility

**3. Bible Study**

A video introduction to the lesson is available. View it at <https://tinyurl.com/5n86pm7a> If you have no wi-fi where you teach, it is best to download the video file to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/ytbcd3pn>

3.1 Accept Honors with Humility

Listen for civil disobedience.

Esther 3:1-5 (NIV) After these events, King Xerxes honored Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles. 2 All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor. 3 Then the royal officials at the king's gate asked Mordecai, "Why do you disobey the king's command?" 4 Day after day they spoke to him but he refused to comply. Therefore they told Haman about it to see whether Mordecai's behavior would be tolerated, for he had told them he was a Jew. 5 When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged.

How was Haman honored by the king?

* king gave him highest seat of honor among the other nobles
* royal officials knelt down, paid him honor
* the king required this honorific attitude

Note the description of Haman’s lineage

* Descendant from the Amalekite King Agag.
* When God commanded Saul to destroy the Amalekites, King Agag was on the throne. (1 Sam. 15:7-33).
* The strife between Israel and the Amalekites started much earlier when they battled after the exodus (Ex. 17:8-15).
* Long enmity between Israelites and Amalekites

So, why do you think Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman?

* Perhaps Mordecai refused to bow because he felt he’d be violating his worship of Yahweh to bow before anyone but God.
But …
* to bow was an act of respect, not worship. And if Mordecai did serve in the king’s court, he likely had bowed previously before Ahasuerus or royal officials.
* Perhaps Mordecai refused to bow because Haman was an Agagite. … we noted above the long standing enmity

How would you feel in Haman’s place?

* might ignore it … Haman may not have been that important, in Haman’s opinion
* could be mad because if you’ve earned the right to the appointed office, you need to receive the honor due
* need to expect the honor of the position, even if they don’t like you

Verse 5 says Haman was “enraged.” Do you think he was right or wrong to be mad? Why?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Correct to Be Upset | Shouldn’t Let It Bother You |
| * he earned the honor from the king
* people need to respect the position given
* it’s an insult to ignore the honor
* gives me a chance to enforce my position, show my authority and power
 | * if they don’t know enough to bow, they’re not worth the aggravation
* who is Haman, anyway?
* won’t bother me once I get even
 |

How would you describe humility? What are some synonyms?

* self-effacement
* unpretentious
* humble
* meekness
* shyness
* unassuming
* not think less of yourself, but think of yourself less

How can believers guard against the temptations of pride and greed?

* remember that all we have is a gift from God
* even our skills are the result of God’s creation of our minds and bodies
* we succeed only as we are good stewards of our resources and God’s blessing
* God is sovereign and will have a hand in shaping our opportunities to succeed

3.2 Pursuing Personal Gain

Listen for a deadly scheme.

Esther 3:6-9 (NIV) Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes. 7 In the twelfth year of King Xerxes, in the first month, the month of Nisan, they cast the pur (that is, the lot) in the presence of Haman to select a day and month. And the lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar. 8 Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "There is a certain people dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and who do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. 9 If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will put ten thousand talents of silver into the royal treasury for the men who carry out this business."

When Haman saw firsthand that Mordecai refused to show him honor and learned Mordecai’s ethnicity, what did he determine to do?

* he got mad
* he was a believer of the adage “don’t only get mad, get even”
* decided killing only Mordecai was not enough
* began to plan for a way to destroy all the Jews throughout the kingdom
* checked his horoscope to see when the best day would be to do this
* this may also have to do with the long standing animosity between the Jews and the Amalekites

How did Haman take advantage of his position, his relationship to the king, and the king’s ego, to gain royal approval to exterminate the Jews?

* suggested to the king there was a “certain people” in the kingdom who were undesirable
* their customs are different from all the other citizens
* they don’t obey the king’s laws
* would be best to get rid of them all
* let’s make a law, a declaration

How can we identify when we’re drifting toward pettiness and revenge?

* obsessive focus on grievances – past wrongs or slights
* increased hostility towards someone
* overreacting to minor issues
* thinking about ways to have revenge
* lack of empathy for others
* voicing increasingly negative opinions about someone
* avoid any reconciliation with someone
* isolate yourself from people who do not share your views, attitudes

What can happen when someone's personal agenda attempts to override God's will?

* you are “pushing” Jesus off the throne of your life
* you are in rebellion
* you ignore or lose the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit
* you will elevate the ill will between you and others
* you try to run your own life and don’t trust in God to make things right, to correct wrongs

3.3 Destructiveness of Pride

Listen for how the tables were turned.

Esther 6:10-14 (NIV) "Go at once," the king commanded Haman. "Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended." 11 So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!" 12 Afterward Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman rushed home, with his head covered in grief, 13 and told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, "Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him--you will surely come to ruin!" 14 While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared.

The back story …

* The king wanted to honor someone who had acted in his (the King’s) behalf
* Haman didn’t realize it at first, but it was Mordecai
* Some months/years previously, Mordecai had uncovered a plot against the king
* Esther had relayed the warning, and the plot was foiled

So, what ways did Haman suggest to show honor to someone (himself, he assumed)?

* dress him in the king’s robe
* put him on the king’s horse
* lead him through the city proclaiming “Hail to the king’s hero”

How is Haman an example of the destructiveness of pride and ego?

* he assumed he deserved and was to be honored by the king
* he thought he was deserving of honor and prestige
* certainly no one else (especially Mordecai) deserved the king’s congratulations

In what ways can pride affect your relationship with God and others? Why do you think pride is so displeasing to God?

* it can be offensive to others … and to God
* you end up worshiping yourself
* you become your own idol
* certainly Jesus is not on the throne of your life

How can we protect ourselves against the temptation to be proud or arrogant?

* ask God to love others through you – one of the Fruit of the Spirit
* be quick to confess and repent of your sins and receive God’s forgiveness
* remember, you are not perfect – you are merely a sinner, saved by God’s grace
* when complemented, thank the person for the encouragement and give God the glory
* cultivate an attitude of gratitude – thanking God for being at work in your life

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Consider.

* Have you received special recognition lately … a raise or a promotion?
* Did you receive it with humility?
* Thank God for His favor and blessing, commit to accepting recognition with humility.
* Consider a way you can use your blessing to bless others.

Confess.

* Can you recognize the subtle pride within you?
* Do you know when you’re starting down that slippery slope that leads to destruction?
* Ask for forgiveness from others for any act of pride you have displayed.

Be Accountable.

* Do you have an accountability partner?
* Have you given your family and friends the freedom to be open and honest with you?
* Prayerfully choose someone who can ask you the tough questions.
* Regularly meet and humbly submit to one another



Cryptogram Puzzle



Two different members of the underground church in Hrainsau Blicgin gave the two parts of this message to separate operatives from our consulate. Believers there want to alert us to the wiles of our enemy, the devil. The key tells you what letters to use for the numbers in the message. You can see that the key is incomplete. Do your best to determine the missing letters. Pass the message along to all the Bible Study leaders in your church. Help and further Family Fun Activities are found at <https://tinyurl.com/ytbcd3pn>