

# THE PROUD AND THE HUMBLE

*by Lawrence H. Balleine*



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**CHRISTIAN PUBLISHERS  
EDUCATIONAL SERIES**

**THE PROUD AND  
THE HUMBLE**

*Parable: The Pharisee and the Tax Collector*

**By Lawrence H. Balleine**

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**SYNOPSIS:** A confirmation class studying the seven deadly sins sees how pride is the worst as they hear prayers from Mr. Jones, who gloats about his spiritual success, and Mr. Axelrod, who cries out to God from his deep need.

**BIBLE VERSE:** Luke 18:9-14

**CAST OF CHARACTERS***(3 females, 4 males, 2 either)*

NARRATOR (m/f)..... (7 lines)

TEACHER (m/f)..... (20 lines)

**YOUTH CONFIRMATION CLASS:**

TAYLOR (f) ..... (4 lines)

MACKENZIE (f) ..... (5 lines)

ALLISON (f)..... (4 lines)

JORDAN (m) ..... (3 lines)

BRETT (m) ..... (5 lines)

**FORMER CONFIRMATION STUDENTS:**

MR. CAL JONES (m)..... (2 lines)

MR. DARRYL AXELROD (m) ..... (2 lines)

**DURATION:** 10 minutes.

**SETTING:** Church

**TIME:** Today.

**SET:** Set up chairs for the students and one behind the pulpit for the Narrator.

**PUBLISHER'S NOTE**

Parables are earthly stories intended to reveal a heavenly meaning. They are by nature stories that people could relate to and which would inspire questions and discussion, thus providing the opportunity for revelation of the truth. We have brought these parables into present time where the listener can relate and once again ask questions, which will reveal the true meaning.

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**PARABLE:** <sup>9</sup>To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: <sup>10</sup>“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup>The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup>I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ <sup>13</sup>“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ <sup>14</sup>“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted” (*Luke 18:9-14*).



**AT START:** *NARRATOR* takes place at the pulpit while *TAYLOR*, *MACKENZIE*, *ALLISON*, *JORDAN*, and *BRETT* gather and sit on chairs in the chance areal. *TEACHER* stands.

**NARRATOR:** (*Addressing congregation.*) Today we are privileged to observe a lesson being taught to our confirmation (*Or Sunday school.*) class. The lesson is on the seven deadly sins. (*Takes a seat behind the pulpit.*)

**TEACHER:** Class, today we are going to learn about the seven deadly sins. Have any of you ever heard the term “the seven deadly sins” before today?

**TAYLOR:** I have.

**TEACHER:** So what can you tell us about them, Taylor?

**TAYLOR:** Not much. I just heard someone say there was a movie about them.

**TEACHER:** The seven deadly sins were identified by the church way back around 600 A.D. Does anybody have any idea what those sins are?

*MACKENZIE* raises hand.

**TEACHER:** Mackenzie?

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**MACKENZIE:** Stealing and killing are probably two of them.

**TEACHER:** Actually, no, they're not. You're thinking about the Ten Commandments. But you are kind of on the right track. Allison?

**ALLISON:** How about lying and cheating?

**TEACHER:** I'm sure we would say that lying and cheating are sins, but they are not on the list of the seven deadly sins. Anyone else want to try?

*The other STUDENTS shake their heads indicating "no."*

**TEACHER:** Let me share the list with you. Again, there are seven. Lists of seven are common in our religious tradition. We will learn why this is so in another lesson; but today we want to talk about these deadly sins. In particular, I'd like us to zero in on the one that is considered the worst. Here are the seven: greed, gluttony or over-consuming, wrath or uncontrollable anger, lust, sloth or laziness, envy, and pride.

*MACKENZIE raises her hand.*

**TEACHER:** Yes, Mackenzie?

**MACKENZIE:** Someone sent me a cute little video of a sloth on my Facebook page the other night. It moved really, really slowly. No wonder you said sloth and laziness mean the same thing.

*TAYLOR raises her hand.*

**TEACHER:** Taylor, do you have something to add?

**TAYLOR:** I think I see something. You said before that killing and stealing are not deadly sins. But I see where these deadly sins—like uncontrollable anger or greed—could lead people to do things like killing or stealing.

**TEACHER:** Good point, Taylor. Class, which of these seven do you think is considered the worst?

**JORDAN:** That's easy. It's greed. Just look at what greed leads to. I think greedy people are stingy and don't want to share, and yet they take more than their fair share. And doesn't greed lead some people to go and take all the natural resources—like strip mining for coal or drilling for oil or cutting down the rain forests—all for a quick profit? Greed can lead to all kinds of bad things.

**ALLISON:** It seems to me that greed can lead to bad business practices and cheating. And I bet it's caused wars, too.

**TEACHER:** Obviously, greed is a pretty bad thing. For a long time, I thought greed would be considered the worst of the seven deadly sins. But actually, it's not. Does anyone else have an idea which sin is considered the worst? (*Pause.*) Brett?

**BRETT:** If it's not greed, it must be envy.

**TEACHER:** Why do you think that, Brett?

**BRETT:** Well, when you're jealous of someone, you want what the other person has. I think that might lead you to steal it.

**TEACHER:** Good point, Brett, but that's not it. Any other thoughts?

*ALL shake their heads indicating "no."*

**TEACHER:** Actually, the number one sin among the list of deadly sins is pride.

**MACKENZIE:** How can that be?

**BRETT:** Yes, how can that be?

**MACKENZIE:** I thought pride was a good thing. When we won the conference championship in basketball last winter, everybody told us we "should be proud of ourselves." I remember Coach Todd's exact words after the game. "Girls, you have every reason to be proud."

**ALLISON:** Yes, Mackenzie, I agree with you. When my brother Aaron came home with his report card at the end of last grading period, he had all A's. I would be glad to get one or two, but he gets five of them. Mom and Dad said to Aaron, "We're very proud of you, and you should be proud too." And actually, I'm kind of proud of him because he studies really hard, and it seems like he's getting rewarded for all his hard work. What's wrong with feeling pride?

**BRETT:** Every time my grandpa sees me, he asks how my job is going. I tell him, "I'm just cutting lawns and shoveling snow." And then he always says, "Keep doing a good job and be proud of your work." What's wrong with being proud?

**TEACHER:** Your questions about pride are good ones. I thought you might ask them, so I asked two students from last year's confirmation class to put on a little skit for you. It might help to explain how pride has come to be considered the worst of the deadly sins.

*TAYLOR, MACKENZIE, ALLISON, JORDAN, BRETT, and TEACHER focus on the NARRATOR as he/she takes his/her place at the pulpit. MR. CAL JONES and MR. DARRYL AXELROD enter the sanctuary from the back and proceed to the front. One walks along the left outside aisle toward the front while the other proceeds along the right outside aisle. MR. JONES sits on the far right side of the right front pew. His posture is tall and erect. MR. AXELROD "slumps over" on the far left side of the left front pew.*

**NARRATOR:** *(To audience.)* One Sunday morning, Cal Jones and Darryl Axelrod arrive early at Grace Church. Evidently they want a little quiet time—some one-on-one time with God—before the rest of the congregation arrives. Mr. Jones has been the president of First National Bank for twenty years. He serves on the board of trustees at the nearby college and has been a member of the local country club since the day it opened. Yes, he is a wealthy man whose two children both attended Ivy League colleges. Mr. Axelrod, on the other hand, is a man of very ordinary means. He never finished high school, and it seems that he can never hold a job for very long. He used to drink a lot, so his first wife divorced him. He has remarried. Darryl and his wife, Sara, have six children. Most folks wonder how they are able to make ends meet. Although Mr. Jones and Mr. Axelrod cannot hear or see us or each other, we can see and hear them. Let's listen in on their prayers.

**MR. JONES:** God, it's your faithful child, Cal. I'm here again. Haven't missed a Sunday in three years. Oh yes, I did miss one when my choice for congress was in town and Alberta and I were hosting the brunch for him. But I figured you wouldn't mind us missing that Sunday since you were probably hoping he would win the election. I've been able to accomplish a lot these last several months. Business at the bank has been good this year. Profits are up, and I'm thankful for the five-figure bonus that came my way. Not that I didn't deserve it or anything. Remember when it looked like our income here at Grace wouldn't keep pace with our expenses, and I kicked in an extra two grand so we could balance the budget? I'll bet you're glad too, Lord, when I get those bonuses. (*Looks over to where MR. AXELROD is sitting and continues speaking.*) Look at poor Darryl over there. I pity him. He can hardly keep shoes on his kids' feet. Drove his first wife away with his love for Bud—Budweiser, that is. I'm surprised that he still shows his face around here. If we get too many like him, who probably never give more than a pittance in the offering plate, we're going to fail to meet our budget. And then the elders will come calling on me to bail us out again. I can only do that for so long. I'm gonna retire someday, and then they'll be sunk.

**NARRATOR:** Meanwhile, Darryl Axelrod was in the other front pew, sitting near the corner. With his hands covering his face and his face buried in his lap, we hear him utter only a few words. They are barely audible.

**MR. AXELROD:** (*Bent over.*) Lord, have mercy upon me.

**NARRATOR:** He whispered again.

**MR. AXELROD:** I've sure made a mess of my life. Forgive me. Lead me in the way I should go.

**NARRATOR:** After a brief moment and these simple words of confession, Darryl stands and walks slowly to the back of the sanctuary and finds a place on the far end of the last pew. He is hoping he will not be seen by too many people.

*MR. AXELROD exits.*

**NARRATOR:** Cal also stands up and strides to the rear of the sanctuary where he positions himself by the main entrance door. He obviously wants to be ready to greet as many folks arriving for worship as he possibly can with his trademark firm handshake. As he walks to his self-appointed place, we can hear him muttering to himself...

**MR. JONES:** (*As he exits.*) What would this place ever do without me?

*Brief pause.*

**NARRATOR:** We return now to the confirmation class and its teacher.

**TEACHER:** What's your reaction to this drama? (*Pause.*) Taylor?

**TAYLOR:** I think Mr. Jones may be doing a lot of good things, but he sure likes to brag about it.

**ALLISON:** I kind of think God would have already known about those things. He really didn't have to tell God.

**MACKENZIE:** And he seemed a little harsh or judgmental when it came to Mr. Axelrod.

**TEACHER:** All good points. Anything else? (*Brief pause.*) Jordan?

**JORDAN:** Yeah. I'm beginning to think Mr. Jones was too proud of himself. I think maybe he had the kind of pride that can be a problem. On the other hand, Mr. Axelrod was certainly not proud. He seemed really humble.

**TEACHER:** Jordan, are you saying that Mr. Jones was too proud of himself and that he was showing the deadly sin of pride?

**JORDAN:** He seems like the kind of person I wouldn't want to spend much time with. I think he would be quick to judge me if I didn't live up to his standards. I think he could end up being a very isolated, lonely person that I would end up feeling sorry for, and maybe people would just like him for his money. Come to think of it, it seems to me that Mr. Jones is not only telling God what God already knows, but he is telling God that he doesn't need God as much as God needs him. On the other hand, Mr. Axelrod is not afraid to say that he needs God and God's mercy.

**TEACHER:** Do you think what makes pride the worst deadly sin is that those who exhibit such pride are so full of themselves that they have no room left for God?



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