

*Selfless*  
LIVING  
IN A *Selfie*  
WORLD

by

*pam gillaspie*

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## Dedicated to . . .

Sue and Dave Olson, my Mom and Dad, who have modeled selfless living every single day of my life.

## Acknowledgements

It's easy for readers to think that a book only belongs to the author whose name appears on the cover. Nothing could be further from the truth. Thanks as always to Rick Purdy and Pete DeLacy for walking through multiple drafts with me from a theological and editorial standpoint. Thanks to Jan Silvius whose influence prompted my thinking toward the topic. Thanks to Kay Arthur for the critical Uzziah-Isaiah connection that I hadn't seen on my own. Thanks to my husband, Dave, for the cover and interior design of the book. Thanks to the marketing and design department of Scott Rimell, Scott Grizzle, John Phillips, and Brian Woodlief into whose hands the project goes when it leaves mine. Above all, glory to God who allows us to join in His work in this world!

# Selfless LIVING IN A Selfie WORLD

There is nothing quite like your favorite pair of jeans. You can dress them up, you can dress them down. You can work in them, play in them, shop in them . . . live in them. They always feel right. It is my hope that the structure of this Bible study will fit you like those jeans; that it will work with your life right now, right where you are whether you're new to this whole Bible thing or whether you've been studying the Book for years!

How is this even be possible? Smoke and mirrors, perhaps? The new mercilessly thrown in the deep end? The experienced given pompoms and the job of simply cheering others on? None of the above.

Flexible inductive Bible studies are designed with options that will allow you to go as deep each week as you desire. If you're just starting out and feeling a little overwhelmed, stick with the main text and don't think a second thought about the sidebar assignments. If you're looking for a challenge, then take the sidebar prompts and go ahead and dig all the way to China! As you move along through the study, think of the sidebars and "Digging Deeper" boxes as that 2% of lycra that you find in certain jeans . . . the wiggle-room that will help them fit just right.

Beginners may find that they want to start adding in some of the optional assignments as they go along. Experts may find that when three children are throwing up for three days straight, foregoing those assignments for the week is the way to live wisely.

Life has a way of ebbing and flowing and this study is designed to ebb and flow right along with it!

**Enjoy!**

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# How to use this study

Flexible inductive Bible studies meet you where you are and take you as far as you want to go.

**1. WEEKLY STUDY:** The main text guides you through the complete topic of study for the week.

**2. FYI boxes:** For Your Information boxes provide bite-sized material to shed additional light on the topic.

## FYI:

### Reading Tip: Begin with prayer

You may have heard this a million times over and if this is a million and one, so be it. Whenever you read or study God's Word, first pray and ask His Spirit to be your Guide.

**3. ONE STEP FURTHER and other sidebar boxes:** Sidebar boxes give you the option to push yourself a little further. If you have extra time or are looking for an extra challenge, you can try one, all, or any number in between! These boxes give you the ultimate in flexibility.

## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### Word Study: *torah*/law

The first of eight Hebrew key words we encounter for God's Word is *torah* translated "law." If you're up for a challenge this week, do a word study to learn what you can about *torah*. Run a concordance search and examine where the word *torah* appears in the Old Testament and see what you can learn from the contexts.

If you decide to look for the word for "law" in the New Testament, you'll find that the primary Greek word is *nomos*.

Be sure to see what Paul says about the law in Galatians 3 and what Jesus says in Matthew 5.

**4. DIGGING DEEPER boxes:** If you're looking to go further, Digging Deeper sections will help you sharpen your skills as you continue to mine the truths of Scripture for yourself.

## Digging Deeper

### What else does God's Word say about counselors?

If you can, spend some time this week digging around for what God's Word says about counselors.

Start by considering what you already know about counsel from the Word of God and see if you can actually show where these truths are in the Bible. Make sure that the Word actually says what you think it says.

# Week One

## Mirror, Mirror on the Wall . . .

*"He must increase, but I must decrease."*

—John the Baptist, John 3:30

We live in a culture that venerates pride, self-sufficiency, and getting ahead above just about everything else. Pursuing humility seems weak, servile, and to bottom-line folks perhaps bordering on stupidity. God's Word and the testimony of those who obey it tell an entirely different story, one upside down from the cultural narrative that continuously turns the camera toward self.

God's ways are not man's ways; they are profoundly better. We know this, but still we're lured by a "selfie" culture that says "Live big because you are the center of the universe!" to every person who breathes on the planet. But let me ask you one question: *How do you like hanging out with people who think and behave like everything revolves around them?* My guess is that you don't like it any better than I do.

Let me follow up with one more question: *Do you know what one of the main criticisms leveled against the Church is today?* It's self-importance, just another way of saying arrogance.\*

While it isn't surprising that the Bible makes a huge case for humility before a Sovereign Creator, it's hard to miss the paradox that our selfie culture both breeds and feeds arrogance, but at the same time hates it . . . especially arrogance in the Church.

Arrogance has a stench about it that offends both people and God Himself. Humility, though, has a fragrance; a sweet aroma noticed by men and pleasing to God.

### FYI:

#### If You're in a Class

Complete **Week One** together on your first day of class. This will be a great way to start getting to know one another and will help those who are newer to Bible study get their bearings.

\*David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *unChristian: What a New Generation Thinks About Christianity—and Why it Matters*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007, p. 26.

Week One: **Mirror, Mirror on the Wall . . .**

## CONSIDER the WAY you THINK

Consider for a moment what kind of scent lingers about your life today. Is it sweet and fragrant, pleasing to all who come near . . . or is it indicating something's amiss?

What "smells" right in your life today? Explain.

What "smells" wrong? Explain.

How do you view humility? Do you see it as virtuous or weak? Explain. Does false humility ever play into your thinking, planning, and actions? Give some examples.

How do you view arrogance? Do you distinguish between pride and arrogance? If so, how?

Do you struggle with pride? Are you annoyed when you see it in others? Explain.

While the Bible is packed with men and women who exemplify humility, none did so more thoroughly or clearly than John the Baptist. Jesus Himself commends him to the disciples when He says ". . . among those born of women there is no one greater than John . . ." immediately making him a person of interest. We follow Jesus first and foremost, but we can learn to do that better by paying attention to the lives of others who followed well.

### FYI:

#### Suggested Reading . . .

*unChristian: What a New Generation Thinks About Christianity . . . and Why it Matters* by David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons.

In this critical but disturbing book, Kinnaman, President of the Barna Group, and Lyons investigate how a new generation views Christianity. Think humility is only important to God? When you read this book, you'll think again.

### FYI:

#### Start with Prayer

You've probably heard it before and if we study together in the future, you're sure to hear it again. Whenever you read or study God's Word, first pray and ask the Lord to guide you with His Holy Spirit. Jesus says that the Spirit will lead us into all truth.

# JOHN THE BAPTIST

## SETTING the SCENE

This text immediately follows the Apostle John's recap of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. The Pharisee had come to talk to Jesus under the cover of night—likely to maintain secrecy—because he recognized mere man could not perform the signs Jesus had. Jesus quickly turned the conversation to the need for a person to be born again to see the kingdom of God.

## OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

**READ** John 3:22-36 and **MARK** references to *Jesus* and *John the Baptist*.

### **John 3:22-36**

- 22 *After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them and baptizing.*
- 23 *John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people were coming and were being baptized—*
- 24 *for John had not yet been thrown into prison.*
- 25 *Therefore there arose a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification.*
- 26 *And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him."*
- 27 *John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven.*
- 28 *"You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent ahead of Him.'*
- 29 *"He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full.*
- 30 *"He must increase, but I must decrease.*
- 31 *"He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.*
- 32 *"What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.*
- 33 *"He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true.*
- 34 *"For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.*
- 35 *"The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.*
- 36 *"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."*

## **FYI:**

### **Camel Hair and a Belt**

Have you ever considered how much what we wear influences self-centeredness or at least self-focus? Advertisers peddle clothes modeled on Photoshopped beauties to people who want to look good for others . . . and we haven't mentioned accessories yet! John had one outfit—a garment of camel's hair—and one necessary accessory—a leather belt. He wasted no time on "What do I wear today?", no emotional energy on "What will they think of my outfit?", and no resources on things he didn't need.

# Notes

Week One: **Mirror, Mirror on the Wall . . .**

## **DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .**

What happens to John's ministry when Jesus comes on the scene?

### **ONE STEP FURTHER:**

#### **Thinking for Yourself**

If you have a working knowledge of the Bible and a little time on your hands, think of individuals in the Bible whose lives shed light on humility and pride. Jot down your thoughts below. Sure, the study is going to bring up names, but why be dependent on workbook questions? Think for yourself. Anticipate questions. *You* rightly divide the Word of truth. Record your observations below.

What does John make of this turn of events? Summarize in paragraph or list form how John compares himself to Jesus.

What does John say about God?

How would your life change if you followed John's paradigm "He must increase, but I must decrease"?

Do you ever increase yourself and decrease Jesus in day-to-day life? If so, how?

Do you ever increase yourself and decrease Jesus in ministry? Again, if so, how? What about corporately? Do churches ever elevate individuals or ministries above Jesus? Explain.



What do you notice happening in your life when you seek to increase your position or status? Have you observed times when you are more prone to this type of behavior? If so, when? Why?

What are some biblical ways to counteract this behavior and live John's mindset?

## USING AN INDUCTIVE APPROACH

As we study together, we'll use an inductive approach toward the Bible. With increases in connectivity and information technology today, we have access to study tools and resources unparalleled in history, but the main thing remains the main thing—the Bible itself.

Inductive study has three main components that we'll walk through step-by-step: *observation, interpretation, and application.*

**Observation** asks: *What does the text say?*

**Interpretation** asks: *What does the text mean?*

**Application** asks: *How can I apply this truth in my life?*

Together they lead to transformation by the Spirit through the Word.

MARKING the text of Scripture is one tool that will help us to observe the text well. We identify key words by reading carefully, then we mark them. As we mark, we ASK the 5W and H questions (*Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How?*).

## SIZING UP THE LANDSCAPE

Over the next few weeks we'll study God's Word together to find out for ourselves how we can live selfless lives in a selfie world. We'll discover biblical solutions to counteract the clawing and climbing behavior so ingrained into the hearts of fallen people. First, though, let's take a look together at the landscape of the culture we live in and a look at what led us there.

Week One: **Mirror, Mirror on the Wall . . .**

## SETTING the SCENE

Writing to his child in the faith, Paul warns Timothy about what the last days will look like. Timothy lived in the last days and so do we.

### FYI:

#### The Last Days are Here

When Paul talks about the last (Greek: *eschatos*) days, he is not referring to some far-off, distant time. He is referring to the age that began with Christ's incarnation. Are we in "the last days"? We absolutely are, as everyone since Jesus' time.

## OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

**READ** 2 Timothy 3:1-5 and **UNDERLINE** characteristics of people in the last days.

### 2 Timothy 3:1-5

- 1 *But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.*
- 2 *For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,*
- 3 *unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,*
- 4 *treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,*
- 5 *holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.*

## DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

**Who** is Paul talking about in this section? **What** are the people Paul describes like?

**What** does Paul tell Timothy to do in verse 1? Why will this matter?

**When** will these people be around?

**Where** will they be?

**Why** are they a concern?

**How** are these characteristics counter to God and His ways?

Does Paul's description of the last days match what you see in your worlds? Explain.

Who specifically does Paul tell Timothy to avoid? Does he put parameters on it? Explain.

Are there any people in your life that Paul might tell you to avoid? Why?

Week One: **Mirror, Mirror on the Wall . . .**

## **SETTING the SCENE**

James writes sobering words to fellow believers concerning different kinds of wisdom.

## **OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE**

**READ** James 3:13-18 and **MARK** references to *jealousy* and *selfish ambition*.

### **James 3:13-18**

- 13 *Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.*
- 14 *But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.*
- 15 *This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.*
- 16 *For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.*
- 17 *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.*
- 18 *And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

## **DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .**

What two wisdoms does James contrast in this section?

Describe earthly wisdom. What characterizes it? What is its source? How does it live? What is its relationship to the truth?

Describe the wisdom from above. What characterizes this wisdom? What is its source? How does it live? What is its relationship to the truth?

Based on what you've seen in the text, do you think you're able to identify these two wisdoms in others? How about in yourself?

Is your life ever marked by "bitter jealousy and selfish ambition"? Explain.

Have you seen people demonstrate the "wisdom from above" that James talks about? If so, how has it affected you? What have you learned from examples you've seen?

## THE HEIGHT OF ARROGANCE

There is arrogance and then there is *arrogance*. The final two texts that we are going to look at this week show arrogance in all its puffed up false glory. The arrogance displayed is so great that many scholars tie the texts not only to the height of human pride but to the fall of Satan as well. Regardless of whether these speak of mortal men alone or also of Satan himself, we can learn much about arrogance and its outcome from Ezekiel 28:11-19 and Isaiah 14:12-15.

## SETTING the SCENE

In Ezekiel 28, the temporal king in view is the king of Tyre, but much of the descriptive language seems to point to someone else who exhibits the same character traits and behaviors.

## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### Word Study: Jealousy and Selfish Ambition

If you have some extra time this week, see if you can find the Greek words for "jealousy" and "selfish ambition." Then see where else and how else they are used in the New Testament and record your findings below.

## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### **Ezekiel 28:1-10**

If you have extra time this week, add the early verses of Ezekiel 28 to your study and record your observations below. What caused the leader of Tyre's heart to be lifted up? How did he behave because of it? What judgment did God bring?

## **OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE**

**READ** Ezekiel 28:11-19 and **MARK** every reference to the *king of Tyre* including pronouns.

### **Ezekiel 28:11-19**

- 11 *Again the word of the LORD came to me saying,*
- 12 *"Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,*  
*"You had the seal of perfection,*  
*Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.*
- 13 *"You were in Eden, the garden of God;*  
*Every precious stone was your covering:*  
*The ruby, the topaz and the diamond;*  
*The beryl, the onyx and the jasper;*  
*The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald;*  
*And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets,*  
*Was in you.*  
*On the day that you were created*  
*They were prepared.*
- 14 *"You were the anointed cherub who covers,*  
*And I placed you there.*  
*You were on the holy mountain of God;*  
*You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.*
- 15 *"You were blameless in your ways*  
*From the day you were created*  
*Until unrighteousness was found in you.*
- 16 *"By the abundance of your trade*  
*You were internally filled with violence,*  
*And you sinned;*  
*Therefore I have cast you as profane*  
*From the mountain of God.*  
*And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub,*  
*From the midst of the stones of fire.*
- 17 *"Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;*  
*You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.*  
*I cast you to the ground;*  
*I put you before kings,*  
*That they may see you.*

- 18 *“By the multitude of your iniquities,  
In the unrighteousness of your trade  
You profaned your sanctuaries.  
Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you;  
It has consumed you,  
And I have turned you to ashes on the earth  
In the eyes of all who see you.*
- 19 *“All who know you among the peoples  
Are appalled at you;  
You have become terrified  
And you will cease to be forever.” ‘ ‘*

## **DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .**

Who is speaking in this section and who is being spoken to?

Who was the lamentation to be pronounced over?

List everything you learned about the king of Tyre based on what you marked in the text.

### **FYI:**

#### **Ezekiel: Writing from Exile**

Ezekiel was both a priest and a prophet to the exiles during Judah's captivity in Babylon.

# Notes

Week One: **Mirror, Mirror on the Wall . . .**

Now, go back and look at your list and mark entries that describe something more than a mortal man. What makes those descriptions different?

Some commentators think this text includes words to the historical king of Tyre but that parts of it seem to go further to describe another one who was like him—Satan when he fell from heaven in the biggest display of self-glorification ever. Regardless of which parts of Ezekiel 28:2-19 are applicable to a human ruler and which to an angelic ruler, we see case studies not only in self-elevation and worship but also in the behaviors these lead to. Let's look closer.

What was the king like in the beginning? What good qualities was he given and noted for?

What happened to his heart?

What did he do to his own wisdom?

What does this tell us about non-revealed wisdom's ability to keep people on the straight and narrow?

What else resulted after the king's heart and wisdom were corrupted?

How did God view his actions? How did He respond?



How would you describe God's view of His creatures exalting and worshipping themselves?

How does our culture exalt and worship itself?

How do you succumb to this in your life? What are some specific ways believers can live counter-culturally?

## SETTING the SCENE

In the following verses from Isaiah, the subject is related to "the king of Babylon" in verse 4. Like the Ezekiel text, some think these verses are also a reference to Satan's fall. Even if this is not the case, we see arrogance and rebellion against God fully on display.

## OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

**READ** Isaiah 14:3-15 and **MARK** references to the *star of the morning* including synonyms and pronouns.

### **Isaiah 14:3-15**

- 3 *And it will be in the day when the LORD gives you rest from your pain and turmoil and harsh service in which you have been enslaved,*
- 4 *that you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon, and say,*  
*"How the oppressor has ceased,*  
*And how fury has ceased!*
- 5 *"The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked,*  
*The scepter of rulers*
- 6 *Which used to strike the peoples in fury with unceasing strokes,*  
*Which subdued the nations in anger with unrestrained persecution.*
- 7 *"The whole earth is at rest and is quiet;*  
*They break forth into shouts of joy.*
- 8 *"Even the cypress trees rejoice over you, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying,*  
*'Since you were laid low, no tree cutter comes up against us.'*

## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### **Get the Whole Context**

While we're focusing on Isaiah 14:12-15, the context for these verses is Isaiah 13:1-14:23. If you have time this week check out the full context. Remember, context is king in matters of interpretation! When you're done reading, record your observations below.

## ONE STEP FURTHER:

### Star of the Morning

If you have some extra time this week, see what you can discover about the phrase "star of the morning" (Isaiah 14:12). What current name do we derive from it? Record your findings below.

Week One: **Mirror, Mirror on the Wall . . .**

9 "Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come;  
It arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth;  
It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones.

10 "They will all respond and say to you,  
'Even you have been made weak as we,  
You have become like us.

11 'Your pomp and the music of your harps  
Have been brought down to Sheol;  
Maggots are spread out as your bed beneath you  
And worms are your covering.'

12 "How you have fallen from heaven,  
O star of the morning, son of the dawn!  
You have been cut down to the earth,  
You who have weakened the nations!

13 "But you said in your heart,  
'I will ascend to heaven;  
I will raise my throne above the stars of God,  
And I will sit on the mount of assembly  
In the recesses of the north.

14 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;  
I will make myself like the Most High.'

15 "Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,  
To the recesses of the pit."

## DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

Who is being addressed in this section? How is he described in verse 12? What has he done? What has happened to him?

What did he say prior to being cut down?

Based on his statements, how does he view himself?

How does he view God?

For the moment, let's assume this is talking about a human king over Babylon. What kind of behavior would you expect from someone with these views of God and himself?

How does a proper view of God impact how we view ourselves?

What's your view of God? What is it based on?

What is your view of yourself in light of your view of God? Is it biblical or not? Explain.

# Notes

Week One: **Mirror, Mirror on the Wall . . .**

## **@THE END OF THE DAY . . .**

As we finish our lesson this week, spend some time evaluating your life. Which direction do you typically have the camera turned? Are you self- or others-focused? Listen to your conversations. Watch your social media life. Who are they about? Our world in general and certain industries in particular have made self-promotion a god . . . but there is only One God. How are you doing at living in light of this truth?