

Talks given by Ryan and Sarah Umari- July 12, 2026 (Ryan's given first here..)

On Pride and Humility

Good afternoon Brothers and Sisters,

Everyone in this ward has been so amazingly kind and welcoming to us since we moved in this March. Thank you so much- we are excited to be here, and get to know everyone.

Brother Hatfield asked us to give a talk on how Humility can help us to more closely follow Jesus Christ, or my personal experience with that. I should start by saying, I am not an expert with humility. I have definitely had my share of non-humble moments and periods of my life. But I think that the Bishop and Brother Hatfield asking us to give a talk on this subject shows that God has compassion where we have weaknesses, and does all he can to help us to grow, and to become better. I believe that God knows that this is an area I can and need to have more growth.

In her talk discussing finding Strength through Humility, Church General Primary President Sister Susan Porter, says that "a way to feeling more humility is to understand and recognize that all of our gifts come from God." These gifts include all of our abilities and talents and everything that we are able to accomplish with them, every temporal or spiritual action for good that we can do. I have realized that if I have this perspective there is never a cause to feel personally inflated, but only thankful to God for his support. Porter explains that this recognition or Humility, is not weakness. She says, "Humility is an indication that we know where our true strength lies" that to be humble is to recognize our dependence on God, and to recognize we have a constant need of his support."

Jesus gave us an example of unmatched humility and love throughout his life and in his teachings. As a Divine being and while at the time of his mortal ministry possessing incredible and undeniable independent strength, power and virtue, he spoke of strength and connection to His Father in the works he did. In performing incredible miracles, healing and good works, Jesus said in John 5:19 and 30 that he does not do these things of himself, but only those things that he "seeth the Father do" and that are the will of the Father to do. Jesus said unto them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."

Jesus chose to be born into very humble circumstances, consecrated his life in the teaching, healing and service of others, and sacrificed his life in what Elder Marlin K. Jensen says was both the greatest act of courage and love in the history of mankind, and also the greatest act of humility, and submissiveness. And in the incredible works, the infinite and eternal good that he did, he gave Glory to his Father in all things. The

perspective that all good we can do comes in connection with God's support, as Jesus expressed, is the way to extinguish unrighteous pride. We can only boast in our God, and feel thanks and appreciation for what gifts and good he has given to us and allowed into our life.

(I will mention some things about Pride here, as struggling and trying to overcome Pride has been a part of my journey..)

Elder Uchtdorf gave a talk in which he made a very helpful distinction between healthy feelings such as being proud of one's work, children, or country, and sinful pride of comparison or self-aggrandizement, in which one uses status or an accomplishment to look down on others. The healthy feelings of being proud of our work, family, and country, are grounded in love and appreciation to God, whereas the negative pride is characterized with a feeling of competition with others, or superiority.

In the talk he says, "I believe there is a difference between being proud of certain things and being prideful. I am proud of many things. I am proud of my wife. I am proud of our children and grandchildren. I am proud of the youth of the Church, and I rejoice in their goodness. I am proud of you, my dear and faithful brethren. I am proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with you as a bearer of the holy priesthood of God."

He then goes on to discuss the difference between these feelings, and the corruptive sin of pride that President Benson called the Universal sin. "Pride is sinful, as President Benson so memorably taught, because it breeds hatred or hostility and places us in opposition to God and our fellowmen. At its core, pride is a sin of comparison, for though it usually begins with "Look how wonderful I am and what great things I have done," it always seems to end with "Therefore, I am better than you." His Talk, President Benson's, and Elder Jensen and Susan Porter's talks on Humility are wonderful, and very helpful in better taking to heart how we can overcome corruptive pride, and grow closer to God through developing humility.

Elder Uchtdorf and others have discussed the area of competitive events as an area where feelings of pride are triggered more easily, and sometimes can become prevalent. A stumbling block for me in my journey to understand or develop humility was growing up in competitive chess tournaments. As players have ratings based on their skill level, knowledge, and results in competition, it was easy to look at ratings and say, I'm a 1400, he is a 2000, or expert, he is "better" than me. Or they are 800 and just a beginner, I am more experienced, or "better" than them. These statements of skill, knowledge and experience seemed somewhat objective. And I began to look at people and qualities they had in other areas of life in similar ways, such as intelligence and test scores or grades in school. With some success in different areas of life and making these kinds of comparisons, not growing up knowing about or thinking of all of our strengths coming from God, I became a prideful person.

I was a decent person, even a caring person, and became a faithful person, but had a lot of personal pride. It is often said that it is better to choose to be humble or to cultivate humility than to have to be compelled to be humble. I learned through much difficulty and hardship, that God can give us strengths and blessings and can also take away any gift or blessing that we have. I went from being a 30 year old making a good income, in a leadership role with a good company, to years of falling out of society, where I often had no place to live..

People rarely fall out of society in this way without some serious issue- for me it was activity of mental and spiritual energy that had become unhealthy or dysfunctional. (My pride makes it hard to say Mental Health issues, and I believe there are often spiritual things involved with those too. But that is the arena I am speaking about.)

The story that I told myself, was that the difficulty of an effort to write a few books on Spiritual topics after my conversion, had taken me to the edge of my sanity and beyond, that I had fought a battle with difficult opposition and been spiritually damaged in the process. But even if there was a kernel of truth to this, I know that a great reason for my mental and spiritual affliction had been both a genetic family disposition, over-religiosity, and pride and feelings of grandiosity it drove.

It took a while to humble myself enough to ask for help, and to go to shelters and hospitals to get treatment for these issues. And it took years of repentant efforts, and turning my heart more to God and others to be able to hit and injure a lot of this un-humble disposition.

It always seemed a curious contrast to me that while I had felt prideful with some, with others my heart was very open and loving, very sensitive even. With my daughter or friends and family, with the innocence I felt in pets, with many I felt great love and protection. But with some I had been partially, and sometimes very hardened.

After years of activity in the church, and a more active effort to live the gospel, not just write about it, I noticed some changes begin. Where I had a lot of my self-worth externalized in things that I believed gave me worth, like accomplishments (even if usually with a spiritual focus), I noticed these feelings begin to shift to internal things like the love for others beyond my family and friends, or testimony I felt in my heart. It is a much more secure feeling to feel worth internally, for the love and warmth we feel in our relationships with friends, family and other people, our integrity and good choices, and feelings of closeness or testimony and relationship with God. It is a good feeling to feel that if every possession we have were lost, even pictures, journals, etc., our hearts and everything engraven on them, and everything they are connected to will stay with us in this life and beyond, including the potential for our family relationships, to be eternal as well. And of course our relationship with God..

As the subject of this talk asked, how can Humility help us to more closely follow our Saviour Jesus Christ, or helped me to do that, I am learning that working on humility helps our hearts open to love more, to find greater joy and fulfillment in serving God and his children, and to put our worth in more real and eternal things. Brother Jensen explained, growing in humility leads to other virtues, such as being modest, teachable, and unpretentious. And I am beginning to experience that living with an effort to grow in the gospel, and striving always to make the best choices, helps us to grow in spiritual strength, and in the ability to feel God's love and guiding influence more consistently. As Brother Jensen also points out, The life of Jesus Christ "is evidence that true humility is anything but subservience or weakness". It is a path to growing in spiritual strength, and living more like the Lord's example; it is the path to growing more toward our divine potential.

My health challenges are not all resolved, and many of them will be lifelong. But they are weaknesses that helped me to chisel through a prideful exterior, and begin to start to understand humility. I have a testimony that as it says in Ether, God gives "unto men weakness" that we may find humility, and God's strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). I'm grateful for a loving and supportive wife and partner in Sarah, who has researched these issues, is very understanding, helps me remember to take needed medication, etc. I am also grateful for God's help and patience with me, and for a very supportive and understanding daughter and family. I bear testimony also that as we strive to develop more humility we will grow in positive qualities, in closeness to God and ability to do the things he asks us, and to grow in spiritual strength. And I leave this testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

How Humility Has Helped Me More Closely Follow the Savior- Sarah Umari

Good afternoon Brothers and Sisters! We've been in this ward for a few months now, and we've gotten to know a lot of you and we're so thankful for the warm welcome we've received! You won't see much of us during the second hour - we are living the dream as nursery leaders. We are truly blessed to have that calling. Ryan and I have been married for 3 years now, it's the 2nd marriage for both of us. We are an LDS Planet success story - we keep forgetting to submit our testimonial, though. Ryan has a 19 year old daughter who lives in Colorado, and I have two daughters that I share custody of, Paige and Sophia. I'm so blessed to be their mom.

In Ether 12:27, the Lord told his prophet, Moroni: "I give men weakness that they may be

humble." For most of my life, I have struggled with feeling weak. I have struggled with being able to feel self-worth. This is not to say that I've always been **humble**, of course. It's challenging to allow our weaknesses to be changed into strengths – it's much easier to feel sorry for ourselves. Many times I've thought to myself, "Don't I **deserve** to not have this trial? Don't I **deserve** to have this thing/talent/circumstance that I want to have?! Don't I **deserve better** because I've always done my best to keep the commandments?? " But that's pride.

That's getting stuck in a rut. If I'm constantly feeling like I'm just not as good as other people, or I'm spending my energy thinking, "What do I possibly have to offer other people?" I am not allowing my light to shine in ways that will bless other people; I am not following in the Savior's footsteps.

Humility does **not** mean we shouldn't have confidence, especially as we go about to do the Lord's work. The Savior, our perfect example, had full confidence in His mission as the Savior of the World. He had full confidence that His Father would help Him to fulfill it. We're told throughout the scriptures that **our** mission is to keep God's commandments, the greatest of which are to Love God and Love our neighbors. God and Jesus will help us to fulfill that mission as we humbly ask for their help. I have found a lot of comfort in this verse in the Doctrine & Covenants: "Let thy **bowels** also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let **virtue** garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence shall wax strong in the presence of God" (D&C 121:45). We should have confidence in our God-given talents so that we can use them to bless others! In *True to the Faith*, it states: "Humility is an acknowledgement that your talents and abilities are gifts from God." We all have special, unique gifts that we can bless others with if we look for opportunities (D&C 46:11-12, 32). We should be mindful to always thank God for our gifts, as well.

Being married to Ryan has been a wonderful confidence boost. Having a spouse who cares about my feelings and is a "compulsive complimenter" has helped me to grow as a person. Thanks in great part to Ryan, I've started to believe that I do have things to offer other people. We should also always keep in mind how God sees us, as that matters **infinitely**. President Russell M. Nelson said, ""The greatest compliment that can be earned here in this life is to be known as a covenant keeper." Making and keeping covenants - baptismal covenants, sacrament covenants, and covenants in the temple - can allow us to feel confident at all times. We've been told by Prophets and Apostles to attend the temple as often as circumstances allow. This will bring us confidence, as well as humility and awe

at the love God has for each of us.

Also, if you haven't yet done so, make sure to get a Patriarchal Blessing. In my blessing, I'm told that I've been blessed with "many talents, and to use those talents to help others, that they, too, might feel good about who and what they are." I still need to identify more of and develop these talents. We should cultivate our talents with a grateful heart, being willing to use them in the ways that God wants us to. Seek to know who **God** says you are.

Then, trust in Him to help you do this, you must have enough humility to say, "Yes, I need to grow more" or even "Yes, I do have this talent, and because I know God will support me, I am willing to share it with others."

Humility is also trust in God's timing and wisdom. I am a chronic worrier. But when I can humble myself and say, "This is in the Lord's hands," I free my mind to take care of the things that need immediate attention. When I'm not worrying about the future or things that I have no control over, I can be present and a better servant of the Lord knowing He is in charge. Anything I can do at this moment using my finite talents can be of help to someone else. Humility is knowing we "cannot add to [our] stature one cubit" just by thinking about it.

God imparts to us as He sees the end from the beginning. If we always got what we wanted and felt like we deserved, we wouldn't learn and grow like we need to. In January 1973, Elder Hugh B. Brown told a classic story of how he learned humility. Elder Brown had been living in Canada where he had just purchased a run-down farm. On the farm, there was a six-foot high currant bush that was not producing any fruit. Hugh knew that he needed to clip back the currant bush until there was nothing left but stumps. As he looked at that freshly pruned current bush, Hugh thought he saw on top of each stump what looked like a tear, and he thought he heard the currant bush crying. Hugh asked the bush what it was crying about, and the reply he thought he heard was, "How could you do this to me? I was making such wonderful growth. I was almost as big as the shade tree and the fruit tree that are inside the fence, and now you have cut me down. Every plant in the garden will look down on me because I didn't make what I should have made. How could you do this to me? I thought you were the gardener here."

Elder Brown replied, "Look, little currant bush, I am the gardener here, and I know what I want you to be. I didn't intend you to be a fruit tree or a shade tree. I want you to be a currant bush, and someday, little currant bush, when you are laden with fruit, you are going to say, 'Thank you, Mr. Gardener, for loving me enough to cut me down. Thank you, Mr. Gardener.'

Years later, Elder Brown was in command of a cavalry unit in the Canadian army in England. He held a high rank that he was proud of, but an opportunity came up for him to become a general. He was basically a shoe-in for the position. When he went to London to receive his appointment, the General he met with told him, "I'm sorry I cannot make the appointment. You are entitled to it. You have passed all the examinations. You have the seniority. You've been a good officer, but I can't make the appointment. You are to return to Canada and become a training officer and a transport officer." Elder Brown discovered that he had been passed over for the position simply because he was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. In Elder Brown's own words, he said: "I got on the train and started back to my town, 120 miles away, with a broken heart, with bitterness in my soul. And every click of the wheels on the rails seemed to say, 'You are a failure.' When I got to my tent, I was so bitter that I threw my cap on the cot. I clenched my fists, and I shook them at heaven. I said, 'How could you do this to me, God? I have done everything I could do to measure up. There is nothing that I could have done—that I should have done—that I haven't done. How could you do this to me?' I was as bitter as gall.

And then I heard a voice, and I recognized the tone of this voice. It was my own voice, and the voice said, "I am the gardener here. I know what I want you to do." The bitterness went out of my soul, and I fell on my knees by the cot to ask forgiveness for my ungratefulness and my bitterness. I arose from my knees a humble man. And now, almost 50 years later, I look up to Him and say, "Thank you, Mr. Gardener, for cutting me down, for loving me enough to hurt me." The Lord had other plans for Elder Brown and his family, as difficult as this experience was for him. Elder Brown stated, "Many of you are going to have very difficult experiences: disappointment, heartbreak, bereavement, defeat. You are going to be tested and tried. I just want you to know that if you don't get what you think you ought to get, remember, God is the gardener here. He knows what He wants you to be. Submit yourselves to His will. Be worthy of His blessings, and you will get His blessings.

I'd like to close with this admonition found in Alma 13:28-29 - "But that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, and thus be led by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering; Having faith on the Lord; having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life; having the love of God always in your hearts, that ye may be lifted up at the last day and enter into his rest."

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

