



The Journey
Week of 12.27.09

Different Routes to the Manger: The Proud

By Julie Gass

While most of the guidance given in the scriptures seems intuitively right to me, the instructions to not be prideful seem counterintuitive. From my earliest years in elementary school, I was taught to have pride in my work. At high school graduation, we are told there is nothing we cannot do if we simply reach for the stars! And I believed it!

The free enterprise system encourages self-made men and tells us to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. The world of corporate America tells us humility will not help us rise to the top but that we need to tout our accomplishments. We are in charge of our own destiny! Isn't that what American freedom is all about?

It is no wonder that concepts such as humility, submission, and bowing before kings, are foreign to us. The pilgrims fled England to be free of the dictates of a king.

In many cases, there are good reasons why we don't want to submit. Many of us have been "burned". Perhaps it started in childhood when a parent took advantage of our complete dependence by abusing their position of absolute power. Maybe a spouse has carelessly and blatantly violated our trust. Or perhaps we have been crushed by an employer who used us as a stepping stone on the way to the top.

In the movie *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*, the young boy Charlie believed he had done better than his peers who gave into gluttony and other temptations while touring the chocolate factory. He believed he was deserving of the promised lifetime supply of chocolate. Willy Wonka reminded him that he had broken the rules by drinking some unique soda. Charlie's grandfather wanted to take Willy's latest candy creation to the "competition" to assuage his pride. But, Charlie humbly laid it on Willy's desk and turned to leave. Charlie was richly rewarded for his humility as Willy presented him with the entire chocolate factory!

I was like Charlie. Prideful, I thought I was a near perfect kid. But just as Charlie broke the rules at the chocolate factory, I have broken God's rules.

As rule breakers, we are invited to bow to the perfect, perfectly gentle, and completely trustworthy creator of the universe. He demonstrated his trust in us, however misplaced, and in his father by coming into this world as a totally dependent newborn baby. The "chocolate factory" we are offered is a relationship with Christ now and for eternity.

(You are encouraged to use the SOAP – Scripture, Observation, Application and Prayer Method for a guide. Click [here](#) for an example SOAP journal entry. Page numbers refer to "The Story of God" Bible available for free at the Welcome Center in our atrium.)

monday, 12.28.09

Read: [Psalm 40](#) (pg. 385)

tuesday, 12.29.09

Read: [Isaiah 43:14-21](#) (pg. 496)

wednesday, 12.30.09

Read: [2 Corinthians 5:14-21](#) (pg. 792)

thursday, 12.31.09

Read: [Matthew 9](#) (pg. 664)

friday, 01.01.10

Read: [Revelation 21:1-8](#) (pg. 854)

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Grow (resources to help you in your study)

- **Sunday's Sermon:** Click [here](#) for podcast, or here for [video](#)

Go (action steps)

- **GIVE**—click [here](#) to make an online gift to Heartland and learn how you can set up recurring gifts
- **Tell your Reverse Offering story:** click [here](#)
- **GO—Sign up to serve:** email Lisa Zulke by clicking [here](#)
- **GROW—Sign up to grow in a small group or 1:1 spiritual mentorship:** click [here](#) to email Britton Gregory

Small Group/ 1:1 Question Samplers:

1. Per Isaiah 43:18, what's a "former thing" in your life that you must stop dwelling on? What was it for the Israelites?
2. In Matthew 9, Jesus is doing a lot of new things in people's lives. What do you think He means about the new wineskins in v.14-16?
3. What's something new that you sense Jesus is doing in you for 2010?