



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Take A Bow / Week 1

SERIES OVERVIEW

SERIES SUMMARY

This series encourages high schoolers to explore the interesting tension between living a life of humility and confidence at the same time. Anchored in Jesus' understanding of humility, students will be challenged to occupy their God-given space in the world and to learn how to constantly weigh the tendency for entitlement and arrogance against Jesus' call to be humble.

SERIES BOTTOM LINE

A high schooler's guide for taking up your God-given space in the world.

WEEKLY BOTTOM LINES

WEEK 1: Don't leave your space blank

WEEK 2: When you follow Jesus, you will find real rest

WEEK 3: Don't measure your God-given space by the space occupied by someone else

WEEK 4: Your space in the world will change over time

SCRIPTURE

Humble yourselves before the Lord . . . (James 4:10a NIV).

True humility and fear of the LORD lead to riches, honor, and long life (Proverbs 22:4 NLT).

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you (James 4:8 NKJV).

NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

THINK ABOUT THIS

This week's message includes the introduction of *anavah*, the Hebrew word that translates to "humility." It essentially encourages students to "occupy your God-given space in the world." As this comes up in your Small Group, be sensitive to the fact that this may be easier for some to take hold of than others. Depending on things like race, socio-economic status, gender, and culture, it might be naturally easier for some students to see and step into their God-given space than others. Be sure not to make this sound equal across the board because in our world, it's unfortunately not. However, just because the world may not see or value someone's ability to step into their space doesn't mean that God doesn't! In fact, that's the biggest takeaway you can give to your students this week: No matter how this plays out in their world or context, they can be confident that God has given them a space to occupy and the humility and confidence to do it.

INTERACTIVE 1: FILLING THE CIRCLE

OVERVIEW

This is where you'll use a circle to represent your life and everything that you think makes you valuable.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Three large posterboards
- Markers
- A way to display your posterboards (Easels, chairs, etc.)

PREP

- On one posterboard, draw an empty circle.
- On one posterboard, draw a circle and then splatter the inside with different colors.
- On one posterboard, draw a circle with the word "Anavah" in the middle and then color the rest of the circle in around it.

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- How many of you would say you're at least a little competitive?
- For me, being competitive isn't just about the big things, but the little ones too! *[Give relevant examples.]*
- Just think about some of the language we use when we're competing. *[Give relevant examples.]*
- It's dramatic, right? We can't just win; we must annihilate the competition.
- Whatever it is, we all have areas where we feel the pressure to perform, prove ourselves, or come out on top.

TENSION

- What if, in our quest to be the best, we're missing out on something even better?
- You can summarize the root of all this complexity in one word: pride.
- In this new series, *Take a Bow*, we want to talk about this normal human struggle head-on.
- It often seems like the only two options are to think we're better than everyone or to shrink into the background.
- *[INTERACTIVE: Filling the Circle: This is where you'll use a circle to represent your life and everything that you think makes you valuable.]*
- Option one leads to pride, which is when we define our worth by our accomplishments and how we stack up against others. *[Give relevant examples.]*
- For a lot of people, especially if you struggle with self-confidence, the other option is to make yourself small. *[Give relevant examples.]*
- Unhealthy pride feels fake and isolating, but shrinking into the background doesn't help anyone either. It's a lose-lose situation.
- So, what do we do?

TRUTH

- James, the brother of Jesus, addressed this competitive thing in all of us with an interesting solution.
 - *Humble yourselves before the Lord . . . (James 4:10a).*
- James said that a posture of humility is the solution to this quest to be the best.
- Centuries before, King Solomon also shared that humility is the way God intends us to live:
 - *True humility and fear of the Lord lead to riches, honor, and long life (Proverbs 22:4 NLT).*

- God wants us to be humble, but what does humility look like?
- The reality of our lives is this: We serve a God who made us.
- The problem with the two approaches we normally take is that we put too much weight and value on what we think other people think about us.
- What if we don't look to the right or left at what other people may be thinking? What if we decided to trust God's view of us over anything else?
- *[INTERACTIVE: Filling the Circle: This is where you'll use a circle to represent your life and everything that you think makes you valuable.]*
- The Hebrew word *anavah* is translated as "humility."
- Many years after Solomon wrote several of his proverbs about humility, rabbis introduced the idea that *anavah* means "to occupy your God-given space in the world."
- The big idea is: Don't leave your space blank.
- True humility isn't about beating yourself up or pretending you're worthless; it's about taking the focus off yourself or others and putting it on what God says.
- When we start to see ourselves the way God sees us, it frees us up to be more confident, not less.
- At the same time, we stay humble, knowing our confidence is rooted not in what we achieve or the work we put in, but because we're worth everything to God.
- James put it simply a little later in his letter. He wrote:
 - *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you (James 4:8 NKJV).*
- Proximity changes your perspective.
- When we humble ourselves and draw near to God, we start seeing ourselves as God sees us.

APPLICATION

- What does it look like to draw near to God?
 - Spend time with God.
 - Talk to God in prayer.
 - Surround yourself with people who point you to God.
- These things are designed to help us follow the way of Jesus closely.
- To help us:
 - Live as Jesus lived.
 - Do what Jesus said to do.
 - And become more like Jesus.
- Over time, these practices free us up to live with confidence that doesn't need to put others down to prop itself up.

LANDING

- If there was anyone who could have put on the most swagger and pride possible, it was God in a human body.
- But instead, Jesus humbled Himself. He's the perfect example of humility.
- So, how can you draw near to God this week? Whatever it is, take that step.
- As you do, remember this: Don't leave your space blank.
- Who would you say is the humblest person you know?

TEACHING SLIDES

All bolded words and phrases in the Teaching Script are also provided as teaching slides for Premium Tier subscribers.



TEACHING SCRIPT

Take A Bow / Week 1

BOTTOM LINE

DON'T LEAVE YOUR SPACE BLANK

INTRODUCTION

1 ½ MINUTES

How many of you would say you're at least a *little* competitive? I'm hoping I'm not the only one!

[Communicator Note: Add in your own perspective and examples if the following ones don't fit you.]

For me, being competitive isn't just about the big things, but the little ones too!

I want to be the first one to yell, "I got front seat!" while getting in the car, the first one across the finish line in a friendly game of *Mario Kart*, and the first one to beat you 2-0 in a game of rock, paper, scissors. There's just something satisfying about coming in first place, isn't there?

And as you can imagine, game nights with friends are usually a bit tough for me. I'm always trying to toe that line of pretending like I don't care too much, but also making sure you know I'm going to *crush* you. But if I lose? *[Make angry face.]* Is that just me?

Now, here's the thing: Sometimes, when I pause long enough to think about what I'm doing, I even shock myself a bit. Just think about some of the language we use when we're competing. Have you ever caught yourself saying things like:

- I *crushed* that test.
- I *slayed* that performance.
- I *dominated* on the court.

It all sounds and feels a bit violent, right? Dramatic even? It's like we can't just win; we have to annihilate the competition. And this language is all around us. Watch two minutes of ESPN, or check what movies "crushed" the competition in the box office, or look at what artists are currently "destroying" each other with diss tracks.

Don't get me wrong; I'm guilty of it too.

Maybe it's sports for you too, or your class rank, or being more popular, or having the most followers. Whatever it is, we all have areas where we feel the pressure to perform, prove ourselves, or come out on top.

TENSION

3 MINUTES

But what if that mindset is holding us back from becoming the people we were meant to be? What if, in our quest to be the best, we're missing out on something even better? And why is it that our definition of "success" or "achievement" includes the destruction of someone or something else?

You can summarize the root of all this complexity in one word: **pride**. In this new series that we're calling *Take a Bow*, we want to talk about this normal human struggle head-on. The reality is, it's trickier than you think. It often seems like the only two options are to think we're better than everyone or to shrink into the background.

INTERACTIVE: Filling the Circle

This is where you'll use a circle to represent your life and everything that you think makes you valuable.

Think about it this way.

This circle represents your life. *[Show the poster board with the empty circle.]* Inside this circle is everything you think makes you valuable—everything that gives your life meaning and purpose. To us, it can feel like there are only two ways to fill that circle.

Option one leads to pride. *[Show pride-splattered circle.]* **Pride is when we define our worth by our accomplishments and how we stack up against others.** Our whole identity gets wrapped up in being better than everyone else. Some common examples might be:

- Achieving success at the cost of relationships with other people.
- Elevating your own sense of value by cutting others down or making them feel insignificant.
- Doing things only for appearances instead of doing genuinely hard work to become better.

But what's the alternative? For a lot of people, especially if you struggle with self-confidence, it can feel like the only other option is to make yourself small. To leave that circle blank because you've bought into the idea that you can't compete with the people around you. If that's true, then why even bother? *[Show the original empty circle again.]*

I think we've all felt this way at times.

Like when you scroll through TikTok and see all these extraordinary people with incredible lives, and you feel like giving up on ever measuring up.

Or when you try out and don't get the spot, and you wonder if you're just not talented enough. Or when you pour your heart into a relationship, only to get ghosted or rejected, so you start to question what's wrong with you.

In those moments, it's easy to want to fade into the background—to numb out with YouTube binges or endless scrolling—because facing the world feels too difficult.

If beating out others is the only way to feel valuable in this world, where does that leave those who don't? What if we don't feel like we measure up? If we're not the best at something, does that mean we don't matter at all? I don't know about you, but I don't love either of those options. Unhealthy pride feels fake and isolating, but shrinking into the background doesn't help anyone either. It's a lose-lose situation.

So, what do we do? Can we be confident but not prideful? Can we be humble but not insecure or invisible? Is that even possible?

Let's talk about it!

TRUTH

3 ½ MINUTES

In an ancient letter meant to help Christians understand what it means to follow Jesus, James, the brother of Jesus, addressed this competitive thing in all of us with an interesting solution. He wrote this:

Humble yourselves before the Lord . . . (James 4:10a).

Nine verses before, James said that the recipients of his letter “*want what they don't have,*” and that is why there is so much drama with them. He said that a posture of **humility** is the solution to this quest to be the best.

Centuries before, King Solomon also shared that humility is the way God intends us to live:

True humility and fear of the LORD lead to riches, honor, and long life (Proverbs 22:4 NLT).

So, God wants us to be humble. It's valuable. But what does humility look like?

As we said, we usually feel like we should approach life either with pride or by shrinking back. Accomplish, accomplish, accomplish, or cower, cower, cower. But what if neither of those two ways is what God intended for us?

The reality of our lives is this: **We serve a God who made us.** God gave us our abilities and strengths, and God knows our weaknesses and struggles. And God is in love with who we are.

The problem with the two approaches we normally take is that we put too much weight and value on what we think other people think about us. But what if we didn't think about other people's possible opinions at all? What if we could just be who we were made to be? We don't look to the right or left at what other people may be thinking; we put blinders on and only focus on what God says about us.

In other words, **what if we decided to trust God's view of us over anything else?**

There is a beautiful rabbinical teaching that might help us learn how to live humbly well. The Hebrew word *anavah* is translated as “humility.” [*Show anavah circle.*] Many years after

Solomon wrote several of his proverbs about humility, rabbis introduced the idea that *anavah* means “**to occupy your God-given space in the world.**”¹ Humility means to color to the edges of your space. *[Motion to anavah circle again.]* The idea of *anavah* means not overestimating yourself or your abilities but also not underestimating them either. It’s being exactly who God created you to be. The big idea is:

Don’t leave your space blank.

Occupying your God-given space in the world is the opposite of pride because it doesn’t need to prove anything. But it’s also the opposite of putting yourself down all the time because it recognizes that you have worth and value given to you by God, even on your worst days.

In other words, true humility isn’t about beating yourself up or pretending you’re worthless. It’s about taking the focus off yourself or others and putting it on what God says.

Suddenly, our worth isn’t based on how we stack up against everyone else. It’s not about being the smartest, the prettiest, or the most talented. It’s about being loved by the Creator of the universe, period. When we start to see ourselves the way God sees us, it frees us up to be *more* confident, not less. We can relax and be who we were made to be. At the same time, we stay humble, knowing our confidence is rooted not in what we achieve or the work we put in, but because we’re worth everything to God. God created us in God’s image. God gave us incredibly unique value that nothing can take from us. Our confidence can come from that!

So, how do we put this into practice? How do we learn to live this balance of humility and confidence?

James put it simply a little later in his letter. He wrote:

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you (James 4:8 NKJV).

Proximity changes your perspective. Whatever or whomever you stay close to determines how you see things. And as James wrote, when we “*humble ourselves before the Lord,*” when we “*draw near to God,*” we begin to see ourselves correctly.

We start seeing ourselves as God sees us.

APPLICATION

1 MINUTE

What does it look like to draw near to God? It means:

- **Spend time with God.** Set aside a few minutes each day to read the Bible and reflect on what it reveals about God and God’s love for you. Make time for God, even when life is hectic.
- **Talk to God in prayer.** Don’t worry about sounding scholarly or spiritual. Just be real with God about your joys, struggles, and gratitude. God wants to hear from you.

¹ https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5785598/jewish/Humility-Anavah.htm

- **Surround yourself with people who point you to God.** We need others to remind us of the truth and encourage us when we're down. Find those people in your life and be that person for others.

Each of these are not just homework assignments or religious boxes to check. They are designed to help us follow the way of Jesus closely. To help us:

- Live as Jesus lived.
- Do what Jesus said to do.
- And become more like Jesus.

Over time, these practices free us up to live with confidence that doesn't need to put others down to prop itself up. We can celebrate our successes without rubbing them in anyone's face. We can admit our failures without thinking they define us. We can cheer other people on because their achievements do not threaten us.

LANDING

1 MINUTE

This is one of the things I love most about Jesus. If there was anyone who could have put on the most swagger and pride possible, it was God in a human body. But instead, He humbled Himself. He was confident enough not to demand everyone's respect and confident enough to speak up when His time came. He's the perfect example of humility. In other words, we can follow Jesus' example and experience in everything we're talking about. He'll give us a sense of meaning and purpose that goes way beyond what other people think about us.

So, how can you draw near to God this week? Whatever it is, take that step. Because when we draw near to God, God draws near to us.

As you do, remember this: **Don't leave your space blank.** There's another way—a better way. It starts with humbling ourselves before God, who loves us more than we could possibly imagine. When we do that, everything else starts to fall into place.

When you head to Small Groups, I want you to think about your response to this question:

Who would you say is the humblest person you know?



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
