

May I Autograph Your Liver?

By RLD Editorial Team

for use as
STEP 1



Lesson 8

Focus:

God opposes pride.

Lesson 8

Bible Basis:

Genesis 11:1-9

Lesson 8

Memory Verse:

Pride goes before destruction, a
haughty spirit before a fall.
—Proverbs 16:18

Students will discuss the difference between using our talents for our own benefit and using them for the benefit of others as they explore God’s opposition to pride.

Materials:

- Internet access

A few years ago, Simon Bramhall—a surgeon from the city of Birmingham in England—got in trouble for taking a little too much pride in his work.

In 2013, he performed liver transplants on two different patients. The problem is what he did after the organs were in place. After the patients’ livers had been transplanted, Mr. Bramhall used a special machine to burn his initials into the livers.

If you’re wondering how it turned out, Dr. Bramhall didn’t land in jail for initialing livers. But he had to pay a \$13,000 fine and do 120 hours of community service . . . *after* he’d already lost his job at the hospital. In other words, he paid a steep price. Although he burned his initials in the livers over a decade ago, he didn’t get discover and punished until 2018. He later officially lost his medical license in 2022.

➤ **Why do you think Dr. Bramhall signed the livers of his patients?** (It was probably a form of pride. He seems to have been more focused on his own skill in surgery than on his role of helping patients.)

News reports indicate that Dr. Bramhall was very good at his job. It’s okay to be proud of something that you’re good at. Suppose someone had asked, “Dr. Bramhall, are you good at surgery?” It would have been truthful for him to say “yes.” He helped a lot of patients heal, and that’s wonderful!

Pride becomes a problem when we stop focusing on how we can use our talents to serve God and people, and start focusing on ourselves instead. “What’s in it for *me*?” “How can I get people to notice *me*?” Instead of helping others, I’m only considering how my talents benefit myself.

➤ **How do you think that idea applies to this surgeon?** (Apparently, he forgot that his role was to help people heal. Instead, he thought his skills as a surgeon made him so amazing that he should autograph the inside of his patients' bodies.)

This surgeon couldn't resist signing his patients' livers out of pride . . . and in the end, he paid a steep price.

Today, we're going to look at some other people who paid a high price for pride. Our Bible story is about a group of people who were proud of their building abilities. But instead of using their skills to build homes for others, they tried constructing a monument to themselves . . . with dire consequences.

Sources:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/01/13/doctor-branded-liver/>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/simon-bramhall-liver-surgeon-gmc-b1891568.html>

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher's guide; your Step 4 appears below.)

Lesson 8 / October 20, 2024

May I Autograph Your Liver?

for use as
STEP 4 

Lesson 8

Focus:

God opposes pride.

Lesson 8

Bible Basis:

Genesis 11:1-9

Lesson 8

Memory Verse:

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haughty spirit before a fall.
—Proverbs 16:18

Materials:

- Ruled paper
- Pens/pencils
- Optional: Sample encouragement note

In this step, your students will be writing an anonymous encouragement note to someone; you might find it helpful to write out a short note before class as a sample for any students who might not know how to compose one. If your class is meeting online, invite students to bring supplies with them to class.

Earlier we heard about English surgeon Simon Bramhall. He was so prideful that he couldn't resist signing his patients' livers. In our Bible story, we learned about a group of people who had so much pride that they began constructing a huge monument to show off.

In both stories, the people involved paid a steep price. Dr. Bramhall lost his medical license and job, served 120 hours unpaid in community service, was on probation a year, and paid a big fine (£10,000 or approximately \$13,000 USD). God scattered the monument-builders by confusing their languages. Pride always comes with a price tag.

So long as we're on planet Earth, we may never get rid of our pride completely. But as Christians, we can work to keep the focus on serving others instead of ourselves.

➤ **When you use your talents, what's one way to stay focused on the people you're helping instead of yourself?** (Accept all reasonable answers. Help the students realize that mixed motives are natural, but we can challenge ourselves to focus on serving.)

Distribute supplies (or invite students to have them ready at home). **Today, let's close our lesson by writing a note of encouragement to someone. Instead of signing it, you're going to leave it blank. That will be our way of serving without letting pride get in the way.**

First, choose who's going to receive your note. It can be anyone *except* a member of your family or a person you're romantically interested in. Translation: no writing to Dad or your crush. Choose someone that you think could use a little kindness.

Second, decide what you want to say to encourage the person. Your note should be at least three sentences long. (Note: Many middle schoolers will struggle with what to write. You may want to write a letter of your own before class begins and read it aloud as a model.)

➤ **What are some ways that you can encourage a person in your note?** (Again, accept all reasonable answers. Students may suggest things like complimenting the person, exhorting her to persevere through a difficult time, or including a favorite verse from the Bible.)

Now it's time to write your note. Remember, *don't sign it!* This is going to be anonymous encouragement—the person you're helping won't know who sent the note. Give the students a few minutes to draft an encouraging note. Try to help any students who are stuck on what to write.

Now, here's the fun part! You need to devise a way to get this note to the person you're encouraging . . . without them figuring out who sent it.

➤ **Who has an idea about how they're going to deliver their letter without being found out?** (Allow a few students to share their ideas. If they seem stuck, begin by sharing one of your own.)

When you deliver your letter, you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you honored God and helped another person—not because it would make you look good, but because it's a wonderful way to serve.

If the person asks you straight out if you were their “mystery encourager,” it's okay to say yes. But otherwise, keep your identity a secret! That's part of the fun . . . and part of serving without pride.

This week, don't be like the surgeon who signed livers. Be an encourager whose reward comes from God!

Close in prayer.

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