

FRATERNUS · THE STANDARD

the conversation guide

A Father's Guide to Virtue



VOL. I · HUMILITY vs. PRIDE

Keyed to The Daily Sword&Spade — Weeks 27 & 34

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The Father's Conversation Guide to Virtue

What to say for every phase, keyed to The Daily Sword&Spade.

Each week of The Daily Sword&Spade focuses on one virtue opposing one vice. This guide gives you the words to open a real conversation with other men about that same virtue — wherever he is, from sixth grade to adulthood.

The format for each virtue is the same: a short opening for you, then conversation starters organized by phase. Read the room, use whatever fits, and skip what doesn't. What follows are conversation starters based on things that are typical for each stage of a man's life.

One rule.

Don't lecture. Ask, then listen. Share something true about yourself — including how you have failed, or how you have seen God growing these virtues in your life.

Humility vs. Pride

To prepare, read this first.

Pride is the root of every vice. But it hides. In your son it might look like defensiveness, refusal to admit mistakes, or the constant need to be the funniest or most capable person in the room. In you it probably looks slightly different — impatience with him when he fails, needing to be right in arguments, or the inability to say “I was wrong” or “I don't know.”

The most powerful thing you can do this week isn't explaining humility. It's confessing something. Tell him a time you were prideful, and it cost you. That is something he won't forget.

If you are practicing the habits in *The Daily Sword&Spade*, you will recall that the phlegmatic man mistakes passivity for humility. The melancholic mistakes extreme self-criticism for it. Watch for those behaviors in your men and in yourself.

6TH-7TH GRADE • AGES 11-12

He's just becoming aware of how he looks to others. Pride is beginning to wear the mask of social survival.

Start here

“Hey, I want to ask you something. When you get something wrong — like in a game or at school — what do you feel like doing? Do you want to explain it away, or can you just say ‘I messed up’?”

Then share

Tell him about a time in middle school or early in life when you couldn't admit you were wrong, and what it cost you. Keep it simple. Resist the temptation to tag a moral onto the end. Let the story do the work.

What to listen for

He'll tell you who he's measuring himself against. That's the information you need.

Daily battle challenge — one thing to say

“Being able to say ‘I was wrong’ is one of the strongest things a man can do. Too many men today can't do it. I want you to be the kind of man who can.”

8TH-9TH GRADE • AGES 13-14

He's intensely aware of status. His pride is mostly about being seen and not being embarrassed.

Start here

"Fraternus men remember that pride is the root of every other vice. What do you think that means? Where do you see it show up in guys your age?"

Then go deeper

"Where do you think you struggle with pride? I'll tell you where I do."

What to name

The difference between confidence (which is good) and pride (which is the need to be above others). A confident man can lose without collapsing. A proud man can't.

One thing to say

"Humble guys are rare at your age. They stand out — not because they're weak, but because they don't need everyone to know how good they are."

10TH-11TH GRADE • AGES 15-16

He's capable of real philosophical conversation now. Pride is starting to show up in subtler forms — intellectual arrogance, contempt for people he thinks are beneath him or don't agree with what he thinks he knows.

Start here

"The spiritual combat tradition says humility isn't just about thinking less of yourself — it's about thinking accurately about yourself. What's the difference?"

Go deeper

"Where do you think your version of pride shows up most? Mine is [give a specific example]. Here is how I've been working on it..."

Name the temperament angle

"Depending on how you're wired — if you're more choleric, pride shows up as needing to be right. If you're more melancholic, it might look like perfectionism or intellectual contempt. Which one sounds more like you?"

One thing to say

"St. Augustine said: 'Our heart is restless until it rests in You.' Pride is restlessness — you can never get enough recognition to settle it. Humility is the only thing that actually gives you rest."

12TH GRADE / SENIOR YEAR · AGES 17-18

He's about to leave. He needs to understand that humility is what will make him teachable in the world.

Start here

"You're about to walk into situations where you know nothing. College, work, adult life — you'll be the least experienced person in the room constantly. How you handle that will define the next five years."

Be direct

"Humble people advance. They get mentored. They are trusted. Proud people plateau early because they can't be taught. I've watched it happen to smart guys."

One thing to say

"The guys who do well in the next few years won't be the most talented. They'll be the ones who can take correction, admit what they don't know, and work hard without needing to be noticed."

COLLEGE YEARS · AGES 18-22

He's being humbled by life right now, whether he knows it or not — by failure, by comparison, by discovering his limits. Lean into that.

Start here

"What's been hardest to admit to yourself this year? I'm not asking so I can fix it. I just want to know."

Share from your own life in this phase

Tell him about something you got wrong in your early twenties that humility would have prevented.

One thing to say

"There's a difference between self-loathing and humility. Self-loathing beats you down and keeps you stuck. Humility just tells you the truth and keeps moving. The journal makes that distinction. Which one are you tempted toward?"

YOUNG ADULT / WORKING MAN • AGES 23-30

Pride now shows up as career ambition, comparison with peers, and the inability to receive help.

Conversation opener

“What would you say is the thing you're most tempted to prove right now? To whom are you proving it?”

One thing to say

“Dom Scupoli says distrust of self is absolutely required for the spiritual combat — not distrust in your abilities, but knowing that left to yourself, without grace, you'll always default toward your own glory. That's a hard thing to admit when you're trying to build something.”

FATHER TO FATHER • AGES 30+

Now you're talking man to man. He may be raising children of his own. Pride in fatherhood is subtle and devastating.

Conversation opener

“What does pride look like in you as a father? Not general pride — what's your specific version? Mine has been [fill in honestly].”

One thing to say

“The Daily Sword&Spade; says the phlegmatic man mistakes passivity for humility. A lot of fathers do this — they avoid hard conversations and call it patience. I've done it. The question isn't whether to lead. It's whether to lead humbly.”

Go deeper.

This guide is one round in the fight. The full arsenal arrives four times a year — The Daily Sword&Spade, the book men are using to raise the next generation of Catholic men. Become a Fraternus Member at fraternus.org/membership.