

# Pride

Pride refers to an unwarranted attitude of confidence. While pride can have a positive connotation of self-worth or boasting, it is often used in Scripture to refer to an unhealthy elevated view of one's self, abilities, or possessions.

## Concept Summary

In Hebrew, the concept of pride is most often expressed metaphorically with words that literally denote height. The word most frequently used in this way is the noun גָּאוֹן (*gā'ôn*, “height”); in the majority of cases it refers pejoratively to pride (e.g., [Lev 26:19](#); [Isa 11:13](#)), but in some cases it refers to God's “majesty” (e.g., [Exod 15:7](#); [Job 37:4](#); [Isa 2:19](#)) and in others to literal height (e.g., [Job 38:11](#); [Jer 12:5](#); [Zech 11:3](#)). As this noun shows, pride is often mentioned negatively but can be good when it is rightly directed.

The Septuagint often uses ὑπερηφανία (*hyperēphania*, “arrogance”) to render *gā'ôn*. Accordingly, the NT authors sometimes use the same noun or the related adjective ὑπερήφανος (*hyperēphanos*, “arrogant”) when speaking of pride in a negative sense (e.g., [Mark 7:22](#); [Luke 1:51](#)) but use the noun καύχησις (*kauchēsis*)

when referring to something in a positive or neutral light ([Rom 3:27](#); [2 Cor 7:4](#); [1 Thess 2:19](#)).

## Theological Overview

Many characters throughout Scripture display an attitude of pride. When the prophets speak of Satan's fall ([Ezek 28:14–15](#); [Isa 14:12–15](#)), the attitude of pride is involved even though no words for pride are used. King Solomon, who is credited with much of Proverbs, often addresses the dangers of pride and the consequences of destruction ([Prov 11:2](#) [זִדְיוֹן, *zādôn*, “presumptuousness”]; [Prov 16:18](#) [גָּאוֹן, *gā'ôn*, “pride”]; [Prov 18:12](#) [הִבְהִי, *gābah*, “to be haughty”]).

In the NT, as in the OT, the concept of pride is often easier to recognize through context than by searching for any one word. During his ministry, Jesus often confronted the pride of the religious leaders of the day (e.g., [Luke 14:7–11](#); [18:9–14](#)), not because they were religious, but because they took solace in their religiosity rather than in God. Paul and other NT writers reinforce the concept by speaking against pride while admonishing believers to live in humility because of the gracious salvation of Christ ([1 Cor 1:26–31](#); [1 John 2:15–17](#)).

While not completely synonymous, other concepts that bear similarities to

pride include arrogance, pomp, presumption, conceit, self-satisfaction, boasting, high-mindedness, and haughtiness.

## Lexical Information

### Old Testament

**גָּאָל** (*gā'ā*). vb. **to be high, to be elevated, to triumph.** *Denotes the activity of growing high or the state of being high or elevated either physically or metaphorically.*

When referring to Yahweh, this verb is used to express praise and glorify his victory (e.g., [Exod 15:1, 21](#)). The verb can also describe natural, physical processes like a plant growing tall ([Job 8:11](#)), a person raising up their head ([Job 10:16](#)), or waters rising ([Ezek 47:5](#)). The connection of height with pride is evident in the many nouns and adjectives related to this verb that are used for “pride” or “exaltation.” The conceptual link is also found in other languages (e.g., English, “haughty”).

**גָּבִיעַ** (*gē'e*). adj. **proud.** *Refers to human arrogance and self-sufficiency, especially people who trust in themselves instead of trusting in God.*

The adjective **גָּבִיעַ** (*gē'e*) is derived from the verb **גָּאָל** (*gā'ā*). The adjective is always used for human arrogance, resistance to God, and contempt for right-

eousness ([Prov 15:25](#); [Jer 48:29](#)). The adjective is frequently used substantively (i.e., like a noun) to refer to “the proud,” especially in poetic texts asking God to judge the proud ([Psa 94:2](#); [123:4](#); [Isa 2:12](#); compare [Jer 48:29](#)). God uses this imagery—he is the one to judge the proud—when he questions Job sarcastically whether he, a mere man, has that power to bring low the proud (*gē'e*; [Job 40:11–12](#)).

**גִּבְעָה** (*gā'ôn*). n. masc. **height, eminence, majesty, pride.** *Typically translated “pride” or “high-mindedness” when used to describe humans but “majesty” or “glory” when used to describe God or his works.*

This term literally carries the idea of height (e.g., [Job 38:11](#)), but the metaphorical meaning of pride has become predominant. It can mean “majesty” when referring to something that is actually elevated in value, such as God (e.g., [Exod 15:7](#); [Job 40:10](#); [Nah 2:3](#)), but in most instances carries a negative connotation of pride (e.g., [Lev 26:19](#); [Job 35:12](#)).

**גִּבְעֻת** (*gē'ût*). n. fem. **majesty, elevated, presumption.** *Used of God to show majesty, of nature to show height, and of man to show arrogance.*

Used only by the psalmist and Isaiah, this term's meaning can be literal or metaphorical. The psalmist uses the term for three different objects—man's speech is arrogant ([Psa 17:10](#)), the waves are high

(Psa 89:9), and God is majestic (Psa 93:1). Isaiah only employs the term five times; two of these occurrences describe the proud city of Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom (Isa 28:1, 3).

**גָּאוֹן** (*ga'āwâ*). n. fem. **arrogance, majesty, height**. *When used to speak of Yahweh, the term always has the positive connotation of majesty or proper pride. When used to speak of mankind, the term always has the negative connotations of arrogance.*

Used 19 times, this noun is used of three different subjects. Most often (14 times), the noun is used to speak negatively of humans (Pss 10:2; 31:18, 19; Isa 9:8; Zeph 3:11). Secondly, the term is used three times to speak of God's majesty (Deut 33:26, 29; Psa 68:34). Lastly, the term is used twice to speak of nature (Job 41:15; Psa 46:3, 4).

**גִּבּוֹר** (*gēwâ*); Aram. **גִּבּוֹר** (*gēwâ*). n. fem. **arrogance, pride**. *Used to indicate a prideful attitude.*

The Hebrew noun *gēwâ* is related to **גָּאוֹן** (*gā'ôn*, “pride”). It is used in Job and Jeremiah to express the idea of pride (Job 22:29; 33:17; Jer 13:17). The cognate Aramaic noun *gēwâ* is only used in Dan 4:37, where Nebuchadnezzar says that God “is able to humble those who walk in pride (*gēwâ*).”

**זָדַן** (*zîd*). vb. **to heat, be presumptuous, be insolent**. *Literally this verb is used to describe heating something but figuratively refers to arrogant or insolent behavior.*

Used only in the Pentateuch, Nehemiah, and Jeremiah, this term has a range of meanings. The only literal usage of this term is in Gen 25:29, where Jacob cooked stew. Most of the references relate to the exodus and wilderness wandering, either referring to the arrogance of the Egyptians or the presumptuous rebelliousness of Israel (Exod 18:11; Deut 1:43; 17:13; Neh 9:10, 16, 29). Jeremiah uses the term once to refer to Babylon's arrogant defiance of Yahweh (Jer 50:29).

**זָדוֹן** (*zādôn*). n. masc. **presumptuousness, overconfidence, insolence**. *Most often refers to presumptuousness in thoughts, behaviors, and actions.*

The writers of the Historical Books often use the term for “presumptuousness” due to excessive self-confidence (Deut 17:12; 18:22; 1 Sam 17:28). The book of Proverbs uses the term for pride more generally; Prov 21:24 uses it alongside the terms **זָד** (*zēd*, “presumptuous”), **יָהִיר** (*yāhîr*, “proud”), and **עֲבָרַת** (*ēbrat*, “wrath”) to characterize scoffers. The term *zādôn* is most common in the Latter Prophets, where it exclusively refers to human arrogance (Jer 49:16; 50:31–32; Ezek 7:10; Obad 1:3).

זָד (*zēd*). adj. **insolent, presumptuous**. *Describes pompous behavior and attitudes.*

This adjective is most frequent in Psalms (eight times, with six uses in [Psa 119](#)), and the term is always presented as a negative descriptor ([Pss 19:13](#); [86:14](#); [119:21](#), [122](#)). In addition to the word's use by the psalmist, Proverbs employs the adjective once ([Prov 21:24](#)), and the prophets use it four times ([Isa 13:11](#); [Jer 4:2](#); [Mal 3:15](#), [18](#)).

רָם (*rûm*). n. masc. **haughtiness, loftiness, height**. *Usually refers to haughtiness.*

This noun is derived from the Hebrew verb רָם (*rûm*), which can mean “to be exalted” or “to be high.” The term is used to mean “haughty” ([Isa 2:11](#), [17](#); [10:12](#); [Jer 48:29](#)) in Isaiah and Jeremiah, as it is once in Proverbs ([Prov 21:4](#)).

גָּבַהּ (*gābah*). vb. **to be high, exalted, or haughty**. *Refers literally to the state of being high and figuratively to describe haughty behavior or attitudes.*

Frequently, this verb refers to physical elevation or height, such as Saul's height ([1 Sam 10:23](#)), a vine growing high ([Ezek 19:11](#)), or the clouds in the sky ([Job 35:5](#)). However, the verb can also be used to refer to feelings and attitudes, both positively and negatively. When referencing attitude, it is most often used negatively to convey a sense of haughtiness ([Isa 3:16](#); [Ezek 16:50](#); [Zeph 3:11](#)) but can be used

positively to convey a sense of cheerfulness ([2 Chr 17:6](#)). As with other words for pride or exaltation, the term may also refer positively to God's majesty or exalted nature ([Isa 5:16](#); [52:13](#); [Job 36:7](#)).

גִּבְהָהּ (*gobah*). n. masc. **height, majesty, pride**. *This term is often used for literal height of something but is also used metaphorically for a haughty attitude.*

This term can refer to literal height (e.g., [1 Sam 17:4](#); [2 Chr 3:4](#)). Other passages use the term to mean pride or haughtiness (e.g., [2 Chr 32:26](#); [Prov 16:18](#)). [Job 40:10](#) uses it of God's majesty.

## New Testament

καυχάομαι (*kauchaomai*). vb. **to boast**. *To take pride in something; to express pride about something.*

This verb is the one most often used to describe pride. In the NT it appears mostly in the letters of Paul; the two exceptions are [Jas 1:9](#); [4:16](#). It is always used to express the idea of boasting in something about one's self or others, but sometimes it is used for positive boasting about things that are in fact good (e.g., boasting in Christ in [Phil 3:3](#)) while at other times it is used about boasting that comes from arrogance (e.g., [Jas 4:16](#))

καύχησις (*kauchēsis*). n. fem. **boasting**. *The act of taking or expressing pride in something; the object of that pride.*

This noun is related to the verb καυχάομαι (*kauchaomai*, “to boast”). In the NT, *kauchēsis* appears mostly in the letters of Paul. It is especially frequent in the Letters to the Corinthians, where Paul often addresses the proper form of boasting, which he calls both *kauchēsis* (e.g., [1 Cor 15:31](#); [2 Cor 11:10](#)) and καύχημα (*kauchēma*). In the one example outside Paul’s letters, James says that arrogant boasting (*kauchēsis*) is evil ([Jas 4:16](#)).

καύχημα (*kauchēma*). n. fem. **boasting**. *The act of taking or expressing pride in something; the object of that pride.*

This noun is related to the verb καυχάομαι (*kauchaomai*, “to boast”) and is synonymous with καύχησις (*kauchēsis*, “boasting”). Like *kauchēsis*, *kauchēma* occurs in the NT mostly in the letters of Paul, especially the Letters to the Corinthians (e.g., [1 Cor 5:6](#); [2 Cor 5:12](#)).

ὑπερήφανος (*hyperēphanos*). adj. **arrogant, haughty, proud**. *Always used to describe something negatively as prideful.*

This word is always used of inappropriate pride. In Mary’s song, she praises God for scattering those who are “proud (*hyperēphanos*) in the thoughts of their hearts” ([Luke 1:51](#)). [James 4:6](#) and [1 Peter 5:5](#) quote the Septuagint text of [Prov 3:34](#), which says, “God opposes the proud (*hyperēphanos*) but gives grace to the humble.” The word also appears in two lists of sinful attitudes ([Rom 1:30](#); [2 Tim 3:2](#)). The related noun ὑπερηφανία

(*hyperēphania*, “arrogance”) appears in [Mark 7:22](#) in a list of evil things that come from people’s hearts and defile them.

ὑπέρογκος (*hyperonkos*). adj. **haughty, pompous, bombastic**. *Descriptor used in negative connotation to convey conceit and arrogance.*

In the Septuagint (e.g., [Exod 18:22](#); [Dan 5:12](#)) this word means “difficult” or “almost impossible,” whereas the NT ([2 Pet 2:18](#); [Jude 16](#)) uses it to express things that are pompous or boastful.

φυσίω (*physioō*). vb. **to puff up; to be inflated**. *The passive expresses the idea of thinking excessively highly of oneself.*

Paul is the only NT author who uses this term. In [Colossians 2:18](#) he encourages believers to live in the fullness of Christ rather than be “puffed up (*physioō*)” with angel worship. The remaining uses occur in 1 Corinthians, where Paul admonishes the Corinthians against being “puffed up (*physioō*)” (e.g., [1 Cor 13:4](#)). The related noun φυσίωσις (*physiōsis*, “inflated condition”) appears in a list of vices in [2 Cor 12:20](#).

ἀλαζών (*alazōn*). n. masc. **boaster, braggart, arrogant person**. *Someone who is given to being pretentiously proud.*

This term occurs in the NT only in two lists of sinful behaviors and attitudes that also contain ὑπερήφανος (*hyperēphanos*, “proud”; [Rom 1:30](#); [2 Tim 3:2](#)). The related noun ἀλαζονεία (*alazoneia*, “arrogance”)

is used for inappropriate pride in [Jas 4:16](#) and [1 John 2:16](#).

τυφώω (*typhōō*). vb. **to be puffed up, to be conceited**. *To think more highly of oneself than is justified or merited.*

In the NT, this term appears only in the Pastoral Letters. It always has negative connotations. In [1 Timothy 3:6](#) Paul writes that an elder should not be a recent convert lest he become conceited (*typhōō*). In [1 Timothy 6:4](#) Paul says that false teachers are conceited (*typhōō*). In [2 Timothy 3:4](#) Paul includes this word in a list of vices that will characterize people in the last days.

WILLIAM A. WILLIAMS