

Humility

Introduction - The Humility of the Messiah

Definition of Humility

Honestly assessing ourselves in the light of God's holiness and our sinfulness.

Definition of Pride

Contending for supremacy with God, and lifting up our hearts against Him.

“At every stage of our Christian development and in every sphere of our Christian discipleship, pride is the greatest enemy and humility our greatest friend.”

John Stott in *Pride, Humility, & God*

Describe the attitudes of James and John (the sons of Zebedee) in seeking such a place of honor. _____

Describe the attitudes of the other disciples. _____

Matthew 20:20-28

²⁰ Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. ²¹ And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.” ²² Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?” They said to him, “We are able.” ²³ He said to them, “You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.” ²⁴ And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. ²⁵ But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ²⁶ It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, ²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Now describe Jesus' response to the disciples as found in verse 26-28. What are the key terms he uses to describe humility? _____

Credit: C.J. Mahaney in *Humility: True Greatness*

Luke 14:7-11

⁷ Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, ⁸ “When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, ⁹ and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this person,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. ¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

What does Jesus suggest when someone seeks to find a place of honor? _____

Martin Luther reportedly told of two mountain goats who met each other on a narrow ledge just wide enough for one of the animals to pass. On the left was a sheer cliff, and on the right a steep wall. The two were facing each other, and it was impossible to turn or to back up. How did they solve their dilemma? If they had been people, they would have started butting each other until they plunged into the chasm together. But according to Luther, the goats had more sense than that. One of them lay down on the trail and let the other literally walk over him—and both were safe.

What are some reasons why humility can be such a struggle? _____

Why do we constantly battle pride, even in the church? _____

What are some things we can do to keep pride from infecting our lives? _____

What are some important daily practices that will help us to remain humble and focus on others? _____

How can anyone be arrogant when he stands beside the cross? -Carl Henry

Humility

Denying the Self

Discussion: What are your thoughts on the term “self-denial”? What does it mean? What does it look like in real life? _____

Read Luke 9:23-27

There are two important phrases to consider in verse 23. First, what does Jesus mean when he says that a follower must “deny himself”? _____

Secondly, what does it mean to “take up his cross daily”? _____

Colossians 3:5

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Luke 9:23-27

²³ And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. ²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? ²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷ But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”

As we look at the idea of HUMILITY in any depth, we must begin to see what it involves in a spiritual sense. Humility isn’t simply being quiet, polite, or shy. From a spiritual sense, it means to lower the status of one’s self, to embrace an attitude of self-denial or self-mortification. Consider the definition of *Mortify* and how we should approach the attitudes found in Colossians 3:5-8.

Definition:

Mortify - to destroy the strength, vitality, or functioning of; to subdue or deaden

Galatians 5:16-25

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Read Galatians 5:16 and 24 only. What two actions does Paul command, as a way to live an obedient, Christian life?

“It is time for us Christians to face up to our responsibility for holiness. Too often we say we are “defeated” by this or that sin. No, we are not defeated; we are simply disobedient.”

Jerry Bridges in *The Pursuit of Holiness*

Why is this quote from Jerry Bridges so profound as we consider a life of humility? _____

Galatians 2:20-21

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Read Galatians 2:20-21. Consider your own experience with houseguests, or overnight visitors. What happens when there are too many people trying to “rule” a home? _____

If we truly believe that Christ lives in us, how must we approach “ruler-ship” is our own hearts and minds? _____

“Of all the spiritual disciplines none has been more abused than the discipline of submission.

Somehow the human species has an extraordinary knack for taking the best teaching and turning it to the worst ends. Nothing can put people into bondage like religion, and nothing in religion has done more to manipulate and destroy people than a deficient teaching on submission. Therefore, we must work our way through this discipline with great care and discernment in order to ensure that we are the ministers of life, not death.”

Richard Foster in *Celebration of Discipline*

Humility

Others First

Discussion: What is the Golden Rule?
How might the Golden Rule conflict
with the idea of true humility? _____

Philippians 2:1-8

¹ So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Consider Philippians 2:6-7. What does Paul mean when he says that Christ “did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped”? _____

In verse 3, what attitude does Paul say is the opposite of selfish ambition or conceit? _____

Considering the description of Christ’s humility in verses 6-8, what does it look like for a Christian to “count others more significant than yourselves”? _____

“The humble man feels no jealousy or envy. He can praise God when others are preferred and blessed before him. He can bear to hear others praised while he is forgotten because...he has received the spirit of Jesus who pleased not himself, and who sought not His own honor.” - Andrew Murray

Why do you think Christians struggle with jealousy and envy? _____

Luke 10:25-37

²⁵ And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" ²⁷ And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." ²⁸ And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" ³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

What are some reasons why the priest and the Levite might not help the beaten man? _____

"Our natural inclination is to be served, not to serve others." -

Dave Earley and David Wheeler

What is your reaction to the story of the Good Samaritan? _____

Consider for a moment how you would react to finding someone on the streets today. What if they were wearing dirty clothes? What if they were bloody? Hysterical? What if they hadn't showered in days or weeks? It's easy to say that we would help someone in need. But consider helping someone that we find appalling or disgusting. What would you do? _____

Read Ephesians 5:22-33. How does the ideal marital relationship demonstrate humility? What is the key to the wife's responsibility? What is the key to the husband's responsibility? _____

Humility

The Poison of Pride

Discussion: What is PRIDE? How do you define it? How would you describe it? _____

“There’s a keenly insightful and biblical definition of pride’s essence: _____ for _____ with God, and _____ our _____ against Him.”
(courtesy C.J. Mahaney)

James 4:1-10

¹ What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴ You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? ⁶ But he

gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” ⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

What are some things that James mentions as ways to avoid being proud (opposed to God)? _____

Describe what James is trying to convey when he tells the reader to “be wretched and mourn and weep.” Are Christians not allowed to laugh and have fun? _____

“It is my pride that makes me independent of God. It’s appealing to me to feel that I am the master of my fate, that I run my own life, call my own shots, go it alone. But that feeling is my basic dishonesty. I can’t go it alone. I have to get help from other people, and I can’t ultimately rely on myself. I’m dependent on God for my next breath. It is dishonest of me to pretend that I’m anything but a man—small, weak, and limited. So, living independent of God is self-delusion. It is not just a matter of pride being an unfortunate little trait and humility being an attractive little virtue; it’s my inner psychological integrity that’s at stake. When I am conceited, I am lying to myself about what I am. I am pretending to be God, and not man. My pride is the idolatrous worship of myself. And that is the national religion of Hell!”

Howard Butt in *The Art of Being a Big Shot*

Take a moment to reflect on your own life. In what areas can you see the affects of pride (as opposition to God and His influence in your life)? How might Luke 5:31-32 apply to you? ____

Luke 18:9-14

⁹ He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰ “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Why is the example of the Pharisee considered to be negative? _____

Why is the tax collector considered “justified”? _____

“I hate abortion. I hate child abuse. I hate racism. What do you hate? You and I hate nothing to the degree that God hates pride. His hatred for pride is pure, and his hatred is holy.”

C.J. Mahaney

Pride is cited in the two lists of the most glaring sins in the Bible. Along with the sins for which God is going to judge the Gentiles, one finds insolence, arrogance, and boasting (Rom 1:30). Included with the sins that will be prevalent in the last days, Paul includes boasting, arrogance, and conceit (2 Tm 3:2, 4). It is no surprise to read that pride is one of the seven things which the Lord hates (Prv 6:17).

Humility

Forgiveness & Correction

Get into groups of 4-5 people.
Discuss how you would describe the Christian concept of forgiveness to a non-Christian. _____

Matthew 18:23-35

²³ “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³² Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ And

should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

Why is the servant in this story referred to as “wicked”?

What is the obvious lesson taught in this parable? _____

How does a spirit of humility help us to offer forgiveness in the times we are hurt? _____

“Real forgiveness means looking steadily at the sin, the sin that is left over without any excuse, after all allowances have been made, and seeing it in all its horror, dirt, meanness and malice, and nevertheless being wholly reconciled to the man who has done it.”

C. S. Lewis

“My self-perception is as accurate as a carnival mirror.”

Paul David Tripp

Matthew 18:15

¹⁵ “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.”

As you consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:15, how might a spirit of humility benefit both people involved in pointing out a fault? _____

Hebrews 3:12-13

¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

What are the two calls to action found in Hebrews 3:12-13? _____

What is meant by the term “take care”?

Describe what it means to “exhort” one another. _____

Read the following passages from Proverbs and discuss what each one teaches about correction.

Proverbs 12:15

¹⁵ The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.

Proverbs 17:10

¹⁰ A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool.

Proverbs 27:5

⁵ Better is open rebuke than hidden love.

Proverbs 27:17

¹⁷ Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

“A wise man learns by the experience of others. An ordinary man learns by his own experience. A fool learns by nobody’s experience.”

Anonymous