

Correcting Misconceptions About Humility

Philippians 2:5-8

I. INTRODUCTION: I

- I. **2** God's Word has a lot to say concerning the character of a Christian; for example:
 - A. The great apostle Paul lists nine of them: **Gal. 5:22-23**: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."*
 - B. The apostle Peter reiterates three of these character traits and adds four more: **2 Pet. 1:5-7**: *"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love."*
 - C. Honesty: **2 Cor. 8:21**: *"Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."*
 - D. Truthfulness: **Eph. 4:25**: *"Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another."*
2. I could go on and list many more, but that is not the purpose of this lesson (another time).
3. Another trait God strongly desires for the Christian is humility; however, of all the character traits, humility, is probably the least understood. Society has many misconceptions concerning humility.
4. **3** How can we correct these misconceptions concerning humility? We can do so by establishing that Jesus was the ultimate example of humility (**Phil. 2:5-8**). Once we've done this several misconceptions about humility can be laid to rest.

II. DISCUSSION:

- I. **4** Humility is not weakness: many believe it is, that's why it is rarely in today's society.
 - A. Even the enemies of Jesus testified to His power.
 - (1) It was demonstrated over Satan, over nature, and over every force that opposed Him (**Mk. 1:27**: *"Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, 'What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.'"*).
 - (2) Yet in the exercise of His great power He was humble and acknowledged that the works He did were the works of His Father (**Jn. 5:19**: *"Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner."*).
 - B. Humble individuals who recognize their own weakness and allow the power of God to work in them are the only ones who are truly strong (**2 Cor. 12:7-10**).
 - C. The Lord said to Paul, *"My strength is made perfect in weakness"* (v. 9), causing Paul to respond, *"When I am weak, then I am strong"* (v. 10). Are we as humble as Paul?
2. **5** Humility does not preclude leadership:
 - A. Jesus was *"meek and lowly"* (humble), in fact, He was the meekest, lowliest, most humble person that ever lived on the face of the earth!
Matt. 11:29: *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."*

Phil. 2:5-8: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

B. But His humility did not prevent Him from exercising leadership.

(1) I Peter 5:4 describes Him as “the Chief Shepherd”; “Chief Shepherd” is from the Greek *archipoiomen* which was used by the Greeks to describe tribal chiefs. Thus, the humble Jesus is the leader of our tribe, the tribe called “Christians” (Acts 11:26).

(2) Notice Paul’s description of Jesus: **1 Tim. 6:15:** “He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords,”

“Is this a description of Mr. Milquetoast or of a leader?”

“Potentate” from *dunastes* (from *dunamis*, Rom. 1:16, dynamite) and means one of great authority; from this word we derive the English word *dynasty*. Jesus is the “head honcho”; He’s the great Shepherd of the flock, the King of kings and Lord of lords! Matt. 28:18; Col. 1:16, 18

C. Some individuals, citing humility as their reason, refuse to accept the responsibilities of leadership, especially some brethren not serving as elders.

(1) The fact is that elders must be humble.

1 Tim. 3:2-7: “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; 3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; 4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

(2) They are to be sober-minded (1 Timothy 3:2), and this is defined in Romans 12:3 as not thinking more highly of oneself than one should.

(3) 1 Timothy 3:6 says that an elder should not be a novice, “lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.”

D. Rather than hindering leadership, humility defines the style of leadership that pleases God.

E. Christ-like elders are not lords over those entrusted them but examples: **1 Pet. 5:2-3:** “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;”

3. **6** Humility does not forbid rebuking sin:

A. Jesus dished out some of the most scathing rebukes recorded in Scripture:

(1) Blesses the little children (This is how most want to exclusively portray Jesus! **Matt. 19:13-15:** “Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ 15 And He laid His hands on them and departed from there.”),

(2) Money-changers (**Matt. 21:12-13:** “Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 13 And He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’”),

(3) Scribes and Pharisees: In Matthew 23 on half a dozen (vv. 13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 29) occasions Jesus delivers this scathing rebuke: “woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!”; He then heaps on: “woe to you, blind guides”; and “Serpents, brood of vipers!” (v. 33).

B. But He was just as humble when He drove out the money-changers from the temple in Matthew 21 and when He rebuked the Pharisees in chapter 23 as when He was blessing little children in chapter 19.

C. In each case He was expressing in His words and actions the will of God, not His own: **Jn. 5:30:** “I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.”

D. Likewise, humility should always characterize our manner of dealing with sinners and those in error:

2 Tim. 2:24-25: “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,”

E. Rebuking that is done from a spirit of self-righteousness and pride will never be effective in accomplishing God’s purpose (**Gal. 6:1:** “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”).

4. **7** Humility is not inconsistent with personal initiative:

A. The church needs the input of every spiritually-minded Christian in planning and, executing its work (**Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:12:** “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.”; **Eph. 4:16:** “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”).

B. A song we sing says, “Take my intellect and use every power as Thou shalt choose.”

(1) Some don’t fully participate out of pretense of humility.

(2) Of course, if one demands that his way be accepted and becomes angry if his suggestions are not taken, that surely indicates a lack humility. But some plug up the whole works with their pretense of humility.

C. We must remember that humility demands “each esteem others better than himself” (Phil. 2:3), but it does not forbid us offering our wisdom/input on any subject for whatever it may be worth to our brethren.

5. **8** Humility doesn’t require we think of ourselves disdainfully or speak of ourselves disparagingly or grovel to others:

A. That’s what many people think of as humility; however, this is actually the very opposite of humility!

(1) Such a person is thinking too much of himself, however negative his thinking may be.

(2) When one is constantly thinking: “How inferior I am, how worthless I am, how useless I am, how poorly I do compared to others” he is thinking of himself all the time.

(a) In reality he is proud of being humble!

(b) Recall the publican and Pharisee? **Lk. 18:11-12:** “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.”

B. Pride’s the problem; too proud to be comfortable among those he considers superior to himself.

- C. Humility isn't the cause of such poor thinking; it's the solution—not thinking of one's self at all (**Phil. 2:3-4**: *"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."*).
- (1) As Christians we should rejoice in the superiority of our brethren; happy and grateful for whatever gifts they might possess; happy and joyous when they achieve success.
 - (2) Furthermore, all of us can hold up our head in the presence of all men, not because we are so worthy, but because we are a child of the God of heaven, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus.
 - (3) Jesus didn't grovel before any man, yet He didn't lack humility when He said to a Roman governor, *"You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above"* (Jn. 19:11).

III. CONCLUSION: 9

- I. True humility replaces self-seeking with seeking first the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33).
 - A. It's the humility to forsake one's self-will with doing the will of God (**Matt. 7:21**: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."*).
 - B. It involves replacing self-reliance with reliance upon God (**2 Cor. 3:5**: *"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,"*).
 - C. It requires replacing our self-confidence with confidence in God (**2 Tim. 1:12**: *"For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day."*).
 - D. It involves substituting self-exaltation with exaltation by God (**1 Pet. 5:6**: *"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,"*).
- 2. These were the qualities that made Jesus humble and the qualities He seeks in us.
- 3. ** May we bring ourselves to say truly, even as we sing: *"Lord, thy love at last has conquered: None of self, and all of Thee."* (song lyrics from: *None of Self and All of Thee*)

Adapted from a sermon by Sewell Hall