

Humility

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Intro:

God names humility among the most basic requirements that He expects of us. It is also a dominant trait of Jesus Christ that we need to emulate.

[Micah 6:8](#) - What does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?

The book of Proverbs goes so far as to tell us that there is a reward for those that pursue and embrace this trait.

[Proverbs 22:4](#) – “By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches and honor and life.”

One interesting verse from the book of Colossians tells us that we are to put on humility like a tunic/cloak. It is something that we are to be clothed with or covered by... it is something that protects us and ultimately those around us.

[Colossians 3:12](#) – Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, ***humbleness of mind***, meekness, longsuffering;

We see here that there are several qualities that are supposed to be part of our Christian “outfit”.

Strong's #1746: enduo - in the sense of sinking into a garment; to shrug into a warm coat, to get lost in, or enveloped by.

Think of it this way... have you ever been wet or cold and someone wraps a warm blanket around your shoulders? You know how you pull it up tight and settle in to take advantage of the protection, the insulating quality it provides. That is what is referred to here.

The same word is used by Peter and the RSV actually translates it for us...

[1st Peter 5:5](#) – (RSV) Likewise you that are younger be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

The term is used in relation to several character traits and I'll give you these scriptures as reference:

[Job 29:14](#) – I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem.

[Romans 13:12](#) – The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

[1st Corinthians 15:53](#) – For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

[Ephesians 4:24](#) – And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

[Ephesians 6:11](#) – Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

[Colossians 3:14](#) – And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

One of the things that we can see from this list is that they all require effort. We have to rise every day and “put on” our spiritual garments, our armor, and wage a good fight. God intends that we develop righteous character and that is done little by little, each and every day.

Specific Purpose of this Message:

Today, I would like us to spend a little time on the topic of humility.

Need?

This is a character trait of Jesus that also needs to be one we develop.

Main Points:

Character isn't available by direct mail... we can't order it from a menu at our favorite diner... it's not some elective surgery that we can have done.

God intends that we develop character by trial and error, by practice, by success and failure and success again. He has left us with free moral agency and holds us responsible for our actions. He doesn't call us into the church and get out some big cork screw, then grab us by the neck and (squeak, squeak, squeak... pop) give us some spiritual lobotomy!

God wants living, breathing, thinking, loving sons and daughters... not automatons.

What is humility? Have you seen it lately?

And more importantly... do others see it in us?

Humility comes from the Latin word *humilis* = low, and from the word *humus* = earth. It is likely where we get our expression that someone is “down to earth”.

- 1 - not proud or haughty; not arrogant or assertive
- 2 – reflecting or expressing a spirit of deference or submission

Honestly, we don't seem to have much of that around today. Our athletes seem to lack it, our politicians carry a false sense of it when it serves their purposes, and our young people have an “in your face” attitude like never before.

Humility is the quality that enables us to get along without taking offense. It is being down to earth and free of pretense. It is fully accepting our station in life, and our status before God and man. It is accepting ourselves as we truly are, so that we feel no urge to inflate our social status or to pretend to be something more than we really are.

Paul seeks to make the point in his letter to the Romans...

[Romans 12:3](#) – For I say...to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly...

If we were to rank the shortcomings of mankind in general, the need for status and recognition would have to be near the top of the list.

"When science discovers the center of the universe, a lot of people will be disappointed to find they are not it." ~Bernard Baily

But this is not God's way.

When our ride on the merry-go-round of life comes to a conclusion, it doesn't really matter:

- What car we drove,
- How big our portfolio was,
- How many touchdowns we scored,
- How many speeches we gave,
- How many "things" we accumulated!

It's also not how many scriptures we've memorized, not how many years we sat in one of these seats, not our title, nor any other measure of personal status that makes us any more special or exalted before God.

In the book of [Romans](#) it tells us that "[all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.](#)" And in the book of [Acts](#) we are told that "[God shows no partiality.](#)"

What will matter will be God's view of the character we've developed. And **humility is one of the key ingredients in that righteous character that we are supposed to be growing in.**

Our perspective needs to be altered, modified, tweaked... ultimately brought into alignment with God's. And when we practice humility we are taking a step in the right direction!

Let's look again at the value God places on that gentle, humble spirit.

[Isaiah 57:15](#) – "For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place...**with him who has a contrite and humble spirit**".

Again in [Isaiah 66:2](#) – "But on this one will I look... on him who is poor [humble] and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word".

Let's look at a few examples! Education comes not just from reading but from studying the application of something. Let's look at some Biblical characters that had to learn lessons in humility.

And let's start with one of the great servants of God that might be considered the poster child for humility. I say that because we are told specifically that **Moses** was better at it than anyone else around.

In [Numbers 12:3](#) we read... "[Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.](#)" But it wasn't always that way...

We all know the story... how Moses was placed in a basket of reeds on the Nile River as a

baby to protect him from Pharaoh's decree that all male infants were to be killed. Found by Pharaoh's daughter he was spared and returned to his own family to be raised.

At the age of three, Moses was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. This gave Moses access to the greatest opportunities and wealth that the world of his time could offer. He received a royal education... he was involved in the commerce and politics and military issues of the nation of Egypt.

[Acts 7:22](#) – And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and **was mighty in words and in deeds.**

According to the writings of Josephus, [Moses became a great prince, and partook of all the benefits associated with royalty.](#) God was truly providing for one of His young servants in a rather surprising way!

But things didn't go smoothly for Moses... or for the children of Israel. Their future leader was still a headstrong and worldly young man... one that God still needed to work with in order to prepare him for the monumental task of leading millions of Israelites to the Promised Land.

In [Exodus 2:11](#) Moses comes upon a taskmaster beating a Hebrew slave and he takes matters into his own hands, killing the Egyptian. This sets off a series of events in God's plan to continue working with Moses.

Imagine how different it must have been for Moses to go from the incredible comforts of Egypt to the desert of Midian. The patience and humility of this man was undergoing the first test. Many individuals would have grown bitter, would have lashed out. ***“Do you realize what I gave up for you?”*** Moses no longer led mighty armies, he no longer gave impassioned speeches before thousands of people... instead he slipped into the humble role of a shepherd.

Years passed... Moses married and raised a family. And in [Exodus 2:21](#) we find that ***“Moses was content”***. Exodus 2:21 KJV - And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter.

Moses learned a lot during the 40 years since he'd left Egypt. He had matured and he had come to trust in God rather than his own education and might and position. We would all be wise to follow the words we find in...

[Proverbs 3:5](#) – Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not to your own understanding.

[6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths.](#)

There is a great deal of uncertainty in life, but we're promised significant assistance if we will **humble ourselves and seek God's direction and will.**

It is interesting to note that after Moses accepted God's commission, whenever God told Moses to do something, the Bible records, "And Moses did as he was commanded."

In Exodus 5:2, when Pharaoh throws down the gauntlet and asks “Who is the Lord that I should obey...?” Moses stands back and lets God answer Pharaoh in His own time and manner.

And once this nation of former slaves is on their way, the humility of Moses continues to shine. On more than one occasion God is so fed up with Israel that He offers to blot them out and offers to start over with Moses. Moses no doubt sees the same faults in the people but he implores God to forgive them.

We find repeatedly that **Moses was diligent to educate the people and try and turn their hearts to recognize and serve God** rather than their own pursuits.

[Deuteronomy 4:39](#) – Know therefore this day, and consider it in your hearts, that the LORD is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.

40 Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou may prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever.

We see in the life story of Moses, a young man with the world at his feet. We see a situation where privilege, unchecked, could have led to trouble. However, God used a rich and promising environment to develop certain traits and skills that would then be refined to serve God's end.

If we were to put ourselves in those situations would we have the humility, the lowliness of spirit, to follow God's direction so splendidly? We may not walk in those same footsteps... but the goal, the target, the end of the story is the same for all that love God. **We need to be able to humble ourselves and seek to serve and develop the character that God wishes His children to build.**

There is another example that I'd like to cover with you today and that comes to us from the 4th chapter of the book of Daniel.

Another life of royalty, conquest, rulership, and luxury. And another life that had to be brought low in order to fix a haughty attitude.

In the story of Nebuchadnezzar we can watch the roller coaster of carnality. We see pride, anger, selfishness, repentance, arrogance and ultimately correction at the hand of God.

Let's pick up the story in [Daniel 4:4](#) and I'll be reading from the Revised Standard Version...

[Daniel 4:4](#) – I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. 5 I had a dream which made me afraid; as I lay in bed the fancies and the visions of my head alarmed me.

6 Therefore I made a decree that all the wise men of Babylon should be brought before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream.

7 Then the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers came in; and I told them the dream, but they could not make known to me its interpretation.

8 At last Daniel came in before me...

9 "O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is difficult for you, here is the dream which I saw; tell me its interpretation.

10 The visions of my head as I lay in bed were these: I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth; and its height was great.

11 The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth.

12 Its leaves were fair and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the air dwelt in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it.

13 "I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven.

14 He cried aloud and said thus, 'Hew down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit; let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches.

15 But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven; let his lot be with the beasts in the grass of the earth;

16 let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and let seven times pass over him.

17 The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end *(or for the purpose)* that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will, and sets over it the lowliest of men.'

18 This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw...

19 Then Daniel... was dismayed for a moment, and his thoughts alarmed him... then Belteshazzar answered, "My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies!

20 The tree you saw...

(skip down to verse 22)

22 it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong...

(skip down to verse 24)

24 this is the interpretation, O king: It is a decree of the Most High...

25 that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven times *(or years)* shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will.

26 And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be sure for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules.

27 Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you; break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your tranquility."

28 All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar.

Our real focus begins here! Mankind, in general, seems to be successful only in short bursts when it comes to the qualities of righteous character. We are honest until we think no one is looking... we are helpful and sacrificing when it comes with a payback... Nebuchadnezzar fit that

mold pretty well...

29 At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon,

So his repentant attitude had managed to hold out for a year, actually a rather admirable period of time...but a leopard doesn't easily change his spots

30 and the king said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?"

And the hanging gardens of Babylon were indeed a marvel of their time. In a real sense, the king had done some incredible things... accomplishments that anyone would be proud of.

Perhaps WE have accomplished some admirable or even impressive things?!

- Maybe you were the first in your family to pursue higher education,
- Perhaps some have built impressive structures,
- Nursed someone back to health,
- Or raised good kids...

But we need to never lose sight of where the credit and praise belongs... never exalt ourselves... or as Paul said "to think too highly of ourselves"!

31 While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you,

32 and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; and you shall be made to eat grass like an ox; and seven times shall pass over you, until you have learned that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will." 33 Immediately the word was fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar...

34 At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him...

35 **all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing;** and he does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What doest thou?"

36 At the same time my reason returned to me; and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me.

37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven; for all his works are right and his ways are just; **and those who walk in pride he is able to abase.** (RSV)

... those who walk in pride he is able to abase!

Proverbs 16:5 - Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination [detestable] to the LORD. (Vine's Expository Dictionary uses the term "an object of disgust", or something that is repulsive)

As we read biblical accounts such as these... we must realize that we have the same

human nature in our heart that these men had, and by degree we have opportunity to misbehave. Let's be judging our own situation honestly and regularly so that judgment is not required at the hand of another.

Conclusion:

"No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God . . . and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire and which will make us more like our Father in heaven."

— Orson F. Whitney (politician, journalist, poet, historian and academic)

I'll refer again to [Micah 6:8](#) - "What does the LORD require of **US** but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

It's hard to make it any clearer than that!

God promises us TRUE GREATNESS... wisdom, power, and immortality at His side if we will do as He commands. If we will seek... not to be great in **this** world... but to **humble ourselves as a little child... God will make us great in the Kingdom of Heaven**".

Brethren, let's do as we know we should... let's PUT ON that cloak of righteousness and humility... and wait for God to come through on His promise to exalt us when He decides it is time!