

“Humility”

Philippians 2:1-11

One of the key elements for success in ministry, and for that matter, for life in general, is humility. We often misunderstand this word and apply it to people with low self-esteem. So when we try to humble ourselves we do it by denying that we have any areas of giftedness or have served effectively, and since this isn't true it leaves everyone confused over how to be humble. In our lesson today we want to look at this important word because if real humility is present in our life it will empower us to be fruitful for God at a level we never imagined possible. And it will go a long way toward releasing us from isolation and depression. Many people are crippled spiritually by comparing themselves to others. They feel like failures because they find so many glaring weaknesses in themselves. They try desperately to improve only to discover how much more improvement is still needed. Living like that is depressing, and the shame of it causes us to separate ourselves from others. Of all the words you might think of to help such a person, humility would not likely be high on your list. But God's ways aren't like our ways. The answer to our need is often something that appears completely unrelated, and that's so very true with the word humility. God commands us to be humble like His Son, and when we do we discover our view of ourselves and others has been transformed.

A. Our Model (Php 2:1-11)

Paul tells us we need to be humble like Jesus is humble. We need to have the same attitude in ourselves that He did, so right from the beginning we can tell that humility has nothing to do with low self-esteem.

1. Tapeinophrosune: lowly minded, thinking of yourself as less important than others
2. Humility requires God's revelation, but God can't make us humble. We must choose to humble ourselves (1Pe 5:6 "humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you at the proper time")

B. Three Truths God must reveal to me

1. God has given me gifts

- a) Romans 12:3-8
- b) I don't deny the gifts He's given me. I thank Him for them. (not: "I'm nothing")
- c) I recognize that He is the source of my gifts (great athletes)
- d) He gave them to me to serve Him.
- e) Humility is deeply aware that I can do nothing without Him and quickly turns to Him in all matters (Pr 3:5, 6)
- f) Humility also knows the "Giver of all gifts" dwells within me so I can do anything He asks. This helps me over the fear barrier.

2. God has denied me gifts

- a) He designed me to be incomplete without others.
- b) I joyfully recognize I am designed to be part of a community.
- c) 1 Corinthians 12:12-27
- d) No matter how hard you work on improving, you'll improve your weakness only marginally.
- e) Like writing with your left and right hand (more effort, it takes longer, poorer quality)
- f) It is futile to try to compare myself to other and try to mimic others.
- g) It's futile to compete with others spiritually: you have two different assignments.
- h) The anointing comes when you are doing what He's called you to do.
- i) Billy Graham: gathering a team for a lifetime
- j) Ministry directors: the quality of decisions increased 100%. I tried hard but made many poor decisions.

3. God has given me only one perspective on reality.

- a) Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; 24:6
- b) Rock garden in Japan: 13 stones, all cannot be seen from any one place on the perimeter
- c) I realize I can only see part of the truth, answer, situation
- d) Pentecostals: Moses paradigm: Go up to the mountain and get the word of the Lord for the people
- e) We consider needing others to be a sign of weakness
- f) The Exodus was like a bad camping trip. Moses was alone among 1.5 million immature people.



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C. Conclusion

1. God has empowered me to give Him a gift
 - a) Hebrews 12:2 “for the joy set before Him endured the cross...”
 - b) The “joy” was that He could give joy to His Father by “bringing many sons to glory” (Heb 2:10)
 - c) We’ve been empowered to make an eternal difference.
2. God makes us different and incomplete
 - a) We’re designed to be part of a community
 - b) We glorify God by loving one another and submitting to one another
3. God insists on us working together.
 - a) So He gets the glory
 - b) Why? If people are drawn to you they perish... if to Jesus they live forever
 - c) God doesn’t have low self-esteem
 - d) 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

D. Questions

1. Name two “gifts” God has given you, and tell us how you have used one of these to serve Him.
2. Name an area of weakness you have discovered about yourself. When did you first realize this weakness was there? What was your response at the time?
3. Name an area where you work with others as part of a team. Is working with others hard for you? If so, what is your greatest challenge?
4. Name a team you’ve been part of (even a sports team) where people worked humbly together and had great success.