

VIRTUE 9

HUMILITY

Young men, in the same way, be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

—1 Peter 5:5-6

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

—Ephesians 4:1-3

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

—Romans 12:3

In God’s eyes, *humility* is defined as simply putting ourselves completely under His mighty hand: “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:10). Biblical

humility can also be defined by pride, which is the perfect opposite of humility:

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).

Though the Lord is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar (Psalm 138:6).

For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted (Matthew 23:12).

We are humble when we are free from pride and arrogance. And when we are humble, we are ready and available to receive God's favor and blessing. Pride, on the other hand, puts us on God's "oppose" list, and He only will know us from "afar." Being proud has a high price tag!

Sometimes we get caught up in seeking victory in every situation we encounter. We want to win in sports, in work, in life, and even in love. When we lose, disappointment comes. But what about winning and losing from God's perspective? Does he always want us to walk away with "the big win"? Consider this short lesson from the book of Joshua:

Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" "*Neither,*" he replied, "*but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.*" Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" (5:13-14, emphasis added).

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them (John 13:12-17).

Notice the two extremes in the Philippians passage above: “Be *completely* humble and gentle” and “Do *nothing* out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.” When friends and family are near and words are flying fast, these are difficult words to live by! Perhaps the key to living a humble life is to make humility an action in our lives rather than just an attitude. We should *be* patient, *bear with* one another, and *consider* others as better than ourselves.

REFLECT

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

—James 3:13

A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.

—Proverbs 19:11

Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust,
who does not look to the proud, to those who turn
aside to false gods.

—Psalm 40:4

If a Knight is consumed with pride and seeks by that
means to uphold the Order of Knighthood, he is
in fact corrupting it, for his Order was founded on
justice and humility with a view to protecting the
humble against the proud.²⁷

—Ramon Lull

RESPOND

1. Why does God oppose the proud?
2. How does being weak make us strong in God's sight?
3. Why does God give grace to the humble?
4. Why is humility a sign of true strength?
5. Is humility really lack of self-esteem?