

THIRST 4 HUMILITY

Opener question:

What is your greatest achievement in life? – share with your group...2/3 mins

OK – so when Robbie asked me to lead this session on humility, my immediate thought was – why me?! This certainly isn't my field of expertise!

However, I now realise why... it's because God has an amazing sense of humour – and more important than that, he wants us to be learning all the time and helping each other to become better people.

IRON SHARPENS IRON – right?

When you delve into the concept of spiritual humility, being humble before God, there is so much to reflect upon... so I've tried to narrow it down to what I've found most useful.

SO tonight – three main bits – **what does it mean to be humble?** – we'll come up with a definition

We'll then look at **why being humble is important in our Christian walk?**

And we'll look at where we think we're at right now with regards to our own humility and spend some time looking forward – what do we need to do bring ourselves MORE in line with God's will for us in relation to humility. **How can we 'turn up' the humble and 'turn down' the pride in our everyday lives?**

We're going to see that PRIDE and HUMILITY can't occupy the same space – just like me and Donna couldn't work together behind a shop counter – we're going to see how God wants more of the 'humble' bit, and none of the 'pride' bit...

I would argue that: **“Pride’s for the *ride*, humility’s for *eternity*.”**
ie. Pride is there to point others to US in the here and now... Humility is there to point people to GOD - forever.

FIRST BIG QUESTION – What does it mean to be humble?

Well, what does the bible say about HUMILITY?

There are around 80 odd references to humility in the bible, so it’s clearly important to God.

Jesus only ever used two adjectives to describe himself: “for I am gentle and humble of heart.” So that’s a good start. If you want to be like Jesus, you have to be humble. It’s a choice. A choice that we get to make every day, in every interaction.

And here’s one of the simplest verses to understand, and I like simple and to the point – **Peter 4:6: “God opposes the proud, but shows favour to the humble.”**^[a]

Already we can see then that whatever humility is, it is in direct opposition to Pride.

SO LET’S START WITH PRIDE – pride’s the bad news...WHAT IS PRIDE? **Mark 7:20-23: Jesus said this...**

“It is what comes from inside that defiles you. ²¹ For from within, out of a person’s heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²² adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. ²³ All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you.”

Pride then, is SINFUL... something that Jesus defines as coming from within us – nothing to do with outside influence – it is purely self-promotion from within...

So if we're saying Humility is the opposite of that, by definition, humility must come from with **OUT** – we find it by looking to someone else, not to ourselves... I wonder who that could be?!

What does the dictionary say about the word HUMBLE?

Humble: adjective... [dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com)

- **not proud or arrogant; modest:**

So far, so good. Humility is the act of not acting proud or arrogant.

- **having a feeling of insignificance, inferiority, subservience, etc.:**

Wait, what?

- low in rank, importance, status, quality, etc.; lowly:

Do you see how the English language has warped the word “humble” to the point that it can be associated with inferiority or low status? Does this mean that humility is only for the weak? No! **Not when we're being humble in the name of the creator of everything! HOW CAN WE BE INFERIOR, INSIGNIFICANT in His name?**

You can still be confident... **Hebrews 4:16**

¹⁶ So let us come BOLDLY to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive HIS mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

We can be boldly humble can't we?... knowing that God has given us HIS GRACE & MERCY. If God is for us, who can be against us huh?!

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus said, “Blessed are the **meek** for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew. 5:5). To me, He's saying humble people recognize it all belongs to God to start with . . . that we can inherit what He wants to give us. Humble people start with a clear perspective that everything is His. We have our life, our breath, our being, and our hope in Him. Humble people grasp that it all would end in death except for Grace. Which leads them to gratitude.

Humility has nothing to do with intelligence or competence.

It's about attitude. Which is a relief. We behave based on what we believe. When we believe we're awesome . . . better than others, deserving of what we have and more, we'll have an attitude of pride and arrogance. When pride drives us, we press and compete and push ourselves to the top. We stick out our chests as we get the awards and paychecks and trophies. That *can be very off-putting*.

I worked with a few people like that in my previous life as a radio presenter! And arguably before I came to church, that included me at times.

IN CONTRAST – HOW ABOUT THIS FOR A DEFINITION - **Humility is having an attitude which says, “I am completely dependent on YOU God, and I’m going to use YOUR strength to serve others.”** It’s about letting God IN – ‘your will be done, on Earth’... it’s about accepting that **what we receive is a gift from God**

Humility attracts people *and* more importantly – it attracts God’s favour.

Proverbs 3:34 says “He has no use for conceited people, but shows favor to those who are humble.”

Reflection:

Can you think of some examples of humility:

- **From scripture? / From culture?**
- **Reflecting on your ‘greatest achievement in life’ – where was God in that situation?**

EXAMPLES –

Scripture – Jesus, Moses, Daniel, the Tax Collector, Peter, David – you’re going to be king, but go and feed your brothers on the battlefield first.

Culture – Mother Theresa / Nelson Mandela

SECOND BIG QUESTION - Why is humility important in our Christian walk?

WELL FIRST AND FOREMOST – we’ve already looked at how PRIDE IS A SIN, so we need to replace pride with the humility –

Twice in Luke and once in the book of Matthew we hear Jesus speak words to this effect:

*“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled,
and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”*

None of us want to be sinful before God... so that’s one good reason...but also, surely our main job as a believer is to promote being a Christian to those who are lost – so that they may also know God’s love, not be turned off by it.

The word “humility” comes from the same root word as “humus” which means fertile ground. When we are humble, we become fertile ground for God to grow stuff in . . . stuff like love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, goodness, and self-control. Pride is the opposite. It says, “I’ve got this,” “I don’t need help,” “I know what I need to know.” Pride grows arrogance and isolation . . . rarely wisdom or relational intimacy.

Phil 2:3 – “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves”

Humility serves... it lifts others up. What does humility look like? – It looks like getting low and lifting others up... not looking down on others. The son of man came not to be served but to serve! God serves us everyday with heartbeat, breath, sunshine – without Him we are nothing – and we deserve none of it. Humility is measured by how it will serve the good of others.

FIND THIS READING – 1 Peter 5:1-6. **For context** – this is a letter written by Peter to the churches that had been formed in the years following Jesus’s death... Peter was a fisherman by trade, but had been chosen by Jesus to be one of his original band of disciples... over the years his faith was tested many times, not least by Jesus himself when he was alive, but latterly by the

persecution the early church was subjected to by the Romans – but through that persecution, Peter was still encouraging people to live the right way... following the examples set by Jesus, not following what society was leading them towards. Sound familiar today? So easy to get distracted by the ways of the world, isn't it, and in doing so lose focus on the ways of Jesus.

So let's read part of this letter that Peter wrote to the early church:

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

⁵ In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,

“God opposes the proud
but shows favor to the humble.”^[a]

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Peter says, “clothe yourselves with humility toward one another”

Here are a couple more verses with the same sentiment:

“Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”

Colossians 3:12 NIV

“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.”

Ephesians 4:1-2 NIV

HUMILITY is a must-have qualification if you're applying for the job of disciple... if you were doing your Disciple CV... it would be there alongside your O Level in fishing and food multiplication!

Reflection:

- 1. What does it mean to “clothe yourself in humility”?**
- 2. What would it look like to obey this command?**
- 3. Can you think of a scenario in the last week where you did this well and another in which you didn't do this well.**

FINAL BIG QUESTION - how can we turn up the humble and turn down the pride in our everyday lives?

...BECAUSE - “There should only be one ME dominating your life... the MEssiah!”

3 ways to increase humility in our lives and fight against pride: LOOK AWAY FROM YOURSELF

1. Look at OURSELVES through Gods eyes - James 4:10
“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you”

If we have a mindset where we try and fight pride through OUR eyes – we end up being really negative ourselves... almost substituting any positives in our character with a fake belittling... “I’m not great”, “I’m not that clever”... “I’m not strong” – UNPRODUCTIVE & can be quite depressing – who’s the focus> I’M / US

But when we flip that round and look at ourselves through God's eyes... our focus moves from us to the one who gave us our power and strength. God has bestowed upon us the tiniest sliver of his infinite power – remember from our message on Sunday - ***He breathed life into us***. Surely if we lift our eyes to the one who is truly great and who adopted us into His family... and accept that it's through His grace that we can do all that we do... that way we are not belittling things we do, because we have come to accept that we are doing it with God's power... everything we achieve is thanks to the blessings He has given us.

Matthew 11:29 - “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (there's those two adjectives – gentle and humble)

It's interesting to note that Jesus describes accepting his yoke of humility and gentleness as something that will ***bring us rest***.

In humility is peace, because perpetual striving and pretending are exhausting... I look at some of these images and people posing on social media – and do you know what I'm thinking – not “how great they look”, cos many look so false – but I'm thinking “how long has it taken to you to look like that – how much has it cost?!”

So much effort.

Humility is not easy for us, because we are naturally eager to be the first and have the best, look the best. It feels embarrassing to admit our wrongdoing or ignorance or inadequacy. Yet it brings peace, and serenity.

The world promotes being the best – INSTAGRAM / FACEBOOK – nothing wrong with looking good and having a good time, doing well and telling people about it, but don't lose track of where it all comes from... if you look beautiful, that's God, not you... if you do well in business, that's God, not you... if you're enjoying a great holiday, that's God, not you... let Him do his work in you and be humble, so others aren't turned off by your boasting.

2. Look at OTHERS through Gods eyes – John 13:34 – Jesus said – “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another”

After he washed his disciples feet – Jesus lowered himself to role of servant. He died on a cross for us to pay our sin... He wants to us serve people who we tend to look down upon – a bit like a car jack lifting a car up so you can change it's tyre... (LISA / 3 TYRES CHANGED IN THE LAST WEEK - CAR GOING NOWHERE – until jack up – got right underneath)

Teach, help, correct, save them – volunteer time – place yourself underneath people... not about all THIS – our lovely church, nice coffee, comfy chairs – meet people needs and serve people... what are we doing for the people Jesus died for

3. Look at MINISTRY through Gods eyes (2 Timothy 4:7 – Paul says – “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” Before he died in prison, Paul spent countless hours encouraging and supporting – preached and saved through his suffering - **(FIND THIS READING - Paul - 2 Cor 11:24-28 how much he suffered)**...

²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. ²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ **Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.”**

Paul knew his time was limited so he gave it everything. We don't have a lot of time left on earth – we can't preach in heaven... it won't make a difference

there!!! It's a race we need to finish on earth – let's focus on what we can do while we're still here - FOR GOD – not for us!

Reflection on the night as a whole:

DISCUSS THESE STATEMENTS – *Do you agree with them? Are there any that need 'turning up' in your life? How hard do you find them to adhere to?*

True humility is complete dependence on God

A truly humble person sees themselves as less than or a servant to others

True humility is complete obedience to God's word

Some other verses to meditate on:

Romans 12:3 - 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 faith God has distributed to each of you.

Ephesians 4:2 - Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Philippians 2:1–4 - Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Philippians 2:3 - Don't be jealous or proud, but be humble and consider others more important than yourselves.

Colossians 3:12 - Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

James 3:12–13 - My brothers and sisters, can a fig-tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs?

Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

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