

# Moments *for* You

Volume 60, Number 4

Theme: Humility



## BIBLICAL HUMILITY

The Bible describes humility as meekness, lowliness and absence of self. The Greek word translated “humility” in Colossians 3:12 and elsewhere literally means “lowliness of mind,” so we see that humility is a heart attitude, not merely an outward demeanor. One may put on an outward show of humility but still have a heart full of pride and arrogance.

When we come to Christ as sinners, we must come in humility. We acknowledge that we are paupers and beggars who come with nothing to offer Him but our sin and our need for salvation. We recognize our lack of merit and our complete inability to save ourselves. Then, when He offers the grace and mercy of God, we accept it in humble gratitude and commit our lives to Him and to others. We “die to self” so that we can live as new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). We never forget that He has exchanged our worthlessness for His infinite worth, our sin for His righteousness, and the life we now live, we live by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us (Galatians 2:20). That is true humility.

Biblical humility is not only necessary to enter the kingdom, it is also necessary to be great in the kingdom (Matthew 20:26-27). Here Jesus is our model. Just as He did not come to be served, but to serve, so must we commit ourselves to serving others in all lowliness of mind, always considering others better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3). This attitude precludes selfish ambition, conceit, and the strife that comes with self-justification and self-defense. The truly

humble does not defend himself when falsely accused or unjustly treated. He defends the truth, but not his own ego or reputation. Jesus was always obedient to the Father and so should the humble Christian be willing to put aside all selfishness and submit in obedience to God and His Word. True humility produces godliness and contentment.

God has promised to give grace to the humble, while He opposes the proud (Proverbs 3:34; 1 Peter 5:5). Therefore, we must confess and put away pride. If we exalt ourselves, we place ourselves in opposition to God who will, in His grace and for our own good, humble us. But if we humble ourselves, God gives us more grace and exalts us (Luke 14:11). Along with Jesus, Paul is also to be our example of humility. In spite of the great gifts and understanding he had received, Paul saw himself as the “least of the apostles” and the “chief of sinners” (1 Corinthians 15:9; 1 Timothy 1:15). Like Paul, the truly humble will glory in the grace of God and in the cross, not in self-righteousness (Philippians 3:3-9). —Adapted from GotQuestions.org

## WRAPPED IN HUMILITY

*“Christ Jesus ... made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:5-7).*

In eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit shared coequally in all God is. The Son who was about to become incarnate was possessed of the glory of God, the likeness of God, the image of God, the splendor of God, indeed, everything that makes God God. Everything that caused the angels to adore God was there in the

Lord Jesus Christ. When we begin there, the impact of what follows is staggering.

Coming in the very form or nature of God, Jesus didn't consider equality with God something to be grasped. In other words, instead of holding on to His own uninterrupted glory, He chose to set it aside.

Paul tells us that He "made Himself of no reputation." What does this say? It says that in coming into the world, Christ chose not to arrive in a fashion that was so marked with dignity and style that it would immediately cause people to say, "Oh, this must be God Incarnate."

In fact, remember what the angel said to the shepherds: "This shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12). What a strange site. Not that the shepherds were unfamiliar with a manger. It was part of their routine activities. But a child in a manger? What child is this that would be laid in a manger? The sign is not a chariot parked outside. It's not a scepter, but a stable.

Jesus did not approach the incarnation asking, "What's in it for Me, what do I get out of it?"

In coming to earth He said, "I don't matter."

*Jesus, You're going to be laid in a manger.*

"It doesn't matter."

*Jesus, You will have nowhere to lay Your head.*

"It doesn't matter."

*Jesus, You will be an outcast and a stranger.*

"It doesn't matter."

*Jesus, they will nail You to a cross and Your followers will all desert You.*

And Jesus says, "That's okay."

—Adapted from "He Humbled Himself" by Alistair Begg.

*"Man is never sufficiently touched and affected by the awareness of his lowly state until he has compared himself with God's majesty." —John Calvin*

## NOT MINE

In the Gospel of John, our Lord Jesus speaks frequently of His relation to the Father, of the motives by which He is guided, and of His consciousness of the power and spirit in which He acts. Though the word humble does not occur in these Scriptures, we can clearly see His humility on display. Listen to the Saviour's words:

- "The Son can do nothing of Himself" (John 5:19).
- "I can of My own self do nothing ... My judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will" (John 5:30).
- "I receive not honour from men" (John 5:41).
- "I came ... not to do Mine own will" (John 6:38).
- "My doctrine is not Mine" (John 7:16).
- "I am not come of Myself" (John 7:28).
- "I do nothing of Myself" (John 8:28).
- "Neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me" (John 8:42).
- "I seek not Mine own glory" (John 8:50).
- "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself" (John 14:10).
- "The word which ye hear is not Mine" (John 14:24).

These words teach us how the Almighty God was able to work His mighty redemptive work through Jesus Christ. It is this: He was nothing, that God might be all. He resigned Himself with His will and His powers entirely for the Father to work in Him.

This is the true self-denial to which our Savior calls us—the acknowledgment that self has nothing good in it, except as an empty vessel which God must fill. Here we have the root and nature of true humility. If we understood this better and pursued it diligently, our humility would not be so superficial and feeble. We must learn of Jesus, how He is meek and lowly of heart.

Brothers and sisters: are you clothed with humility? Ask your daily life. Ask Jesus. Ask your friends. Ask the world. And praise God that there is displayed for you in Jesus a heavenly humility through which a heavenly blessedness can come to you.

—Condensed from *Humility* by Andrew Murray.

**“Humility creates the vacuum that divine grace fills.”**

—John MacArthur

## HE MUST INCREASE

*“He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).*

In a “Peanuts” cartoon, Linus tells Charlie Brown, “When I get big, I’m going to be a humble little country doctor. I’ll live in the city, and every morning I’ll get up, climb into my sports car, and zoom into the country! Then I’ll start healing people ... I’ll heal people for miles around!” In the last frame, he exclaims, “I’ll be a world famous humble little country doctor!”

Charles Schultz, the cartoonist, was poking fun at how difficult it is for us to be humble. We may start out with the goal of being a humble little whatever, but before we know it, we’re into being a world-famous, humble little whatever!

Pride is arguably the most deadly and evil of all sins because it’s at the

root of all other sins. Pride was probably Satan’s original sin, when he said, “I will be like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:14, assuming that this in some sense is describing Satan). Pride was the bait Satan used to tempt Eve, when he set aside what God had said and assured her that if she ate of the forbidden fruit, she would be like God (Genesis 3:1-6). Whenever I sin, I am arrogantly asserting that I know better than God what is best for me. Thus, as Christians we must constantly battle pride and grow in humility. And if you think you’ve attained any measure of humility, you’ve got to be on guard against being proud of your humility!

If anyone easily could have fallen into the trap of pride, it would have been John the Baptist. Who else in human history (apart from Jesus Himself) could claim to have been filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother’s womb (Luke 1:15)! No one else in human history had the important role of being the forerunner of Messiah (Luke 1:17, 76). John enjoyed immediate popular success, as all Jerusalem, Judea, and those from surrounding areas were going to him to confess their sins and be baptized (Matthew 3:5-6). Even Jesus testified of John that he was the greatest man in human history (Matthew 11:11). All these things could have fed the pride of this young prophet.

Yet John gives his disciples and us a basic lesson in humility. In the face of Jesus’ growing popularity and his own waning popularity, John gives us a one-liner to live by: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). To the extent that John’s motto is true of us, we are growing in humility.

Humility stems from understanding who God is and who we are. John

the Baptist clearly understood God's sovereignty, who Jesus is, and who he (John) was. Thus he didn't have inflated views of himself. He wasn't out to build his self-esteem or to promote his own ministry or reputation. His aim was to exalt Jesus. The clearer our vision of His majesty and greatness and power and glory, the more we will be humbled in His presence.

John recognized that his unique role in history was not something that he had achieved by his own brilliance or hard work. Rather, God had graciously given it to him so that he could point people to Jesus. It had nothing to do with anything good in John. It had everything to do with God's sovereign, gracious purpose for John.

This is such an important lesson to keep in mind at all times: all of my gifts, abilities, and opportunities come from God by grace alone. Everything! Do I have a sound mind? That came from God, who wants me to use it for His purpose and glory. Do I have money? That came from God, who wants me to use it for His purpose and glory. Do I have a ministry or place of service? That, too, came from God, who wants me to use it for His purpose and glory.

Are you working at growing in humility? If I'm growing in humility, Christ is increasing and I'm decreasing. If I'm growing in pride, self is increasing and Christ is decreasing.

—Condensed from *John* by Steven J. Cole, copyright 2013.

**“They that know God will be humble; they that know themselves cannot be proud.”** —John Flavel

## PRIDE AND HUMILITY

“Pride is your greatest enemy, humility is your greatest friend.” So said

John Stott, whose succinct statement goes straight to the heart of what the Bible teaches about the deadly root of our sins and sorrows.

### PRIDE

Pride can be summarized as an attitude of self-sufficiency, self-importance, and self-exaltation in relation to God. Toward others, it is an attitude of contempt and indifference.

If pride causes you to exalt yourself, you are painting a target on your back and inviting God to open fire. And He will. For He has declared His determination to bring it low wherever He finds it, whether among angels or humans, believers or unbelievers. Pride will be our undoing if we tolerate it in our lives. Truly, it is our greatest enemy.

One of the more notable biblical examples of pride and its consequences is that of Uzziah. When he became king of Judah at age sixteen, he set his heart to seek God and put himself under the spiritual mentorship of Zechariah. And “as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper” (2 Chronicles 26:5). As a result, he acquired wealth and also became politically and militarily powerful. Then things changed. “His name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction” (vv. 15-16).

What happened? There are hints in the text that at some point on the road to the top, Uzziah stopped seeking the Lord and the spiritual mentoring of Zechariah. Rather than humbling himself in thanksgiving to God, he began to develop an exaggerated sense of his own importance and abilities. This pride of heart led to presumption before God and brought very serious consequences upon him,

illustrating the biblical warnings that pride leads to disgrace and “pride goeth before destruction” (Proverbs 11:2; 16:18). I encourage you to meditate on Uzziah’s full story in 2 Chronicles 26. The stories of Haman (Esther 3–7) and Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4) also offer valuable insights into pride and are well worth reading.

### HUMILITY

God loves to bless and exalt the humble. For just as pride is the root of all sin, so “humility is the root, mother, nurse, foundation, and bond of all virtue,” as John Chrysostom once remarked. Admittedly, humility is out of fashion in today’s world and seems unappealing to most of us. However, as Jonathan Edwards said, “We must view humility as one of the most essential things that characterizes true Christianity.”

Our perspective on humility can be radically changed if we will meditate on the greatest example of humility in history: Jesus Christ. By the very act of leaving heaven, coming to earth, and taking the form of man, He demonstrated an unfathomable humbling of Himself. Throughout His life on earth, Jesus demonstrated a spirit of profound humility, saying that He came “not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

The apostle Paul urged the believers in Philippi: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). How do we gain the mind of Christ and humble ourselves? To put on the mind of Christ, we will need to make a firm decision to ponder, understand, and adopt Jesus’ way of thinking; His values and attitudes must become ours. His strong emphasis on humility and meekness and His example of it must take hold of our thinking, our desires and our

conduct. We must admire His humility and want it for ourselves. For this to happen, we need to earnestly and regularly pray for the Holy Spirit to change our hearts, for it is impossible to do it in our own strength.

Truly, humility is our greatest friend. It increases our hunger for God’s word and opens our hearts to His Spirit. It leads to intimacy with God, who knows the proud from afar, but dwells with him who “is of a contrite and humble spirit” (Isaiah 57:15). It imparts the aroma of Christ to all whom we encounter. It is a sign of greatness in the kingdom of God (Luke 22:24–27).

Developing the identity, attitude, and conduct of a humble servant does not happen overnight. It is rather like peeling an onion: you cut away one layer only to find another beneath it. But it does happen. As we forsake pride and seek to humble ourselves by daily deliberate choices in dependence on the Holy Spirit, humility grows in our souls. Fenelon said it well, “Humility is not a grace that can be acquired in a few months: it is the work of a lifetime.” And it is a grace that is precious in the sight of God, who in due course will exalt all who embrace it.

—Thomas A. Tarrants, III, condensed.

**“Humility is something we should constantly pray for, yet never thank God that we have.”**

—M. R. De Haan

## GOD RESISTS THE PROUD

*“All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5).*

We need a new realization of our Savior’s humility. Without it we are in trouble, for God “resisteth the proud.”

“Resisteth” embodies the thought of being set in battle array. God must judge pride for He hates it. He says of those tainted with pride, “These are a smoke in My nose, a fire that burneth all the day” (Isaiah 65:5). Can there be peace or blessing under such circumstances?

Pride provokes the wrath and fury of God. Blinded by pride, Pharaoh and his army perished in the engulfing waters of the Red Sea. The mighty Nebuchadnezzar, filled with self-praise, was punished by the Lord. He was made to crawl on the ground like a beast and eat grass until, in complete humility, he cried to God for mercy.

God has always resisted the proud. He always will! Hear His warning: “O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 49:16). “Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!” (Isaiah 5:21).

On the other hand, how much more joyous and rewarding is the Lord’s promise to those who practice His humility. He “giveth grace to the humble.” There is an uninterrupted flow of God’s unremitting favor into the lives of those who obey God in respect to humility. “What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6:8).

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5:6). The Lord will do the exalting if we do the humbling. “Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 14:11). It is not necessary

for the believer to parade his own importance. He need not sound his own trumpet. God never fails to reward faithfulness. “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up” (James 4:10).

—Condensed from *Living Peacefully* by J. Allen Blair.

**“Every Christian has a choice between being humble or being humbled.”**  
—Charles Spurgeon

## OUR EXAMPLE

*“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:14-15).*

On the way to the Last Supper, the ambitious disciples had been quarreling over who should be the greatest and who would have precedence in Christ’s kingdom. When they entered the room, none of them would condescend to do the menial task of washing feet. Their minds were full of their bitter contention, and none was willing to be servant of all.

The scene that followed is described in moving words: “And supper being ended ... Jesus knowing that ... He was come from God, and went to God; He ... began to wash the disciples’ feet” (John 13:2-5). The quality of this act of humility is heightened by the fact that Jesus performed it while vividly conscious of His divine origin and nature. He knew that He came from God’s presence. None of the disciples would confess himself inferior to another, but when the divine Lord remembered who He was, He rose up and performed the lowliest of tasks.

—Condensed from *The Incomparable Christ* by J. Oswald Sanders.

## TRUE GREATNESS

*“Whosoever will be great among you, shall be . . . servant of all” (Mark 10:43-44).*

If you’re a parent, I ask you to consider carefully your influence on your children and your responsibility for them. What are your ambitions for them? Do your ambitions for your son or daughter include a certain vocation or level of education? Graduation from a certain college? Professional or athletic or artistic recognition? If so, let me ask this: Are any of these ambitions in line with true greatness as defined in Scripture?

And here’s a more important question: Are any of your ambitions for your child more important to you than their cultivation of humility and servanthood—the basis for true greatness as biblically defined? Are any of these ambitions more important to you than their learning to serve others for the glory of God? In other words, are you more interested in temporal recognition for your child than you are in his eternal reward?

As a fellow sinful parent, let me explore with you what it can mean to help your child become truly great in the eyes of God. Here are some recommendations.

### BE AN EXAMPLE

First and foremost, parents are to be an example of greatness. Modeling precedes teaching. We cannot teach or train our children if we don’t provide a pattern for them to follow. If you want to adopt this ambition for your child—true greatness in the eyes of God—you must begin by examining your own life and asking yourself, “Am I an example of true greatness as defined in Scripture?”

### DEFINE TRUE GREATNESS

Second, we must also clearly define true greatness for our children.

Do your children understand the biblical definition of true greatness as Jesus explains it in Mark 10 and as we see it taught elsewhere in Scripture?

Here’s a worthy exercise to engage in: Ask your children to tell you what true greatness means. In this interaction with them, you’ll discover whether they have a biblical understanding of greatness, and if they don’t, you need to define it for them. You need to teach them that greatness doesn’t equal success, or talent, or ability, or power, or applause. It equals servanthood. And it equals humility.

### ADMIRE TRUE GREATNESS

Third, we must teach our children to discern and admire true greatness. Here’s another question for your children: “Whom do you most admire and why?” Their answer will tell you a lot.

Our culture daily celebrates those who are clearly not great in the eyes of God. And to a certain degree our children cannot escape the world’s influence. But are they able to see through the hype? Are they able to turn their attention away from these false heroes and to instead admire those who are truly great as biblically defined?

If you’re a parent, be assured that parenting is something God has called you to and that He has personally assigned your children to you both for their good and for your sanctification. They’re gifts from God, and they come with all the grace you need to prepare them for their future—and in particular for the day when you’ll appear with them before the judgment seat of Christ. What can you do today so that you and your children will then hear the words “Well done”?

—Condensed from *Humility: True Greatness* by C.J. Mahaney, © 2005 by Sovereign Grace Ministries.