

## Grow in Christlikeness (2): Humility

### **Philippians 2:3-4** New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility consider one another as more important than yourselves; <sup>4</sup> do not *merely* look out for your own personal *interests*, but also for the *interests* of others.

### **1 Peter 5:5-6** New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>5</sup> You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.

<sup>6</sup> Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time,

## **Introduction**

Last Sunday, we talked about one of Christ's attributes: love. Christ commands us to love one another as He has loved us; both unconditionally and sacrificially. By this love, people will know that we are Christ's disciples.

Today, we turn our attention to the second attribute of Christ: humility. The funny thing about humility is this: the moment you think you have it, you probably don't. E. g., A pastor was voted by his congregation as the most humble pastor in America. During a Sunday service, they honored him with a medal inscribed, "To the most humble pastor in America." The following week, wanting to show his gratitude, the pastor wore the medal around his neck. But as soon as the congregation saw it, they were stunned and promptly took it away—because the very act of displaying it disqualified him from the title! (Swindoll's *Ultimate Book of Illustrations & Quotes*, p. 278).

My sincere prayer this morning is that we not only learn about Christ's humility, but also begin to live it out in our daily lives.

## **Content**

Scripture shows us that humility is one of the Christian virtues, alongside compassion, kindness, meekness, and patience (Colossians 3:12), as well as mercy, love, joy, peace, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). True humility is the work of the Holy Spirit: no matter how hard we try, we cannot produce it on our own—God must shape it within us. We grow in humility as we seek God, obey His truth, and submit to His will. And the fruit of humility is peace and joy in Christ.

### **So, What Is Humility?**

A simple dictionary definition is: *‘the quality of not thinking that you are better than other people; the quality of being humble’* (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries). That’s actually quite close to the biblical idea. In fact, I believe it borrows from Scripture—especially from our text today, Philippians 2:3: *‘with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.’*

### **Arrogance: the Counterpart of Humility**

The opposite of humility is arrogance. Arrogance is when someone thinks they are more important than others, so they act rudely or ignore the needs and feelings of those around them (Ibid.). Imagine a person at a meeting who talks over everyone and dismisses others’ ideas—Think about a work meeting. An arrogant person might interrupt others, check their phone while someone else is speaking, or say, ‘That’s a good idea, but my idea is better,’ before even listening. That is arrogance in action (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries).

Arrogance is one of the vices listed in the Bible alongside fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing (Galatians 5:20), as well as selfishness, slander, gossip, and disorder (2 Corinthians 12:20).

If humility is a work of the Holy Spirit, arrogance is a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:19–20). A ‘work of the flesh’ is a sinful trait that comes from our own human nature, not from God. Arrogance is always self-seeking and puts one’s own interests above the needs of others. It rejects mutual submission and resists God’s truth. Because it does not pursue God’s will, arrogance ultimately brings God’s wrath and judgment (Romans 2:8).

So, if arrogance is thinking you’re better than others, what does genuine humility look like in action? The Bible gives us three clear signs...

### **Signs of Humility**

1. Consider others more important than yourself (Philippians 2:3)
2. Look out for others' interests before your own (Philippians 2:4)
3. Practice mutual submission and humility toward one another (1 Peter 5:5-6).

### **Misguided Humility**

Some folks believe that humility is self-imposed abasement. I would call this "misguided humility." True humility does not make you believe that you are nobody or act like a "zero," nor does it turn you into a doormat for everyone. Consider Jesus—He was the ultimate example of humility, yet His humility was never self-abasing. At times, He even sounded boldly confident. For example, people wanted to stone Him when He claimed equality with God, saying that whoever has seen Him has seen the Father (John 14:9).

Jesus also was no wimp in confronting evil or hypocrisy—He drove the money changers from the Temple and boldly rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees. Let me repeat: true humility is not weakness or self-deprecation. Instead, it is strength under control, guided by God's will and truth.

And in our current world, that strength is needed more than ever. The Bible predicted that in the last days, arrogance would become widespread (2 Timothy 3:2). We shouldn't be surprised, for we witness people consumed by every kind of wickedness—envy, malice, deceit, craftiness, strife, and even murder. We see people full of gossip, slander, pride, and rebellion (Romans 1:29-31). That's why God calls us to live with godliness and humility. The question is, why is humility so essential?"

### **Why Humility?**

The Bible gives us three clear reasons why humility is essential.

1. Because it is God's will for us. Arrogance is not. God commands us to humble ourselves in the presence of the Lord so that He will exalt us (James 4:10). Humility is especially vital in prayer. Do you want your prayers answered? Then, be humble. Every prayer requires humility, for prayer is having an audience with God. We cannot approach Him with arrogance or a sense of entitlement. Instead, we must come with utmost humility before we even think of presenting our petitions to the Almighty God. God wants us to be humble.

2. Without humility, we cannot see God. To enter God's Kingdom, we must be humble like little children (Luke 14:11). The rich, the powerful, and influential often face a greater challenge because they tend to rely on their own strength, status, or wealth rather than on God. When others elevate them, it can make genuine humility even harder. That's why Jesus said it is difficult for the rich to enter God's Kingdom—their pride and self-reliance stand in the way. Remember: God opposes the proud. Arrogance is a work of the flesh, and the flesh resists God's truth. Do you want to see God? Be humble.

### 3. Humility brings God's kingdom to life in our personal lives, families, and church.

To experience God's kingdom among us, we need mutual submission—and true submission is only possible with humility. How can we genuinely submit to someone if we consider ourselves superior? Through studying the Bible, I've come to understand that humility is the willing submission of ourselves to God and to one another (Philippians 2:8; James 4:10).

Mutual submission works like the human body: every part—hands, feet, organs—functions in harmony under the direction of the head. Your hands get you ready for church, your feet carry you to the car, and the rest of your body follows—all under the guidance of the head.

For the body to function, every part must submit to the head. When a hand tries to act like the head, or a foot refuses to move, the whole body suffers. Imagine if the body mutinied against itself: chaos and dysfunction would result, much like cancer. Arrogance is like one part of the body saying, 'I don't need the others.' It causes chaos and division.

Similarly, under Christ's headship, the members of His body—the Church—are to submit to one another. The key is willing submission: to Christ the Head first and then to others. When we do this, unity, order, and harmony flourish in our families and churches. Arrogance, in contrast, breeds division, disorder, and strife.

### **How We Grow in Humility: Our Role Model Is Christ.**

Humility isn't something we can achieve through sheer willpower; it's a fruit of the Spirit that God cultivates in us as we submit to His will. We can grow in humility by imitating Christ.

In fact, Christ invites us to learn humility from Him: *“Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart”* (Matthew 11:29). Let us follow Christ, who,

though equal to God, did not cling to His equality (Philippians 2:6). Let us follow Him, who emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant (slave) and being born in human likeness (Philippians 2:7). Let us follow Him, who humbled Himself and became obedient even to the point of death (Philippians 2:8). By embracing the same mindset that was in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5), we can truly learn humility. He is, without question, our supreme role model.

## Conclusion

Here's a **two-part action point**.

1. This week, I want you to start by asking yourself one question: Who is someone in my life I can put before myself? Maybe it's your spouse, a coworker, or a neighbor.
2. Now, think of one specific way you can serve them or put their interests first. Maybe it's doing a chore for your spouse without being asked or listening to a coworker's struggle without interrupting.

Let your life reflect the calling God has given you, walking in humility and gentleness (Ephesians 4:2). Clothe yourself in Christ's humility, and let it shine in your words, actions, and relationships---starting today.

Amen.