

The Essence of Humility

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Six Principles of Humility

Humility is not competitive

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others (Philippians 2:3-4). Humility does not get pleasure from having things or not having things (Philippians 4:12). The reason is, humility does not compete for things. It also does not compete for positions of authority or avoid such positions. It was part of the humility of Moses to accept the highest position in Israel (Numbers 12:3). The same could be said of Joseph, Daniel, and David.

Humility pursues excellence

That means doing the best he can, accomplishing what he can, and becoming what he can—developing his gifts, abilities, talents, as well as his position, job, or assignment (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). But his focus is on glorifying God and being approved by God (2 Corinthians 10:17-18). That means the humble person's success includes more than just success at his job, education, or other pursuits. Success also includes preserving his marriage, parenting his children, being honest with his customers, not cheating, or lying, etc. (Galatians 5:21-23). Humility defines success from God's perspective.

Humility seeks power--from God

Both humility and pride seek power (the possession or control of might). The difference is this. Pride sees the source of power as residing in people. This could be individually as a person or collectively as a team. Being proud of my team is just as sinful as being proud of myself. Pride seeks to be a source of that power—a reservoir, not just a channel. *For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water* (Jeremiah 2:13; see also Matthew 26:64; Ephesians 3:7; Acts 1:8; and Romans 1:16, 20).

Humility serves God

Humility serves people, too, of course, but in a context of their value before God as a creation of God—not as an independent disconnected source of value. Pride serves people as an end in itself. Communism, for example, advertises itself as the power of the people, as in, “The Peoples’ Republic of China.” This, of course, devalues people as something less than the image of God because it is a system of pride, not humility.

Humility is sensitive to sin.

Humble people focus on their sin. Prideful people focus on their accomplishment (Luke 18:9-14). In Luke 18, Jesus told one of the most radical stories ever told. The story reveals that pride attempts to serve God through accomplishments. “Thank God I’m not like those sinners.” A humble person focuses on his own sin, which disqualifies him from service. It is out of humility that God uses us (see 2 Chronicles 33:1-16).

Humility has unlimited resources

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Pride competes for limited resources. It focuses on mine and competes for yours. It can get only what people have and do only what people can do. Humility realizes resources are rooted in God and distributed by God (Philippians 2:5-11). Since all good gifts, abilities, wealth, and power, are from God, the resources of the humble person are unlimited (James 1:17). Pride uses my resources to compete for (or with) the resources God has placed in others. What should make the church different from the world is its unity, derived from its humility. Humility develops unity by tapping into the resources God has placed in His people (Ephesians 1:1-16).