

Cultivating the Heart: The Spirit of the Lowly

(Humility)

Introduction

Isaiah 57:15 "For this is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."



Humility is one of the key qualities we must learn in discipleship. **Matthew 11:28-30**

I. Understanding Pride and Humility

(from Biblical Ethics, McQuilkin) There are 4 root sins:

- 1) Lust/desire (to feel)
- 2) Greed (to possess)
- 3) Pride (to rise)
- 4) Unbelief (to have control)

"Of the 10 different Hebrew words for the concept of pride, almost all have the idea of **high, exalted, elevated, grand**, whereas many of the twelve root words for humble and the twenty root words for humiliate have the basic idea of **sink, bow down, depress, put down, subdue**. Another root idea of some words for pride is to inflate, puff up, to swell..."

(McQuilkin, pg.124)

"Notice that the essence of pride is a distorted view of self, leading to unwarranted self-confidence that, in turn, propels a dependent being into a disastrous attempt at independence." (McQuilkin, pg.124)

"Sinful pride is much like alcohol or drugs – the one who imbibes has a distorted view of reality." (p.124) And this leads to an oversized self-confidence, and that can be very destructive. (Rom. 12:3)

A. Indications that someone is proud

It is like having bad breath: you are the last one who realizes you've got it.

1. Attitude towards their weaknesses and sins

- Rejects correction
- Not vulnerable
- Hard for them to ask forgiveness
- Doesn't like the idea of confessing sins
- Avoids accountability

2. In regard to talking

- Doesn't listen well.
- Has more answers than questions.
- Tends to be the one who dominates the conversation.

3. In regard to serving

- Serves only when it makes him look good. (Eph.6:5-6)
- Likes being called a servant but not being treated like one.

4. In their spirituality

- Ungrateful.
- Prays little.
- Tends to think that he doesn't have a problem with pride. "The Devil's darling sin is the pride that apes humility." (Joseph Carroll)
- Nervous and tense because of not resting in the Lord. (Matt. 11:28-30)

- Wants to do "great" things for the Lord (not interested in small acts of serving)

5. In regard to status

- Envious of others' status, possessions, abilities, etc.
- Name dropping.
- Likes having titles and important jobs.
- Seeks to spend time with the important people and not interested in the "little guy." (Rom.12:16)
- Wants to be the boss. Rebellious.

6. In their sensitivity

- Gets upset easily and quickly. (Prov.28:25)
- Dwells on his own problems and pains
- Self pity. "Poor me" syndrome.
- Thoughts of suicide.
- Tends to be negative.
- Cries over their troubles and not over their transgressions.

7. In relation to others

- Always sees the speck in the other person's eye
- Compares and competes. (2 Cor. 10:12)
- Considers the sins of others to be much more serious than his own. (Matt.7:3-5)
- Is not open to being instructed by those who "beneath" him.
- Doesn't value the opinions of others.
- Racism

It's ironic that the people who are the most humble are the ones who feel most convicted by this list. Those with a bad case of pride are too adept at self justification to be able to perceive their true spiritual condition.

But, hey, maybe it doesn't matter that much. Or maybe it does...

B. How pride hurts us

1. It puts us in the league of Satan
2. It separates us from God (James 4:6-7; Ps. 101:5)
3. It keeps us from possessing the kingdom of God (Matt 5:3)
4. It is spiritual suicide (Ps. 138:6; Prov.6:16-17)
5. God commits himself to humble us (Prov.15:25; 16:18; Jer.13:9; Is. 2:10-12)

6. We are an abomination to God (Prov.16:5)

C. Is God humble?

At first glance it doesn't seem so. All the honor is for Him. (Is. 48:11-13) He won't permit any rivals. He does whatever He pleases.

But the clearest revelation of who God is in His essential nature was in the person of Jesus Christ. And what a surprise He gave us! Jesus was not humble because He was a man, but because that is how God is! That's why God says he is intimate with the humble, because they are like Him.

Jesus chose to come as a lamb instead of as a Lion.

James 4:6-7 Isaiah 66:2

II. The Road to Humility

A. What God does to humble us

1. Failure

Peter's denial

2. Limitations

Physical 2 Cor.12:7

Financial Deut.8:2

3. Reproof and correction

The Scriptures

From other believers

From unbelievers

4. Misunderstandings

Humiliation Mary/Joseph

Mocking Luke 23:35-37

5. Tragedy/loss

6. Difficult and demanding leaders

B. Examples of how God humbled His servants

1. Noah – 100 years of ridicule

2. Abraham- 25 yrs of sterility

3. Jacob- deception of Laban

4. Joseph- slavery, prison

5. Moses- 40 yrs in desert

6. David - 15 yrs fleeing from Saul

C. How God has tried to help me grow in humility

1. Difficult teenage years

2. Struggles with temptation

3. Living in a foreign country

4. Lack of recognition

5. Fruitless first years in Argentina

6. The opinion of some of my extended family

7. Rebukes from my leaders



D. Our part in the Battle

1. Admit the reality: (Is. 40:12-31) I am small, momentary, uninformed, weak, and sinful.

We are "low" (deficient) in 1) size 2) duration 3) knowledge 4) wisdom 5) righteousness 6) ability 7) control

What is there about us to boast about?

Recognize also the greatness of God's love and grace.

2. Repent of our pride

Tears and sadness for having failed the Lord.

3. Consciously seek a lower position

(Phil.2:6-7) "...who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men..."

In what ways?

a) By not seeking revenge (Rom. 12:9-14)

b) By seeking to serve others (1Cor. 9:19-27)

4) Strengthen your prayer life; grow in praise and thanksgiving.

5) "Boast" in your weaknesses

Paul (2 Cor. 11:30-12:1, 6, 9)

6) Respond better to the authorities God has placed in your life (1 Peter 2)

7) Watch how you treat the "little ones"

Children, the elderly, handicapped, animals

Conclusion

"Take my yoke..."

You've got to be kidding me! I want to be an eagle, not an ox. I want to soar, not serve. I want to give myself to finding my own way and destiny and success, not waste my time messing around doing what just anyone could do. Is He trying to trick me into doing His work for Him?

But what a surprise! There is our God meek and humble under the yoke and already hard at work. He doesn't order me to humbly labor and serve so that He won't have to do it, but rather to participate in the activity with Him.

And behind all this is a great secret: rebellion wears you out, while serving in humility draws you close to the greatest Servant of all, our God.

"Come..."

"Come to me everyone..."

Have you been rejecting His yoke?