

Christian Humility and Godly Growth

Philippians 2:5-18

Humility —Modesty, humbleness, meekness, lack of pride, lack of vanity.

Humble—Respectful, submissive, modest, dutiful, reverent, thoughtful, considerate, obedient without complaint.

There are many scriptures in the Bible that reference the words, *humility*, *humbly*, and *humble*. The lesson that we have before us is the perfect example of humility. As Paul writes to the church at Philippi, he sits in a Roman prison. He writes with a two-fold purpose: 1) to thank the church for the gift that was sent to him from the church and delivered by Epaphroditus (4:18); and 2) to encourage the believers there and everywhere. Philippians is unique among Paul's letters for at least two reasons: (1) it is virtually "problem free," lacking the disciplinary tone of some of Paul's other letters; and (2) it is filled with joyful statements even though Paul is chained in prison.

The commitment to a Christian lifestyle in such a world as ours is not easy. We live in an age of instant gratification from fast food restaurants to endless entertainment at the touch of a remote control. But many can attest to the fact that real Christian growth is slow and sometimes painful, not instant. There are no shortcuts to holiness, no secrets formulas. There are times that we may read a scripture for years and the meaning doesn't register with us immediately.

Living with Christlike priorities must always begin with a renewed awareness of our sin, and a daily thankfulness for God's never-ending grace—in other words, walking humbly with God. Jesus set us the best example ever of what it means to live with humility, and in so doing, He showed us a way to live with kingdom priorities and thereby glorify God.

Question 1. Think of someone you see as an humble person. What do you admire or respect about that person?

Answer:

Read Philippians 2:5-11.

Question 2. What characteristics of Jesus are given in verses 5-8?

Answer: If we read each verse carefully, we will see characteristics of humility, servanthood, submission, and obedience. This is not the typical "formula for success" that we hear of today.

Question 3. Compare and contrast the two descriptions of Jesus in verses 5-8 and verses 9-11. What was the result of Christ's humble obedience?

Answer: In verses 5-8, we see Jesus in the form of a human with meekness, humility, and obedience as a servant. In verses 9-11, we see Jesus exalted by His Father and given a name above every name. Also, we see the submission to Christ by all and open acknowledgment of Him as Lord—The Sovereign God. This is all a result of His humble obedience to God.

Question 4. How might your life be different if you consistently imitated Christ's attitude?

Answer: According to Scripture, "God will give grace to the humble," (1 Peter 5:5; James 4:6). Also, God will exalt us if we humble ourselves (Luke 14:11; James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6).

Read Philippians 2:12-18.

Question 5. What practical expression of humility do you see in these verses?

Answer: 1) Working out our soul salvation (cultivate it, bring it to full effect, pursue maturity) with fear and trembling (using serious caution and critical self-evaluation to avoid anything that might offend God or discredit the name of Christ. 2) Realize that it is God that strengthens, energizes, and gives us the ability to do His good will. 3) Stop complaining and disputing (arguing, questioning). 4) Prove ourselves blameless and harmless sons (children) of God.

Question 6. Verse 12 says that you are "to work out your salvation." What do you think this means? Why are we to do this "with fear and trembling"?

Answer: See answer to question 5. Also, we work because we are saved, not to be saved. Cultivating includes with it everything that is needed for growth (till, plow, dig, turn, fertilize, mulch). We must do our part to grow.

Question 7. What is the significance of the word *continue* (Amp.) in verse 12?

Answer: We don't need to get side-tracked when it comes to our growth. Christian growth is a disciplined process, not a one-time event.

Question 8. What perspective does verse 13 give to Paul's command in verse 12?

Answer: We must have God's power to do his work. God is working through us, with us, and for us to His good pleasure. He helps us in our struggles.

Question 9. After the tremendous concepts outlined in verses 5-13, what is the very practical instruction Paul gave for living with Christlike humility (verse 14)?

Answer: We need to do everything without complaining and arguing. We are to present a unified impression of Christ and the gospel. We need to shine for Christ.

Question 10. What do you find in verses 14-18 that expresses some of your own hopes?

Answer:

Lifestyle Reflections

As we complete this study, we should focus on our relationship with Jesus and our role as Christians in His world. Some take-aways from this study are:

1. Asking God to show us ourselves and tell us what areas where we grieve Him.
2. Ask Him to help us not to crave the things of the world.
3. Know that our citizenship is in heaven, not here on earth.
4. Ask God to show us the difference between "gnats" and "camels," between what is merely the product of an ingrown Christian culture and what is truly important.
5. Thank God for the material blessings he has poured out on us, but to tear the attraction for them from our heart so they don't have first place.
6. Ask God to help us be lights and shine for Him. Help us to be salt and preserve our saltiness and let it help those we meet.

References: Lifestyle Priorities Living with Purpose in a Fast-Paced World, Fisherman Bible Study Guides, WaterBrook Press; New American Study Bible; The Amplified Bible; The Opened Bible, KJV.