



5. Attitudes of the Heart – Humility

In this lesson we will deal with an *attitude of the heart* that is foundational to all other aspects of Christian character. *Humility* is required to have the proper, biblical view of God, self and others. Jesus Christ exuded humility. It was one of His chief characteristics (Isa 42:1-4, Zec 9:9). As such, when the Christian grows in the faith, maturing into Christ-likeness, he will increasingly reflect the humility that Christ himself possessed (2 Cor 10:1).

The opposite of humility is *pride*. Pride is at the top of God's hate list!

 Prov 16:5. **Q.** What does God think of those who are proud?


 Prov 6:16-19; Prov 8:13. **Q.** What do the things listed with pride in these lists tell us about the seriousness of pride?

 **Discuss.** *In your opinion, Why does God hate pride so much?*

Pride was the sin that caused Satan to be cast out of heaven (Isa 14:14-15). Satan sowed the seeds of pride in the heart of Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen 3:5-6). Pride remains a chief characteristic of Satan and of all who follow him (John 8:31-59; 1John 2:16). It is pride that is behind all strife, wrath and unbelief (Prov 13:10; Prov 21:24; Ps 10:4). And pride ultimately, is followed by shame, destruction and humiliation (Prov 11:2; Prov 29:23; Prov 16:18).

God is the sovereign of the universe and Jesus Christ is Lord over all. God alone deserves honour, exaltation and praise (Ps 148:13). So, everytime man lifts himself up in pride, he challenges the sovereignty of God. He vies for the honour and praise that is due only to God.

God hates pride so much that he designed the entire salvation plan in such a way as to eliminate any possibility of men boasting of their salvation.

 1 Cor 1:19-31. **Q.** What will God destroy?

Q. v26. God has not called many of whom to salvation?

Q. v27-28. Why has God chosen to operate this way?

Q. v29. Because God has planned salvation this way, what can no man do?

Salvation is by grace through faith and not of human works “lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:9). God actively designed salvation in such a way that human pride could play no part! As the hymnwriter put it:

*Boasting excluded, pride I abase;
I'm only a sinner saved by grace!*

Humility – The Key to the Kingdom of God

Jesus Christ’s main opponents during his earthly ministry were the scribes and Pharisees. It is not surprising to learn that these two groups were known for their self-righteous pride (Luke 16:14-15). They strutted about under the guise of religious elitism the entire time being children of the devil and on their way to Hell. (John 8:44, Matt 23:15)

📖 Matt 23:1-12. Q. v5. Why did these men “do their works”?

Jesus went on to say that the scribes and Pharisees always sought the best seats at dinners and at synagogue. They loved personal attention and recognition in public. They relished titles designed to exalt them above the common people. The position they held within their religious system was, to them, something to be proud of and they wasted no opportunity to remind others of that fact.

The scribes and Pharisees were proud legalists. They prided themselves on keeping the rules that they wrote themselves. They were not concerned with inward purity, but only outward appearance (Matt 23:27). They were hypocrites who worshipped God with their lips, but not their hearts (Matt 15:1-9). What we see proven over and over again by the example of the scribes and Pharisees is that legalism and pride go hand-in-hand. The legalist believes he can please God in and of himself. He is depending upon his own righteousness to earn favour with God. Naturally, the man or woman who believes they have *earned* God’s grace will be lifted up with pride by what they perceive to be *their* accomplishment! (Rom 10:3)


In Luke 18:9-14 we find a striking illustration of this as Christ contrasts the prideful legalism of the Pharisees with the genuine repentance of a humble publican. The Pharisees were the religious rulers while the publicans were despised by the Jews and seen as sinners.

📖 Luke 18:9. Q. Who did Jesus speak this parable to?


Q. v9. As a result of their self-righteousness, how did they feel about others?

Q. v11. Why did the Pharisee thank God?

Q. v11-12. What standards did the Pharisee use to judge himself as righteous?

 **Discuss.** *It is good to not be an extortioner, or unjust or an adulterer. It is a good thing to fast and to give money. So, what did this man have wrong?*

Q. v13. What would the publican not do? _____.

 **Discuss.** *The publican would not look to heaven and he pounded on his chest. What do you think these actions say about his view of God and himself?*


The publican in Jesus' parable was the complete opposite of the Pharisee. The Pharisee had a distorted view of God, himself and others. He thought he was good enough to find favour with God. So good in fact that he had the audacity to praise himself and his works before God. He felt that as long as his works outshined the works of others, he had attained righteousness. In contrast, the publican with utter humility would not even look to Heaven. But he stood with head bowed and smiting himself on the chest (a gesture of disdain for himself and his sinfulness), he prayed only seven words "God be merciful to me a sinner".

Q. v14. Who went home justified? _____.

Q. v14. What truth was Jesus teaching through this parable?


The publican had no pretense about him. He knew he could not save himself and was unworthy of God's mercy. He humbly, and with anguish, cast himself at the feet of God the Father seeking forgiveness. These men were

simply illustrations in Jesus' parable. He painted the picture of a prideful and self-righteous man in contrast to a humble sinner in order to illustrate the way of salvation. The truth in this parable applies to every man or woman who comes to God for mercy.

 Matt 18:1-4. **Q.** v1. What question did the disciples ask Jesus?

Jesus did not accept the premise of the disciple's question. He told them that they had to be "converted". That is, their thinking was completely wrong and unless they understood the right attitude necessary to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, they would not enter in.

Q. v4. What attitude is required to enter the kingdom of Heaven?

 **Discuss.** *Why do you think Jesus used a child as an example? In what ways must we become like a child in order to be saved?*


A child is helpless and dependent. He has no accomplishments, no titles, and no lust for exaltation. He is the epitome of humility. He has no pretense, and no hypocrisy, only a simple trust and reliance. To come to God as a child is to put aside our facades and self-righteousness, casting ourselves at his feet declaring our unworthiness and inability to save ourselves.

Jesus emphasized this truth in Matthew 5:3 where he said "*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*". To be *poor in spirit* is to be humble, destitute and utterly dependent upon God. This is the attitude that everyone must have when they come to God for salvation. In contrast to this sincere humility Psalms 10:4 says *The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.*

Humility – The Basis of a Biblical Worldview


The Pharisee in Luke 18 was lifted up with pride and unwilling to humble himself before God. Not only did his pride preclude him from entering heaven, but it perverted his view in three important areas: his view of God; his view of himself; and his view of others. Likewise, everyone who is prone to pride will also have an ungodly and unbiblical view in each of these areas.

1. A Wrong View of Self


 1 Peter 1:24. **Q.** What is man's glory like? What will come of it?

 Rom 12:3. **Q.** How should man think of himself?


 1 Cor 4:7. **Q.** Answer the three questions found in this verse.

 1 Cor 15:10. **Q.** What did Paul recognize about his own abilities?

The psalmist had the right view of himself when he wrote *Psalms 8:4* *What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?* Humility recognizes our sinfulness, our inability and our unworthiness of God's favour.

 1 Tim 1:15. **Q.** Earlier we saw a parable about a Pharisee and a publican. The Pharisee was self-righteous. He judged himself righteous by comparing himself to others. He had the wrong standard! How was Paul's view of himself different than the Pharisee's?

2. A Wrong View of God

 Isa 42:8. **Q.** What will God not share? _____.


God alone deserves praise. He is the sovereign of the universe, the provider, protector and enabler. Man has no right to exalt himself, because all that he is and all that he possesses is graciously provided by God. The prideful man has lost sight of this and places himself in a position that only God should occupy.

3. A Wrong View of Others

Isaiah described the selfish, self-righteous, condescending attitude of prideful rebels when he summarized their attitude towards others in Isaiah 65:5: “[They] say, *Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou*”. God responded, “*These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.*”

In stark contrast to these rebels, Philippians 2:3-4 tells us to view one another as better than ourselves. When we do this, we will also be concerned with the “things” of others more than our own things. This humility will lead us to care for, provide for, and pray for one another (1 Cor 12:25; James 5:16;). It will enable us to forgive one another and ultimately *serve* one another (Eph 4:32; Gal 5:13).

This humble love and care for one another is a far cry from the attitude of the Jews of Isaiah's day or the Pharisees of Christ's day!

 **Discuss.** *How might our flesh react to the idea of serving one another or esteeming each other as better than ourselves? What fears might we have in doing so?*

Without humility we cannot have a biblical view of God, ourselves or others. We will diminish God's glory, exalt ourselves and disregard others. As a result, we will fail to reflect the character of Christ and bring shame to the

name of God. Humility really is the cornerstone of Christian character. It is absolutely essential to properly reflect the character of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ - The Perfect Example of Humility

 Matt 11:29. Q. How did Jesus describe himself? _____.


Jesus said that those who take his yoke upon them would “learn of him”. What would they learn? Meekness and lowliness. Humility is one of the hallmarks of Christ-like character. The Christian who walks with Christ on a daily basis through Bible reading, prayer and obedience will become increasingly like him. That is, he will exhibit more and more humility.

In Philippians 2 Paul exhorts us to show humility. He uses the Jesus Christ as the perfect example.

 Philippians 2:3-11. Q. What attitude will keep us from doing things through strife and vanity?

 Q. v3. How does a proper view of ourselves (lowliness or humility) cause us to see others?

 Q. v4. How does humility change what we are concerned or preoccupied with?

 **Discuss.** *How is humility different from low self-esteem or a poor self-image? How does Christ’s example in verses 5-8 make the distinction clear?*

 Q. Pride causes men to exalt themselves, to seek prominence over others, to relish in accolades and to spend much of their lives ensuring that their projected image is secure. Humility is the exact opposite, according to Philippians 2:7-8, what did Christ’s humility allow him to do?

 Humility is not concerned with self-image or reputation. It is willing to allow others to be perceived as superior. The humble person does not spend much time defending himself or habilitating his image, nor is he concerned with maintaining social status. Jesus possessed all the glory of God the Father but “thought it not robbery to be equal to God”. That means he did not feel compelled to grasp onto or protect his status. He willingly humbled himself by becoming a man and even subjected himself to the hatred, abuse and humiliation of those who were inferior to him.

Christ is the perfect embodiment of humility. All who come to him for salvation must humble themselves in the process. Even after salvation, as a believer grows spiritually, he increases in meekness and lowliness (Matt 11:29). In a striking contrast to this world’s thinking, even (and especially) those who are leaders in the church are to exemplify humility in the form of servant leadership.

Humility Means Servant Leadership

📖 Matt 20:25-28. Q. How did leaders behave themselves in the “Gentile world”?

Q. v26-27. How did Jesus say his disciples should behave?

Q. v28. What did Christ use to illustrate his own servant leadership?

📖 John 13:3-15. Q. How did Jesus display his own humble servant-leadership?

Q. v13. Who is Jesus? _____.

Jesus is the *Lord* and *Master* yet he humbled himself to wash the feet of the disciples. In doing so, he was leaving us an example of servant-leadership. Leading is often no more than “doing the right thing first” and in this case, the right thing is to serve one another with humility.

Q. Jesus was *not* instituting a new ordinance for the church in this passage. He was using an object lesson to illustrate a divine truth. If he was not instructing us to literally “wash one another’s feet”, what *was* he teaching us?

Humility Leads to Exaltation

📖 Matt 23:12. Q. Who will be exalted? _____.

📖 1 Peter 5:6. Q. What must happen before God can exalt us? When will he do it?

The Bible says that after Christ *took upon himself the form of a servant* and became *obedient unto death* that God *exalted him* and gave him *a name which is above every name* (Php 2:7-9). The passage starts by telling us to *let this mind be in your which was also in Christ Jesus*. God’s exaltation comes when we humble ourselves under his hand.

The Pharisees sought man’s exaltation through pride, and got it in this life (Matt 6:5). The Christian is to seek God’s exaltation through humility and look for exaltation in the next life!