

What does it mean to be humble?

Written by Tim Houston
Tuesday, 22 May 2012 14:12

"...And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

I few years ago, I participated in a Bible study at work that provided some wonderful insight on the topic of pride and humility. I have always been a person with a high sense of self esteem, and I believed that it was this confidence in self that allowed me to be successful in life. As I matured, I acknowledged that it was also my ego and pride that fueled me.

But now more than ever, I feel the need to work on my humility. What does it mean to be humble? Perhaps you have heard the story of the parishioner who received recognition for being the humblest man in the church? They gave him a pin to wear. The following Sunday he wore it and they took it away from him for being proud. One wonders sometimes if humility is like this. As soon as we think we are humble, we are not.

Although humility is not easily attainable, it can be attained. Biblically speaking, personal humility carries the notion of lowering or abasing oneself in such a manner as to attain a place of meekness. This is the ability to acknowledge that your strength, talents, and abilities come from someone greater than yourself. You must know that you have been given a gift and with meekness and humility you must share it with others. Perhaps the best way to understand humility is attempting to see ourselves through God's eyes rather than our own. "...For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The following is a list of a few suggestions I have gleaned from others on how to humble yourself.

Take wrong patiently. (1 Peter 3:8-17) This has been a difficult one for me. When something is unjust I want to react and rectify it. However, patiently responding to the unjust accusations and actions of others demonstrates our strength of godly character and provides an opportunity to put on humility.

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Receive correction and feedback from others graciously. (Proverbs 10:17, 12:1) In the Phoenix area, a local East Valley pastor was noted for graciously receiving any negative feedback or correction offered. He would simply say "thank you for caring enough to share that with me, I will pray about it and get back to you." Look for the kernel of truth in what people offer you, even if it comes from a dubious source.

Choose to serve others. (Philippians 1:1, 2 Corinthians 4:5, Matthew 23:11) When we serve others, we are serving God's purposes in their lives. Doing so reduces our focus on ourselves.

Purposely speak well of others. (Ephesians 4:31-32) Saying negative things about others puts them "one down" and you "one up"...a form of pride. Speaking well of others edifies them and builds them up. Remember, you cannot keep another person down without staying down yourself.

Be quick to forgive. (Matthew 18: 21-35) Forgiveness is possibly one of the greatest acts of humility we can do. To forgive is to acknowledge a wrong that has been done to us and also to further release our right of repayment for the wrong.

Forgiveness is not insisting on our way and our justice. Forgiveness is denial of self.

True humility cannot be obtained without acknowledging the work God has done in your life. The noted preacher, Charles Spurgeon, defined humility as, "making a right estimate of one's self." Another noted speaker stated that, "Humility is not denying the power or gift you have, but admitting that the gift is from God and the power comes through you and not from you." After World War II, Winston Churchill humbly commented that, "I was not the lion, but it fell to me to give the lion's roar." It is with this affirmation that we humbly do what we do.

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