

HUMILITY vs. PRIDE

RECOGNIZING AND ACKNOWLEDGING MY TOTAL DEPENDENCE UPON THE LORD AND SEEKING HIS WILL FOR EVERY DECISION.

“By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life” Proverbs 22:4.

DEFINITION OF HUMILITY

Bible translators use **humble** to render several Hebrew words. One, **anah**, means “to look down, to abase oneself, to afflict and chasten, to deal harshly, and to weaken.” King David expressed humility of soul by wearing sackcloth and by fasting: “My clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting” (Ps. 35:13).

Another Hebrew word for **humble** is **kana**, which means “to bend the knee, bring into subordination, to subdue.” God used this word in II Chronicles 7:14; “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face...then will I hear from heaven.”

REWARDS OF HUMILITY

The greatest reward of humility is becoming like the Lord Jesus Christ. He identified Himself as “meek and lowly in heart.” The word **lowly** means “not rising far from the ground, brought low with grief, low in spirit, of low degree.”

Other rewards of humility include what every person longs for—true riches, high honor, and abundant life. “By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life” (Prov. 22:4).

THE SWIFT AND SEVERE PUNISHMENT FOR PRIDE

Pride believes that we have achieved what God and others have done for us and through us. Pride reserves for myself the right to make final decisions. Pride builds all of life around me and my wants.

God illustrates His swift punishment on pride in the lives of King Herod Agrippa I and King Nebuchadnezzar. God did not immediately punish Herod for killing James the brother of John and imprisoning Peter, but when Herod gave a great oration to the people of Tyre and Sidon, and they cried out, “It is the voice of a god,” then “immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory” (Acts 12:23).

When King Nebuchadnezzar boasted, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” God immediately punished him. While the word was in the king’s mouth, God struck him with a mental breakdown and took away his kingdom until he worshiped the King of Heaven. (See Daniel 4:30-37.)

The Lord may bring such swift punishment on pride because pride motivated Satan and a third of the angels to rebel against God. Satan said in his heart, “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:13-14).

Pride motivated Adam and Eve to disobey God. Satan tempted them to violate God’s command, promising that they, through their own efforts, could put themselves on an equal level with God. Satan said, “God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods” (Genesis 3:5).

Pride deceives us into putting ourselves on an equal level with God-given authority; into thinking we can decide for ourselves what is right and what is wrong. Humility means abasing ourselves, and submitting to the righteous rule of God and His authorities.

OUR CHOICE: HUMBLE OURSELVES—OR BE HUMBLLED BY GOD

God appeals to all of us to take the initiative to humble ourselves. IF we fail to do this, he will humble us through circumstances, opposition, infirmities, or weaknesses.

* “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:10).

* “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time” (I Peter 5:6).

Notice that we first and foremost humble ourselves in the eyes of the Lord, not necessarily in the eyes of others. He can see the true condition our hearts, whether we flatter ourselves with compliments or sincerely abase ourselves and exalt Him.

King Nebuchadnezzar learned what happens when a man fails to humble himself. However, after God humbled him, he gave proper glory to the Lord, “At the end of the day I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation” (Daniel 4:34).

HUMILITY BEGINS IN OUR SPIRITS; PRIDE BEGINS IN OUR HEARTS

When our spirits are in full fellowship with the Spirit of God, we will have humble hearts.

- “For thus says the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isaiah 57:15).
- “Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud” (Prov. 16:19).
- “A man’s pride shall bring him low; but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit” (Prov. 29:23).

PRIDE IS TAKING CREDIT FOR WHAT GOD GAVE US

If we fail to recognize that everything we have and comes through the mercy and grace of God, we will tend to think that we are responsible for our achievements. Thus, we will lift up our hearts in pride.

- When King Uzziah became strong, “his heart was lifted up to his destruction” (II Chronicles 26:16).
- When Nebuchadnezzar’s “heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne” (Daniel 5:20).
- When the prince of Tyrus became prosperous, God observed, “By your great wisdom, by your trade you have increased your riches, and your heart is lifted up because of your riches-- ...you have made your heart like the heart of God,” (Ezekiel 28:5-6, New American Standard).

GOD’S CHECKLIST FOR HUMILITY

The Bible gives clear guidance on how to humble ourselves through direct instruction and through the example of men and women. Humility must begin with a contrite spirit, as explained in Colossians 3:12: “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind.”

James 4:6-10 speaks of humility and gives a checklist for achieving it. “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble...Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”

1. Submit yourselves to God with total, unconditional surrender to His will.
2. Resist the devil, allowing no secret sin or hindering weight.
3. Draw nigh to God by seeking His face through the Scriptures.

4. Cleanse your hands by confessing all sin and making restitution.
5. Purify your hearts, making sure there is no secret desire to continue sinning.
6. Be afflicted and mourn and weep. Grieve over the awfulness of sin.
7. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness.
8. Do all this in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

GOD HEARS THOSE WHO COME TO HIM IN HUMILITY

A passage parallel to James 4 on humbling ourselves is given in II Chronicles 7:14, **“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and...**

1. **Pray**—Acknowledging our sins and God’s holiness.
2. **Seek My face**—Set aside every distraction that competes with Christ.
3. **Turn from their wicked ways**—Have a change of life as well as a change of heart.

“Then I will hear from heaven...”

True inward repentance and contriteness will produce outward evidences. God notes the following expressions of humility and how He responded to them.

- Ahab—“When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and went around meekly. Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: ‘Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son,’” (1 Kings 21:27-29, New International Version).
- Josiah—“It came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.” He also acknowledged the iniquities of his fathers: “Because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book.” The Lord responded, “Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the LORD” (II Chronicles 34:19, 21, 27).

SPECIFIC WAYS TO HUMBLE OURSELVES

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome critics—bless those who curse you. 2. Volunteer for menial tasks. 3. Ask others to show you blind spots in your life. 4. Express gratefulness. 5. Listen to others instead of talking about yourself. 6. Kneel in prayer. 7. Let authorities make final decisions. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Ask forgiveness for wrongs you have done. 9. Praise and honor others. 10. Take time for prayer and fasting. 11. Give sacrificially. 12. Give testimony of God’s grace. 13. Deflect praise. 14. Be a servant. The best test of whether or not we view ourselves as servants is how we respond when treated like one. |
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HOW HUMBLE ARE YOU?

- When people disagree with you, do you argue for your position?
- Do you tend to cut off those who ignore you?
- Are you hurt when those you dislike are honored?
- Do you find it difficult to admit you are wrong?
- Do you inwardly react when people criticize you?
- Do you give your opinions before being asked for them?
- Do you enjoy sharing about your accomplishments?
- Do you talk more than you listen?
- Are you more concerned about your reputation or God's?
- Do you give the impression that you have no problems?
- Do you seek ways to humble yourself?
- Do you do things for praise and compliments?
- Do you accept praise rather than deflecting it?
- Are you quick to correct others when they make mistakes?
- Do you react when you do not receive credit you are due?
- Do you feel important?
- Do you compare yourself to others rather than God?