

# Humility

By Peggy Lively

**Core Verse:** “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” **Philippians 2:3-4**

**Creed:** I choose to esteem others above myself.

## Part One: Learn from Jesus

As we study humility, there’s no greater example to look at than Jesus himself. He says:

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” **Matthew 11:29**

### A. His Life

While Jesus was on this earth, He was always looking for opportunities to minister to and serve others. He tells us that “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.” **Matthew 20:28**. It takes humility in order to willingly be a servant.

Read **Matthew 20:26-27**.

1. What did Jesus tell his disciples they needed to do in order to become great?

Read **John 13:1-5**.

2. How did Jesus show this humility to his disciples?

3. In **John 13:14-17**, what challenge did Jesus give to his disciples?

Jesus set an example of humility that he challenged his disciples and us to follow. Peter also reminds us in **1 Peter 5:5**: “All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another ...” Commenting on this verse, Charles Swindoll points out, “*The verb [Peter] used comes from a noun referring to a white scarf or apron typically worn by slaves. He may have been thinking of the last meal he had with Jesus when He taught His disciples a lesson in humility by example ... You want to be like Christ? Find the least desired position, the task no one else wants, the worst seat in the house, and claim it. Make it yours.*” – Charles Swindoll, So You Want to be like Christ?, page 134, 140

Probably Jesus’ most honored moment here on earth was five days before his death. He made his “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem as the crowds shouted, “Blessed is he who

comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (Matthew 21:9) Yet even this procession of praise was highlighted by Jesus’ humility.

Read **Matthew 21:1-11**.

4. How does Jesus enter into Jerusalem?

Matthew Henry notes that Jesus sent only for a donkey and her colt. Donkeys were mostly used in that country for travel, and horses were kept only by great men, and used for war. In Jesus’ humility, he rode upon a donkey. Furthermore, *“It was not his own, but borrowed. He had nothing of this world’s goods but what was given him or lent him ... When a king comes, something great and magnificent is expected. But there is nothing of that here: Behold, he cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon a donkey. When Christ would appear in his glory, it is in his meekness, not in his majesty ... As evidence of this, his appearance is very mean, sitting upon a donkey, a creature made not for state, but service, not for battles, but for burdens; slow in its motions, but sure, and safe and constant. Zion’s King comes riding, not on a prancing horse, which the timorous petitioner dares not come near, or a running horse, which the slow-footed petitioner cannot keep pace with, but on a quiet donkey, that the poorest of his subjects may not be discouraged in their access to him.”*

–Matthew Henry’s Commentary in One Volume, page 106

When we realize where Jesus came from, from Heaven with God his Father, to where he ended up here on this earth, we see a steep downward trend in his life.

Read **Philippians 2:5-8**.

5. List the things Jesus did that are described in these verses.

Go back and look at these verses again. Did you catch the first verse that precedes the description of Jesus’ humility and death? “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus ...” **Philippians 2:5**. His attitude was one of humble service and sacrifice. And we are called to live in humility just as Jesus did, taking the very nature of a servant.

**Bring it Home:**

\*Does my idea of becoming “great” line up with what Jesus taught his disciples? Explain.

\*Is there someone that I need to humbly serve as Jesus did? How will I go about doing this?

## **B. His Death**

Jesus, “being in very nature God”, humbled himself as he came to this earth in the form of a man. He “made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” **Philippians 2:7**. Not only did Jesus walk in humility while he lived here on this earth, but he also exemplified humility in his death. “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!” **Philippians 2:8**. Let’s look at the way Jesus approached his death.

Read **Isaiah 53:7**.

6. How was Jesus led to his death?

It is very interesting to me to read so many scripture references that describe us (mankind) as sheep:

“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” **Isaiah 53:6**

“... we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.” **Psalms 100:3**

“... My people have been lost sheep ...” **Jeremiah 50:6**

“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” **Matthew 9:36**

“He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out ... I lay down my life for the sheep.” **John 10:3, 15**

“For you were like sheep going astray ...” **1 Peter 2:25**

After all the references to *us* as sheep throughout scripture, all of a sudden *Jesus* becomes the sheep. He was led to his death “like a lamb to the slaughter ... as a sheep before her shearers” **Isaiah 53:7**. That is because he became one of us! He humbled himself to become a man; the Shepherd became a sheep. He became a lamb, the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He is the “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” **John 1:29**. I can’t imagine the humiliation for God himself to become a “sheep” led to the slaughter. Yet, he humbly came, and as a result we have salvation through Him. None of us has been asked to walk in humility to the extent that Jesus did. Not only did he serve, but he sacrificed His life for each one of us. Look at Him, and learn from Him.

“... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” **Matthew 20:28**

### **Bring it Home:**

\*Have I allowed Jesus to “serve” me by accepting his sacrifice on the cross for my sins? Explain.

\*How can I serve others with the message of salvation through Jesus’ death on the cross?

## **Part Two: Results of Humility**

### **A. Strengthens Community**

*“What difference does the discipline of humility make in a community? I can think of at least four important results. First, Christians remove selfishness as a motivation. Second, they become less conceited. Third, believers think of others as more important than themselves. Fourth, they deliberately and consistently attend to the needs of others.”*

– Charles Swindoll, So, You want to be like Christ?, page 136

Recently I read an article in the *Houston Chronicle* about a professional football player who was making millions to play the game. Yet somehow the money just wasn’t enough. He was discussing the possibility of getting a better offer from another team with higher pay, and he said, “I gotta take care of *me*.” It amazes me how much pride and selfishness permeates our society. This is not at all the way Jesus intended it to be. Let’s look at an example in the Bible of a group of believers that displayed a serving and selfless attitude.

Read **Acts 4:32-34**.

7. How did the believers serve one another?

There was no “I gotta take care of me” attitude; the believers shared everything they had. And as a result, “There were no needy persons among them.” This is a great example of what it means to “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love” and to “honor one another above yourselves.” **Romans 12:10**

### **Bring it Home:**

\*If I consider others as better than myself, how will this affect the community that I live and work in? List specific names if necessary.

## B. Brings Honor

“Before his downfall a man’s heart is proud, but humility comes before honor.”

**Proverbs 18:12**

We saw in Philippians the downward trend of Jesus’ life as he left heaven and became obedient to death on the cross. But what happened after his death? Where is He now?

Read **Philippians 2:9-11**.

8. How did God honor his Son?

9. Jesus said, “The greatest among you will be your \_\_\_\_\_. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be \_\_\_\_\_.” **Matthew 23:11-12**

Jesus also tells a parable about seeking personal honor. Read **Luke 14:7-11**.

10. What did Jesus notice that led him to tell this parable?

11. What did He suggest they do when they are invited to a wedding feast? Why?

The honor we receive comes from God, as we humble ourselves before Him. He will take notice and honor us as we choose to honor others above ourselves.

Read **1 Peter 5:5-6**.

12. What does God do for the humble?

13. Another word often used for humble is “meek.” What is the blessing promised to those who are meek, found in **Matthew 5:5**?

*“I have come to realize Jesus was saying that when you are meek you are well acquainted with your own flaws. The meek realize they will never be enough and recognize they will always need a Savior to complete them. The meek are uncomfortable with their inadequacy, because it’s very humbling to realize ‘it’s just me.’ And yet that’s the very place where Jesus can step in with His strength and give the blessing.”*

– Angela Thomas, Living Your Life as a Beautiful Offering, page 25

**Bring it Home:**

\*Do I truly believe that God will honor me if I am humble, or do I feel like I need to “take care of me?” Explain.

**C. Gives Wisdom**

“When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.”

**Proverbs 11:2**

Read **Psalm 25:9**.

14. How might humility lead to wisdom?

15. Why does it take humility to come to Jesus?

16. Read **Proverbs 12:15**. How else might we gain wisdom? How does this require humility? See also **Proverbs 19:20**.

**Bring it Home:**

\*Am I willing to come to Jesus and/or others in humility to seek His or their wisdom and advice? Or do I believe that I don't need anyone's help?

If we can learn from Jesus' life and death and practice the humility that he modeled, not only will we strengthen the community we live in, but we will also receive wisdom and honor as we place others above ourselves.

*Dear Heavenly Father,*

*Please help me to live a life of humility, considering others as better than myself. So many times, I find myself protecting my image and guarding my time, when I know that Jesus did neither. Thank you, Jesus, that your whole life was about helping and healing, serving and saving others. You did not come to be served, but to serve. You humiliated yourself, giving up everything for my sake. Help me to remember your sacrifice as I reach out in humility to serve others, by your grace and in your name. Amen*