

Something has shifted, something has changed, and it seemed to happen really fast. Our culture has shifted from humility and modesty to self-promotion and self-centeredness. With the rise of social media, it has become easier than ever for people to showcase their accomplishments, seek validation, and highlight their successes. And I'm not saying these platforms can't be useful for various purposes, it wasn't always this way on social, or maybe it just took some time, or maybe this has always been there and now it's just amplified, I don't know, but I do know social platforms have contributed to a culture that prioritizes personal image, recognition, and the constant pursuit of an idealized self.

I've been reading a lot lately on the effects of all this on Gen-Z. They talk about the pressure to present a curated version of life and how that amplifies pride and self-importance. The pursuit of likes, comments, and followers has become a driving force for so many who now find themselves competing for attention and approval in a never-ending cycle. This has led to a spike in anxiety and depression. Maybe that's how you feel today.

And I know in this crazy environment, humility may appear counterintuitive or counterproductive, but that does not diminish the timeless importance of humility. In fact, it underscores the critical need for believers to stand as beacons of humility in a world often defined by pride and self-centeredness! As followers of Christ, we are called to model a different way of living! Amen? One that values service, compassion, and humility over self-promotion and personal glory! I came today to tell you we have the opportunity to reveal the transformative power of humility in the midst of a culture that desperately needs its influence!

SO, before we go any further, we should probably do our best to define what we are even talking about. Because this is the forgotten virtue, I'll be honest, I had a hard time really wrapping my head around it before I began studying it and allowing God to transform me by it this year. So, what exactly are we talking about?

C.S. Lewis famously said this one time:

True humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less.

And I like that for the most part. **Humility is seeing yourself as you really are.** It's that simple.

Humility is seeing yourself as you really are. The word humility comes from the Latin, *humilitas*, meaning, grounded, or from the earth. So, with humility, we are brought back to earth. We don't think of ourselves higher than we should. Nor do we think of ourselves lower than we should. No pride or arrogance. No self-deprecation or feelings of unworthiness. Just an accurate assessment of who we really are. Our strengths and competencies. And yes, even our weaknesses and shortcomings.

The Apostle Paul helps us out even more in Romans 12:3, look at what he writes:

Do not think of yourself MORE HIGHLY than you ought, but rather think of yourself with SOBER JUDGMENT, in accordance with the faith GOD HAS DISTRIBUTED to each of you.

The Biblical definition of humility has several key components, first, humility involves **acknowledging our dependence on God**. It is an admission that every breath we take, every heartbeat, and every facet of our existence are gifts from our Creator. In the Book of James, we are reminded that *"every good and perfect gift is from above."* Humility aligns our hearts with the truth that we are not self-sufficient beings but rather recipients of grace and mercy. This acknowledgment is not an indication of weakness but a recognition of God's sovereignty in our lives, right? Humility is acknowledging our dependence on God.

But also, the biblical definition of humility calls us to recognize our **need for forgiveness** and salvation. It is the honest admission of our own sinfulness and our inability to make things right with God through our own efforts. In a world that glorifies self-righteousness and independence, humility points us to our desperate need for a Savior. The Apostle Paul also writes in Romans and says: (3:23)

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

Humility leads us to the foot of the cross, where we encounter the depths of God's mercy and the hope of salvation. In fact, you cannot come to Jesus without humility. If we are not willing to humble ourselves then we cannot receive God's forgiveness. This is what makes pride the greatest sin of all.

But Biblical humility also leads us to **treat others with respect and empathy**. It goes beyond self-recognition and extends to the recognition of the worth and dignity of every person, regardless of their social status, race, or background. In the words of the Apostle Peter, we are encouraged to: (1 Peter 2:17)

Show respect and honor for ALL people.

True humility leads to acts of love, kindness, and service. It is through humility that we become instruments of God's grace as we embody the Gospel in our interactions with others. We literally become the hands and feet of Jesus.

Jesus who demonstrated humility in every aspect of His life here on earth. From His willingness to take on human form and experience the limitations of humanity, to His act of washing His disciples' feet. Jesus life's mission was not one of self-promotion but one of self-sacrifice. His humility ultimately led to the greatest act of love the world has ever known—His sacrifice on the cross, where He bore our sins in His body and offered us salvation.

Biblical humility is a profound recognition of our dependence on God, our need for forgiveness and salvation, and our call to treat others with respect and empathy. That's what it is, but let's also mention what it is **NOT**.

Because misconceptions about humility often hinder us from embracing this forgotten virtue as the transformative thing that it is. One common misconception is that humility equates to self-deprecation or self-neglect. How many of you have ever met someone who had a faux humility where they were constantly putting themselves down or they just could not take a compliment? You ever meet someone like that? Christians can be the worst at this sometimes. You tell someone they did a great job at something, and they are like, "Oh, it wasn't me, it was all Jesus, I just hitch up to the J-train and let Him lead me." It's like slow your roll bro, it wasn't that great, pretty sure there was a lot of you in there!

The truth is, humility is not about devaluing yourself, but recognizing your worth and identity in the context of God's grand design. It is acknowledging that we are loved, valued, and created for a purpose, not as an outcome of our own efforts, but as a result of God's grace. True humility invites us to stand securely in our identity as beloved children of God while remaining honest that He is not done with us yet. Does that make sense? We are secure so we can take the compliment of a job well done while at the same time acknowledging God's been so good to us.

Another misconception about humility is that it reflects weakness. Some view humility as a sign of vulnerability, timidity, or a lack of confidence. However, genuine humility is an extraordinary strength that enables us to confront our shortcomings, admit our limitations—come on—and seek growth. True humility empowers us to be resilient in the face of challenges and setbacks as we recognize that our ultimate strength comes from God. It's in our humility that we become vessels through which God's strength can shine bright because of our yielded and humble hearts.

I also know, and this is what turns so many men off of Christianity when it really shouldn't, but often humility is seen as a passive, right? People believe that humility involves being a doormat or silently enduring mistreatment or abuse. No guy wants to be seen as humble because it seems so passive and disengaged. In reality, humility calls us to assertively seek justice, stand up for the marginalized, and confront injustice with love and wisdom. It is not about retreating from challenging situations but engaging them with the security of knowing who we are while depending on God's strength and not our own.

In the Bible, we find so many stories and examples that vividly illustrate this different reality of humility. I mentioned Jesus before and that's a great place to start. He embodied humility throughout His earthly ministry and is our ultimate model for what it looks like to live with this forgotten virtue.

As we enter the Christmas season and celebrate God coming near, stop and consider the humility found in the incarnation. The Apostle Paul tried to summarize this as best he could when he wrote to the church in Philippi and said this: (Philippians 2:5-8)

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. [What attitude, the attitude of humility. Paul says, let these words sink in...] **Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.** [Humility is not thinking less of yourself, Jesus knew He was equal and one with the Father, but He did not cling to it. His humility gave Him the strength to do all of this, verse 7] **Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God** [Even though He was God] **and died a criminal's death on a cross.**

That is so good, amen? I know this is hard to fully get your head around, but the Son of God, who IS God, chose to set aside His divine privileges and become human. He humbled Himself to the point of being born in a lowly manger, living a life of simplicity, and experiencing the full range of human emotions and struggles. We do not serve a distant God who is out of touch with our trials and pain, He willingly enduring them too! Jesus example reminds us that humility is not about clinging to one's status or privileges but willingly surrendering them for others!

Come on, how much better would our world be if we as followers of Jesus were willing to humbly do the same thing for the people around us instead of clinging to our rights and privileges. This is why the church exploded in growth over its first 300 years of existence. In a world where "might makes right" early Jesus followers lived out an otherworldly humility that cared for those who could do nothing for them.

Jesus illustrated this other worldly virtue when He washed His disciples' feet, look at John 13 now:

Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him. [Skip down to verse 12] **After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.**

This act, traditionally reserved for the lowest servants, demonstrated Jesus' willingness to take on the role of a servant and perform a menial task. He knelt before His disciples, washing their feet showing them that

greatness in the Kingdom of God is not defined by positions of authority or power but by acts of humble service.

Before Jesus we also see powerful examples of humility in action too. Moses, this incredible leader who led God's people out of slavery in Egypt and to the Promised Land, one of the greatest leaders in human history is also known as one of the most humble men to ever walk the earth. In Numbers 12:3 it says this:

Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.

Moses exhibited a profound humility as he led the Israelites through the wilderness. His humility was evident even in his willingness to intercede on behalf of the people when they rebelled against God. Moses reminds us that humility is not a sign of weakness but a path to greatness in God's Kingdom.

How distant that leadership style seems today though in our clamor for self-promotion, self-esteem, and personal achievement. This focus on ourselves leads us to prioritize OUR desires, OUR goals, and OUR ambitions over the well-being of others. AND the impact of this shift in relationships and in society is significant. Just look around! Conflicts, strained relationships, and a sense of isolation are everywhere! We are the most connected generation in human history and yet we are also the most isolated! The world's pursuit of the individual and to be an influencer leads to divisions rather than unity.

In a world where humility is often forgotten or undervalued, there is a growing need for individuals who can act as peacemakers, who can bridge divides, and who can model a different way of living! The forgotten virtue of humility serves as the antidote to this pride and self-centeredness that have left many of us yearning for deeper connections, genuine relationships, and a greater sense of purpose.

By embracing humility as a guiding principle, we have the opportunity to be agents of transformation, fostering understanding, empathy, and unity in a world that so desperately needs these qualities. Humility is not a relic of the past but a timeless virtue that has the potential to reshape our society and heal the divisions that have emerged in the wake of a culture that values self-promotion over service!

SO, in the time we have left I want to give you 4 quick ways humility transforms our own lives and 6 really quick applications for beginning your own journey down this forgotten path. I originally wasn't going to share all these, but I really believe we need to at least touch on each if we are going to fully embrace what this looks like in our day to day lives. So, grab your pen or phone and let's hit these.

How does humility transform us, here's the first way:

Humility opens the floodgates of God's grace and favor.

Humility opens the floodgates of God's grace and favor. In James 4:6, we are reminded that *"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."* When we approach God with a humble heart, recognizing our dependence on Him, He responds with overflowing grace, kindness, and favor. This divine grace empowers us to overcome life's challenges, find strength in our weaknesses, and receive God's wisdom for our journey.

Here's another way humility transforms us:

Humility fosters unity and harmony.

Humility fosters unity and harmony with other believers, and it extends to our relationships beyond the church walls. Philippians 2:2-3 urges us to *"be like-minded, having the same love, being one in*

spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves."

When we practice humility in our interactions, we create an atmosphere of love and understanding. It becomes easier to resolve conflicts, build bridges, and work together for a common purpose. Humility serves as the glue that binds us in Christ.

Number three:

Humility is essential for spiritual growth.

Why? Because it requires an acknowledgment that we don't have all the answers and that we need to continuously learn and grow in our faith. In Proverbs 11:2, we are reminded that *"with humility comes wisdom."*

When we approach God's Word with a humble heart, we are open to His teaching and guidance. Humility allows us to admit our mistakes, seek forgiveness, and eagerly receive the truth of the Gospel. It enables us to be lifelong learners that remain teachable by the Holy Spirit.

One more way humility is essential for our transformation:

Humility leads to eternal rewards and blessings.

Jesus emphasized the importance of humility when He said in Matthew 20 that, *"The last will be first, and the first will be last."* In God's economy, humility is rewarded with exaltation. When we embrace humility, we do not seek recognition, honor, or applause from the world. Instead, we find our ultimate affirmation in the eyes of our Heavenly Father. The eternal rewards of humility are not of this world but are laid up for us in heaven. That's what Jesus teaches us. By living out the virtue of humility we store up treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy, and where the last shall indeed be first. In humility, we discover that our greatest blessings are not found in earthly accolades but in the riches of God's love and eternal promises.

AND there is so much more we could say on each of those, but if any of this has resonated with you, if the Holy Spirit has been tugging on your heart today, then how do we begin to practice this. We've talked about what it is, what it isn't, why it's needed, how we see it modeled in Scripture, the benefits... but how does the journey begin? I've got six quick stepping stones, and we are done:

1. Humility begins with self-examination.

This is not a quick, snap your fingers thing, it requires taking regular moments of introspection to assess our thoughts, actions, and attitudes. By taking time to examine our hearts and even our motives, we can identify areas in our lives where pride or self-centeredness may be taking hold. Like, why do I want to post this image or thought on social, what is behind this? Why do I always say yes to everything instead of admitting my limitations, is it pride? Why can I not celebrate when something good happens to one of my friends or family members? Are you with me?

Self-reflection enables us to become more aware of our own vulnerabilities and the need for ongoing spiritual growth. This process of self-reflection leads to a humble recognition that we are imperfect beings who require God's continuous grace and transformation.

Self-examination also allows us to confront our own biases, prejudices, and areas where we may have harmed others. Humility guides us in seeking forgiveness and reconciliation when we have wronged others, as well as taking steps to fix our mistakes. It allows us to own it, right? This self-awareness and willingness to address our shortcomings enable us to grow and develop in our faith while maintaining an attitude of repentance and reliance on God.

So, we begin with regular self-reflection and here's another practical step as we head into this week:

2. Use gratitude and thankfulness every day.

Humble people recognize that every good and perfect gift comes from above. Gratitude allows us to acknowledge that our talents, possessions, and even our very existence are gifts from God. Gratitude is another antidote to the pride of entitlement and self-sufficiency. If you will begin to count your blessings and express thankfulness for the abundance of God's provision, you will humbly reinforce your reliance on God's grace.

Gratitude also transforms our perspective on challenges and trials. Instead of viewing adversity with resentment or bitterness, we can approach it with a spirit of thankfulness, recognizing that God can use even difficulties for our growth and His glory.

Practicing gratitude also fosters contentment and joy, as we shift our focus from what we lack to what we have been given. In this way, gratitude becomes a practical expression of humility, grounding us in a deep appreciation of God's blessings.

Self-reflection, gratitude and thankfulness, now we are getting somewhere, write this down:

3. Make serving others a priority.

One of the most tangible expressions of humility is embracing the role of a servant. I'm talking about actively seeking opportunities to serve others with love and selflessness in your home, at your job, at your school, in our community. This is the model Jesus left us, right? Jesus said I came not to be served but to serve.

How? Offer a helping hand to those in need, offer a listening ear to someone who is hurting, take up someone's cause that needs a voice, demonstrate empathy with those who are suffering. True servanthood is not rooted in seeking recognition or praise but in genuinely desiring to lighten the burdens of others.

SO, make serving others a priority in your life, number 4:

4. Be the first to forgive.

Another practical step to develop humility is the act of extending forgiveness. Humility enables us to release the grip of resentment, anger, and the desire for revenge. By acknowledging our own need for forgiveness and recognizing that we, too, have been recipients of God's mercy, we develop a heart willing to forgive others. That grows our humility muscles!

Because let's be honest. Extending forgiveness is not always easy, amen? Anyone in the house just really enjoy forgiving people? It's hard, especially when we have been wronged or hurt deeply. Yet, humility reminds us that we, too, are flawed and have caused pain to others. This realization fosters empathy and compassion, making it possible for us to forgive those who have wronged us.

I wrote this in my notes, forgiveness is an act of humility that frees both the forgiver and the forgiven, allowing healing and reconciliation to take place. Number 5:

5. Listen with empathy.

The practice of active listening and empathy is another tangible expression of humility. Humility involves a willingness to set aside our own agendas, concerns, and preconceived notions in order to truly understand and connect with others. In a world that often values speaking over listening, humility calls us to be attentive and present.

James, the half-brother of Jesus, reminds us in James 1 to *"be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry."*

Empathy is a key component of this practice. It means not just hearing the words spoken but also discerning the emotions and experiences that lie beneath the surface. By empathizing with others, we demonstrate genuine care and concern. And if we do it long enough our hearts become marked by a sincere desire to comfort the grieving, support the struggling, and rejoice with the joyful.

In practicing active listening and empathy, we create spaces for healing, understanding, and connection, come on, if we just did this one thing imagine how much impact we could have as the church in our culture!

So, humility begins with self-examination, using gratitude and thankfulness, make serving others a priority, be the first to forgive, listen with empathy... and one more stepping stone to begin the journey:

6. Enter God's presence in prayer.

The act of approaching God in prayer is a fundamental application of humility. Humility invites us to come before our Heavenly Father with an attitude of dependence and awe. It involves acknowledging our limitations and surrendering to God's divine wisdom, plan, and sovereignty. In prayer, we are encouraged to seek God's will, not our own, and to trust in His timing and plans.

Humble prayer is characterized by a recognition of our need for God's presence and intervention. It means laying our burdens, concerns, and desires before Him, trusting that He knows what is best for us. In prayer we are also invited to confess our sins and seek His forgiveness, recognizing that our salvation is a gift of His grace. Humble prayer opens the door to transformation as we yield to the Holy Spirit and invite God to work in our lives.

It is in the posture of humble prayer that we find peace, guidance, and the reassurance of God's unfailing love.

SO, how are we going to start this journey? Put these back up one more time:

[ALL ON ONE SLIDE]

Do you see it? Humility begins with self-examination. Use gratitude and thankfulness every day. Make serving others a priority. Be the first to forgive. Listen with empathy. Enter God's presence in prayer. Come on, do those things and God will make you:

[HIGHLIGHT FIRST LETTER]

HUMBLE!

