

Sunday, February 22, 2026 - INTENTIONAL HUMILITY-THE WAY UP IS DOWN- Pastor John Henry Raskin

In God's Kingdom, greatness is measured not by how high we rise, but by how willingly we humble ourselves. Jesus shows us that the way up is down.

***"He must increase, but I must decrease."* — John 3:30**

10 Intentional Ways to Walk in Humility

1. Bow Before God, Not Your Ego

Humility begins with worship—recognizing God as God.

Isaiah 57:15

2. Stop Fighting and Start Submitting

Surrender control and trust God's direction over your own.

Proverbs 3:6

3. Take the Towel, Not the Throne

Choose service over status; follow Jesus' example.

John 13; Philippians 2:5–8

4. Lean on Grace, Not Your Own Strength

Admit your need for God's grace—it is enough.

Isaiah 64:6; James 4:6

5. Own Your Mess, Don't Hide It

Humility brings honest repentance, not hidden pride.

Psalms 51:6; Luke 18:14

6. Shine the Spotlight on Others

Think of yourself less so you can value others more.

Philippians 2:3

7. Seek God's Approval, Not Man's Applause

Live for heaven's approval, not human praise.

Colossians 3:12

8. Be Quick to Listen, Slow to Defend

A humble heart is teachable and willing to learn.

James 1:19

9. Be Content in the Shadows

Trust God's timing and serve faithfully where you are.

10. Let God Write Your Story

Release control and trust His plan—it is always better.

Proverbs 16:9

Final Challenge

Ask God to reveal areas where pride has taken hold.
Choose humility, serve others faithfully, and trust God's timing.

Intentional Humility - The way up... is down.

INTENTIONAL HUMILITY-THE WAY UP IS DOWN

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last week we learned that if we want to have the integrity that brings honor to God, we must follow the way of Christ and be intentional in pursuing it.

Continuing in our series about intentionality, today we are going to talk about how we can be intentional in considering ourselves less and others more.

Today's message is about humility.

There is a sound that Heaven celebrates
and it's not the roar of pride,
not the shout of self-promotion
nor when "Look at me " is cried.

In a world that's climbing ladders,
Jesus knelt and grabbed a cloth.
In a culture always chasing crowns,
Emptied self and chose a cross.

While kingdoms rise on power,
Self-surrender is His Crown
While we celebrate the loud, the strong,
The King of All stepped down.

Of course, our Lord and King is and always will be the model of humility that we strive to emulate in this dark and fallen world.

The world says, "Climb higher."

Jesus says, “Come lower.”

The world says, “Make your name great.”

Jesus says, “Make My name great.”

The world says, “Be served.”

Jesus says, “Serve.”

Jesus washed the feet of those who would deny Him, betray Him and abandon Him.

What kind of God washes feet?

What kind of Savior wraps Himself in the garments of a servant when He could have wrapped Himself in the applause of angels?

What kind of King trades a throne for a basin and a scepter for a towel?

The kind who shows us that greatness is not measured by how high you climb but by how low you’re willing to go for others.

Because the lower you go the more clearly you will see Him.

And the more you see Him the more you will become like Him.

Today, we step into the way of Christ.

Today, we step into the way of intentional humility.

Here are 10 intentional ways to help us to discover a heart of true humility.

1. Bow Before God, Not Your Ego

Humility starts with one simple truth. God is God, and you’re not.

That might sound obvious, but we often forget it. We plan and strive and worry, living like everything depends on us.

Isaiah 57:15

**For thus says the High and Lofty One
Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:**

**“I dwell in the high and holy place,
With him who has a contrite and humble spirit,
To revive the spirit of the humble,**

This scripture reminds us that God is high and lifted up, yet He chooses to dwell with those who are lowly and contrite in spirit.

Too often, we approach God like He’s there to meet our demands. We start our prayers with our lists of wants, forgetting to simply recognize who He is.

But humility begins with worship. It starts when you bow before God, not because you need something, but because He deserves everything.

C.S. Lewis said,

“A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and as long as you are looking down, you cannot see that which is above you.”

Pride obstructs your view of God. All you see is yourself.

When was the last time you prayed without asking for anything, just praising Him for who He is?

When was the last time you let yourself be overwhelmed by His greatness?

Instead of starting our prayers with “God, I need,” we should start with “God, You are.”

Focusing on His holiness, His love, and His power.

Recognize that our every breath is a gift from Him.

When you bow low, He draws near.

It's as John the Baptist said of Jesus in the Gospel of John, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

That's where true humility begins, and that's where you'll find the peace and joy you've been searching for.

2. Stop Fighting and Start Submitting

Humility is about surrendering control, and that starts with surrendering to God.

Proverbs 3:6 NIV

**in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.**

Intentional humility only begins with our attitude towards God. It also shapes the way we treat others.

Pride tells us to fight for our way, whether it's in our plans, our decisions, or our relationships.

Pride tells us being right is the most important thing.

But humble submission allows something different.

It becomes about letting go of the need to control circumstances and other people and choosing to trust God by valuing the people He puts in your path.

Pride makes us defensive, quick to argue, and slow to forgive.

Submission means being willing to say, “I don’t have to win this argument” or “Your needs matter as much as mine.”

It’s about putting love and healthy relationships over pride.

3. Take the Towel, Not the Throne

Humility isn’t just something you think about or talk about in Church. It’s a place you choose to live.

Jesus didn’t just teach humility. He embodied it and showed it in everything He did.

He humbled Himself.

He could have demanded a throne, but He chose a towel.

In the 13th Chapter of John, The King of the universe stooped to clean the filthy feet of His disciples.

Jesus did this because He wanted to show His disciples what true greatness looks like.

They often quibbled about which one of them would be the greatest, but Jesus demonstrated that even He didn’t cling to His position or His power.

Philippians 2:5-8

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Humility in action is about taking the lowest position even when no one notices or thanks you.

Maybe it's cleaning up after your family without asking who made the mess or complaining.

Maybe it's showing kindness to someone who can't give anything back.

Whatever it looks like, it's about putting others above yourself.

So grab the towel. Stop waiting for the throne.

Look for ways to serve someone today not because they deserve it but because Jesus served you first.

4. Lean on Grace, Not Your Own Strength

Humility starts when you admit that you're not good enough.

That sounds harsh, doesn't it? But deep down, we all know it's true.

The Bible confirms that for us.

Isaiah 64:6

**But we are all like an unclean *thing*,
And all our righteousness is like filthy rags;
We all fade as a leaf,
And our iniquities, like the wind,
Have taken us away.**

No matter how hard we try, we're never going to be good enough or strong enough to do life on our own.

Even all our good deeds are like filthy rags.

We are completely and utterly reliant on God's grace for every aspect of our lives.

James 4:6

But He gives more grace. Therefore He says:

**“God resists the proud,
But gives grace to the humble.”**

Humility means we know salvation not because we've earned it, but because we've finally realized we can't.

Humility means admitting, “I can't do this on my own, but God's grace is enough.”

Humility is letting go of the need to prove yourself and resting in the fact that He already sees you as His child.

Today, ask yourself, where am I still striving to make my plans succeed?

Where am I relying on my strength instead of His grace?

Let go. Lean on Him. That's where real freedom begins. That's where humility takes root.

5. Own Your Mess, Don't Hide It

Humility starts with honesty. It's admitting when you've messed up instead of trying to cover up.

Pride whispers, “You're fine. Nobody needs to know.”

Pride keeps you stuck in your sin because it convinces you to hide it.

But humility says, “Lay it bare. Bring it to God and let Him heal it.”

Psalm 51 is a Psalm of David after he confessed his sin with Bathsheba and repented before the Lord.

Psalm 51:6

**The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,
A broken and a contrite heart—
These, O God, You will not despise.**

That's the beauty of humility.

He's not asking you to be perfect. He's inviting you to be honest.

Proverbs 29:3

**A man's pride will bring him low,
But the humble in spirit will retain honor.**

God knows that when we hold onto our pride, we block the grace that He wants to pour out.

Think about the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18.

The Pharisee, in his self-righteous pride stood before God and listed all the reasons why he thought himself righteous.

The tax collector stood at a distance, beat his chest, and said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Jesus said this about him...

Luke 18:14

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

6. Shine the Spotlight on Others

A famous quote from C.S. Lewis on humility is, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less."

When you think of yourself less, it frees you to think of others more. The people around you matter to God just as much as you do.

Philippians 2:3

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

This scripture tells us to count others as more significant than ourselves and to look to their interests, not just our own.

You and I both know that this kind of behavior doesn't come naturally.

We live in a world that tells us to fight for attention and celebrate our own achievements.

But humility shifts the focus. Instead of saying, "Look at me," it says, "Look at them."

When was the last time you made someone else feel truly seen and valued?

Maybe it's a coworker or a family member who's been overlooked or a poor stranger who feels invisible.

Humility says, "I'm going to pour God's love out on you." It's about recognizing and meeting someone else's needs without expecting anything in return.

The disciple Peter was not known for his humble nature, yet once filled with the Holy Spirit, he became one who modeled the way of Christ as a humble servant.

In 1 Peter 5, he reminds us to clothe ourselves with humility toward one another.

That means putting on humility intentionally every single day before you leave the house, just like putting on your pants.

That means choosing to stop making everything about you and start finding reasons to encourage and give credit to others.

Today, look for one way to lift someone else up. Encourage them. Celebrate them. Meet a need.

Humility isn't about thinking less of yourself. It's about focusing more on others. And when you do that, you reflect the heart of Jesus to a world that desperately needs it.

7. Seek God's Approval, Not Man's Applause

Think about how much energy we waste worrying about what other people think.

Social media influencers make all of their money garnering likes on TikTok and Instagram.

We tweak our words, adjust our actions, and even compromise our convictions just to fit in with a crowd.

But Colossians 3 says we're God's chosen ones.

Colossians 3:12

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

We're holy and beloved. That's the only identity that matters.

When you stop living for people's approval, you'll be free to seek God's. Free to love without fear. Free to speak the truth.

Free to follow Jesus with everything you have.

Free to allow the Holy Spirit to bear real fruit in your life.

Today, ask yourself, whose opinion matters most to you? Are you chasing likes, compliments, recognition?

Or are you seeking the approval of the One who made you?

The One who loves you so much that He died on a cross for you and rules and reigns right now from the Throne of Grace.

The applause of heaven will always outlast the praise of people. That's the only approval worth chasing.

8. Be Quick to Listen, Slow to Defend

A humble heart is teachable, but we're not always great at listening.

Most of us are quicker to defend ourselves than to hear someone out.

James 1:19

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;

Think about how much time we spend trying to prove we're right. We want to have the last word. We want people to see things our way.

But humility says, "I don't always have to win. I don't always have to speak." It says, "Your opinion matters as much as mine, and I'm willing to hear you out."

Jesus was a master at this. He didn't rush to defend Himself, even when He was falsely accused.

He listened, He asked questions, and He responded with wisdom. That's the kind of humility that we're called to model.

It's not about staying silent forever, but about pausing long enough to understand the other person before we speak.

How do you respond when someone corrects you? Do you get defensive? Do you try to change the subject?

Or do you take a step back and ask, "Is there truth in this?"

A humble and teachable heart doesn't fear correction.

It welcomes it because it knows God can use it to shape us.

Choose to listen more and defend less.

When you're quick to listen and slow to defend, you reflect the wisdom and grace of Jesus. That's the kind of humility that changes you and others.

9. Be Content in the Shadows

Humility means trusting God's timing, even when it feels slow.

We don't like waiting for God to lift us up. We want recognition in our timeline. We want to feel important now.

We live in a culture that celebrates being seen. Social media, promotions, platforms—they all feed our desire to stand out.

1 Peter 5:6

Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

God has placed you where you are for a reason, and humility says, "I'm okay with that.

I'll serve faithfully in the shadows if that's where God wants me." And for how long? As long as He wants.

Think about David. Before he was king, he was a shepherd, the little brother faithfully tending sheep while no one noticed.

But God was preparing him in the fields for his battle with the Giant Goliath.

Even after he was anointed as the next king of Israel by Samuel, it wasn't until 15 or 20 years later that he actually became king.

David didn't fight for the title. He even had the opportunity to kill Saul and take what he deserved.

Instead, he trusted God's timing, and when the time was right, God exalted him.

Where has God placed you right now? Maybe your current role feels like less than you are capable of or you feel that your efforts are going unnoticed.

Maybe you're longing for something bigger.

But humility says, "God, I'll trust You with the platform, the promotion, or the position. I'll be faithful where I am because You see me, even if no one else does."

When you stop striving for recognition and start trusting His plan, you'll find peace. God sees what you do in the shadows, and that's what matters the most.

10. Let God Write Your Story

D.L. Moody said, "Let God have your life; He can do more with it than you can."

Last week we talked about Joseph. He spent years as a slave and in prison, forgotten by most. Yet he stayed faithful.

He didn't try to manipulate the situation or force his own way.

He trusted God, and when the time was right, God lifted him to a position of incredible influence, one that was for God's glory.

His story became a powerful example of God's faithfulness.

What about you? Are you trying to take control of your story, or are you letting the Lord lead?

Humility means trusting His timing and being faithful where He has you now.

When you let God write your story, it becomes part of His greater plan. His timing is perfect, and His story for you is always better than anything you could imagine.

As we continue into this new year, let's commit to being intentional about living lives marked by humility.

Humility draws us closer to God and strengthens our relationships with one another.

It frees us from the weight of pride and allows us to experience God's grace.

Ask God to reveal where pride has taken hold in your heart and ask Him to shape you into the person He created you to be.

Be faithful in the small things and serve others without expecting anything in return.

Trust that God's timing is perfect.

Let humility lead you into deeper dependence on Him and greater love for others and let it start right now.

Let's Pray