



DAY 7

BRIAN GIBBS

I want to open this final fasting devotion for the week in the book of Philippians as we look at the example of Jesus Himself in regards to humility. Today, I am reading this portion of Scripture from the Passion Translation.

*Look at how much encouragement you've found in your relationship with the Anointed One! You are filled to overflowing with his comforting love. You have experienced a deepening friendship with the Holy Spirit and have felt his tender affection and mercy. So I'm asking you, my friends, that you be joined together in perfect unity—with one heart, one passion, and united in one love. Walk together with one harmonious purpose and you will fill my heart with unbounded joy. Be free from pride-filled opinions, for they will only harm your cherished unity. Don't allow self-promotion to hide in your hearts, but in authentic humility put others first and view others as more important than yourselves. Abandon every display of selfishness. Possess a greater concern for what matters to others instead of your own interests. And consider the example that Jesus, the Anointed One, has set before us. Let his mindset become your motivation. He existed in the form of God, yet he gave no thought to seizing equality with God as his supreme prize. Instead he emptied himself of his outward glory by reducing himself to the form of a lowly servant. He became human! He humbled himself and became vulnerable, choosing to be revealed as a man and was obedient. He was a perfect example, even in his death—a criminal's death by crucifixion! Because of that obedience, God exalted him and multiplied his greatness! He has now been given the greatest of all names! The authority of the name of Jesus causes every knee to bow in reverence! Everything and everyone will one day submit to this name—in the heavenly realm, in the earthly realm, and in the demonic realm. And every tongue will proclaim in every language: "Jesus Christ is Lord Yahweh," bringing glory and honor to God, his Father! —Philippians 2:1-11*

Wow. Jesus is the ultimate perfection of humility. Humility, in its purest form, is a reflection of the beauty of Jesus seen in us. True and genuine humility in the life of all believers is possible. In this passage above you can see the picture of humility that Jesus so powerfully demonstrated linked with our relationship, not only to God, but to one another. In these next few moments together, I want to go there.

Can anyone really argue the obvious fact that this is a generation that is obsessed with themselves. The social media landscape is the world of "selfies" and self-gratification. The pursuit of humility begins with looking to Jesus and becomes a deconstruction from the preoccupation with self.

Let's start with these words from John the Baptist, "He must increase and I must decrease." In the NIV translation, it says it so plainly, "He must become greater, I must become less." When is the last time you heard someone talking with this kind of vision and focus?

Let's take it a step further. Jesus said that his cousin John was the greatest human being in all of history. Wow. In Luke 7:28, Jesus said, "Among those born of women there is no one greater than John." I believe, part of what made John so great was his sincere pursuit of genuine humility.

When you read the account in John 3:25-30, you see that John had some of his own ministry leaders around him acting proud, and he lovingly and humbly revealed to them a mindset that produces authentic humility.

*Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification. And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"*

*John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.' He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.*

Humility gives birth to contentment—not entitlement. The proud are those who carry a sense of entitlement as if they are owed something. This shows up when people demand, contend for, or feel hurt when they didn't get something that they thought they should have or thought they deserved. John tells these leaders that, "A person can receive only what is given them from heaven."

Once you realize that that we all deserved eternal hell and ultimate judgment, but because of the immeasurable love and grace of God that came to us through the blood of Jesus, the more grateful you become for everything you have, and you see it all as a gift from God. I want to see everything in my life as a gift of God, and true humility is the lens that brings it into full view.

In the words of John, we discover that the pursuit of humility produces joy—not jealousy. A proud person lives with jealousy. When others succeed, achieve, or receive, they are unable to celebrate and rejoice, because they wrongly covet and wish they were getting it instead. The pursuit of humility allows us to be happy for others without being concerned for ourselves by constantly comparing and ranking. With people leaving his ministry to join Jesus' ministry, John says, "That joy is mine, and it is now complete." John was happier to see Jesus succeed than he was for his own success. I love this. And the revelation of the Kingdom of God is right inside this message for us to discover concerning "humility".

When we look back at the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians chapter two, He says, *"Be free from pride-filled opinions, for they will only harm your cherished unity. Don't allow self-promotion to hide in your hearts, but in authentic humility put others first and view others as more important than yourselves. Abandon every display of selfishness. Possess a greater concern for what matters to others instead of your own interests. And consider the example that Jesus, the Anointed One, has set before us. Let his mindset become your motivation."* That is powerful revelation right there. Put others first and view others as more important than yourselves. Abandon every display of selfishness. The pursuit of real humility is the concern for others instead of our own interests, our own promotions, our own accolades. Humility promotes and honors God, and it promotes and honors others.

Then John gets right to the core of the matter. Humility produces decreasing—not increasing. Really? Yes. It's true.

Our culture is presently a cutthroat world of ladder climbing, stepping over or upon others, back stabbing, and conquering. There's no conscience in that. We've all seen it—it seems like everyone is trying to tear you down, so that they can step on your corpse as they climb the mountain of success. John was just the opposite. And evidently this is why Jesus brought direct front-and-center attention to it. John said something that you can go your entire life without hearing anyone else say, “He must become greater; I must become less.”

*“Humility is the fear of the Lord; its wages are riches and honor and life.” Proverbs 22:4*

Read that out loud with me: *Humility is the fear of the Lord...*

This is where we see the pursuit of holiness and humility come together in perfect union. The fear of the Lord always returns us to reverential worship, friendship with God and the treasure of pure holiness and humility.

The prophet Micah wrote to us that this is what is really good before God and what the Lord requires of us—to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God. (See Micah 6:8)

As we have set this week apart unto the Lord to fast and pray, we have chosen wisely to pursue holiness and humility. This is what pleases and honors the Lord. This quest will guide you throughout the New Year of 2024. The Spirit of God is producing the very nature and character of God—Jesus' own image reflecting in you, upon you and through you. I bless you all today in His Most Holy Name.

Together Triumphant,  
Pastor Brian