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Humility (Part 2)



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses the concept of humility and pride in a religious context. He explains that people often give value to things that are not of importance to God, such as physical strength or riches, and that pride is a delusion of superiority that affixes artificial value. Gregg suggests that one antidote to proud thoughts is acknowledging that everything we have is a gift from God and giving Him the glory. He further explains that humility is a positive virtue that requires divine nature to become part of our character, and that we should serve others without seeking credit or recognition.

Transcript

One of the biggest problems with pride is that it places a false sense of importance on the wrong things. A person who is proud is obviously measuring himself in some area that is not a valid thing of value. There's a really wonderful verse in Jeremiah that speaks about this.

It's Jeremiah 9. It talks about the false things that people boast about or that they're proud about or that they glory in. To glory in something means to boast in it or to be proud of it. It says in Jeremiah 9, verses 23 and 24, this, Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom or be proud of or boast in his wisdom.

Neither let the mighty man glory in his might. Let not the rich man glory in his riches. Now those are the three things that people most commonly are proud about.

The rich man thinks he's too important to go to the places where the poor people are or to associate himself with people of a lower status in society. The rich man always tends toward pride. I'm not saying every rich man is proud, but there's that tendency.

The man who has riches tends to glory in his riches. The man of might, well that could be military might and probably that's what's in mind here, but that would even imply, especially to our generation, a person of personal physical strength. Because, of course, there's a great deal of pride in physical fitness these days and in athletic accomplishment.

And it's obvious I'm no athlete and therefore maybe I'm not the best one to talk about this. People think I have a sour-grape attitude because I can't be athletic. But the fact of the matter is, those who put their pride in the size of their muscles or in their accomplishments on the sports field, obviously are putting their glory in their might, which is not a proper thing to do.

Because, like riches, physical strength is transient. And one does not have it by intrinsic rights. And that is clear by the fact that a person can lose it very quickly.

God can take those things from a person. Their health can be taken from them. Their muscles can waste away and so forth.

And the same thing with money. These things are not things to be boasted in. Those are gifts from God and are supposed to be thanked for, but certainly not to be proud of.

And also the wise man in his wisdom. This is perhaps, in our society, one of the things that people tend to be the most arrogant about is the illusion of being academically superior to others. Now, of course it's not cool for an academic person to put on an arrogant look around a person who's not educated.

And therefore they may have the appearance of humility. But I know, I know that people who have a superior knowledge or wisdom always have the temptation to kind of look down their nose at the person that they consider to be a lesser breed without the lesson. You know, an ignorant layman or whatever, you know.

And that's definitely the way the Pharisees looked at other people who didn't have their credentials, their educational background. And that's true not only in religious matters, but in secular matters too. A person with a high academic degree, I always wonder about people who put the letters of their degree at the end of their name.

You know, what is the purpose for that? But to gain recognition, but to gain acclaim, but to gain respect. Why put it on there? Just think how many degrees Jesus could have had if he'd wished. But he didn't bother to have any.

In fact, he didn't even associate himself with the educated people. In fact, he said on one occasion, Father, I thank you that you've hidden these things from the wise and the prudent. And you've revealed them unto babes.

Why? Because little children are more humble than the wise and prudent. And Jeremiah says, don't let the wise man boast in his wisdom. Don't let the mighty man boast in his might.

Don't let the rich man boast in his riches. He says, the him that glorieth, let him glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me. That I am the Lord, which exercise loving kindness, justice, and righteousness in the earth.

For in these things I delight, saith the Lord. In other words, character things. But people are proud of all the wrong things.

And you know as well as I do that these things that are mentioned, wisdom, physical strength, riches, these things tend to make people feel superior to those who don't have them. People who have them tend to feel superior. And it's a false notion.

It's a delusion of superiority. And therefore, of course, that's why pride is such a bad thing, is because it affixes an artificial value on things that have no value in the sight of God. Jesus said in Luke chapter 12, I don't have the verse number at my fingertips, but it's in Luke 12, Jesus said, the things which are highly esteemed among men are an abomination to God.

So God's value system is a lot different than man. The things that man highly esteems are an abomination to God. But it's very clear that pride is always out of touch with true values, systems of real values.

In 1 Corinthians 4, we have an important verse that is an antidote to proud thoughts. 1 Corinthians 4. I will say this, that every time that I've been tempted toward being puffed up, this verse has always been the perfect needle. 1 Corinthians 4, the last line of verse 6 and then verse 7. The last line of verse 6 says that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

For who makes you to differ from another? And what have you that you did not receive? In other words, what do you have that you really intrinsically own? Everything you have is a gift from God. And if you did receive it, why dost thou glory as if you had not received it? A person who's wise, a person who's physically strong and healthy, a person who's rich, if he's in touch with reality, he will perceive that these are all so many gifts from God, so many blessings from the hand of God. And that he doesn't deserve to have them any more than the person who doesn't have them deserves to have them.

It's just the providence of God that has caused him to be born in a country where he could make a lot of money. And in fact, a lot of people have inherited their money. Or that God has given them their health or their, you know, their mind.

Some people are born without the same mental accuity. And they can't do anything about it. And the man who's born mentally sharp, and his mind like a steel trap, that person is not any, he doesn't deserve to be that way.

That's a blessing he's just gotten from God. And while people can develop both their minds and their bodies, and can, by diligence, acquire a higher degree of wealth and so forth, than if they're lazy, even then, these things are still the blessings of God, because God gives the man the ability to do so. Even in the book of Deuteronomy, it talks about, to the Jews, when you come into your promised land, and God blesses you, and you get

wealth because don't forget God.

You beware lest you forget God, but remember that God is the one who gives you the power to make profits. Gives you the power to make your money. And so, the point here is, what do you have that really isn't just a gift of God? And if you receive that as a gift, how in the world can you boast about it? A gift, by definition, is something you haven't deserved.

It should be humbling to see that you have gifts. I have been given a number of gifts from the Lord. I haven't been given as many gifts as I would like, and I have a tendency, like everyone else, to envy people who have gifts that I don't have.

Some people have envied my gifts, but then I look at them and there are certain things I envy that they have that I don't have. Everyone has different gifts, but I acknowledge that I have been given some very fine gifts from the Lord, but I'll tell you, there have been times, more than once, that it's just dawned on me. I've just been sitting thinking about the gifts that God has given me, where I've just kind of broken down and wept.

I really have. There have been times where I've just wept at the mercy of God. I was so humbled by the fact that I had gifts that I was either born with, or found easy to acquire because of the state of life in which I was born.

I had Christian parents and so forth, which was a tremendous benefit that some people haven't had. I think, I don't deserve any of these things. It has grieved my heart at times when people have praised me for them.

I think of Herod in Acts chapter 12, where Herod was up there speaking and the people said, it's a God and not a man. Remember it says, the angel of the Lord smote him and worms ate him and he died because he didn't give God the glory. The fear of God, when people praise us or give us glory or credit, the fear of God should come upon us and say, wow, there is a precedent for God eating a man up with worms while he stood on his feet because he didn't give God the glory, because he accepted glory that was not His.

It says in the Old Testament, Isaiah, God says, I will not give my glory to another or to graven images. And so, if men glorify us, we better make sure that we don't let any of that attach itself to us. And it's a humbling thing really, because you know that people put a false value on these things too.

You know that people, no matter what you say, they're going to give you the credit for it and they're going to think you're a great person and you know that God has a totally different opinion about the matter. When my wife was killed and God gave me a great deal of grace so that I was very strong in the midst of that trial, it only caused people to praise me more. And I felt so uncomfortable because I thought, I haven't done anything.

And yet, here I am in my little tiny circle of friends, I was becoming more of a hero or

something, for something I hadn't done and for just the fact that God was merciful to me in that situation, I just felt so uncomfortable because people would say, wow, you're so strong. Because I knew that if I said, don't give me the credit, give God the credit, they'd just say, oh, look how humble he is. What do you do? There's nothing more uncomfortable than knowing that you don't deserve the praise, but that people are inclined to give it to you.

And if you accept it, you know you don't have any right to do that and the fear of God would compel you to make sure you don't. At the same time, if you verbally put it off or something, then people could say, oh, he's such a humble person too, which is another form of giving you a wrong kind of a glory. And it's a very uncomfortable thing.

But I've actually wept at times, I've just kind of reflected on the gifts I've had and I think of people who haven't had those gifts and I think, I'm no better than they are. What do you have that you haven't received? And if you've received it, why in the world would you boast about it? And like I said, this verse is a tremendous deflator of the ego, because it's so real. I mean, it just puts you right back in touch with reality.

Do you have something good? I mean, let's face it, let's not even talk about false values. We talk about wisdom and physical strength and riches. These are false values.

But there are some true, valuable things. Good character is a good thing. And if people commend your character, you see, you realize, well, character is a good thing.

It is good to be just. It is good to be loving. It is good to be merciful.

And if people see that you're merciful or whatever and commend you for it, you can't say, oh, that's not important, because you know it is. At the same time, if you are eminent in any of those things, you also have to realize, that is a gift from God. Because I couldn't, for all the effort I could ever put into the project, I could never make myself better in my character than I was before.

I could build the frame, but I could never find the cement and pour into it. I could behave outwardly the way I should, but I can't make myself better in my heart. That's a work of God.

And if God didn't come through, I'd be totally helpless to change myself. It's He who writes His law in my heart and His words and His ways in my inner man. And so, even those things that are truly of value, that can be seen in us, we've received those too.

Even the fact that we're a Christian is a gift from God, because some people are born in countries where they live their whole lives without ever hearing the Gospel. You've got to hear it. It's just the mercy of God.

And the more you reflect on the mercy of God, the more He will humble you, really.

Because we have nothing except what we have received. Well, obviously we all have a bit more of a problem with pride than is justifiable.

None of us have anything to be really proud of, but if we're honest, probably all of us have pride. And some of us have a lot of pride. And pride is something that has to be disposed of.

It's got to be overcome, just like lust has to be overcome. In fact, in 1 John, chapter 2, verses 15 through 17, pride is linked right together with lust as one of those things that's really of the world. It's 1 John 2, 15 through 17, it says, Notice, love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is not of the Father, it is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof that he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

Notice, all that is in the world is what? The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. This word pride is literally boasting in the Greek. It means the boasting that is so characteristic of us in our lives.

This is one of the things that's really of the world. The tendency to put on an arrogant display, either verbally or visibly, because it just shows that there's worldliness in our hearts. That's the world, and he that is born of God, it later says in 1 John, chapter 5, overcomes the world.

So, we need to overcome the world. That means we need to overcome pride. That means we need to become humble.

Now, like I said, humility is not just the absence of pride. If that were the case, then humility is simply a vacuum. It's just what you have left after the pride has been removed.

It's just an absence of something, and we call that humility, that vacancy. But humility is a virtue. It's not just an absence of a vice.

It is a genuine virtue. It is something of the character of God and the character of Jesus, and therefore is substantive. It has existence.

It's an entity. It's real, and therefore it needs to be added. It is something that needs to be infused from the divine nature to ourselves, to our nature.

It's not just a matter of taking an axe and cutting out all the pride, and then we're okay. We have to actually have the positive aspects of the divine nature infused into our personalities so that we become, by nature, humble. Not that we just have learned how

to guard against every kind of pride, but that there's something in us called humility that abhors pride, that reacts to pride in a very hostile way.

That is, we're hostile toward pride whenever we see it in ourselves. The hatred of pride probably should be identified as the presence of humility. That's certainly not a biblical definition.

I just said that off the top of my head, but it seems likely that if a person hates pride, then they probably are a humble person. In fact, a person can have humility and still have traces of pride that he's seeking to get rid of. But a person cannot be very proud and very humble at the same time, quite evidently.

But how do we become humble? Well, as I've said a number of times, we can't change our hearts necessarily by our own strength, but we can cut off what grows from pride, and we can build humility, at least into our behavior, and trust that God will honor that and build it into our character. We can only change our behavior. God alone can change our character.

But it is as we change our behavior along the lines that God has dictated that our character will be filled in by God to fill the space that we build with our behavior. We build the form. This is very evidently true by the fact that the Bible tells us to, for instance, be merciful, or to be humble, or to be patient, or to be holy, or whatever.

The fact that we're told to do these things means there's something that we must do, that we personally can do. And since we can't change our hearts, it simply means that we have to do these things outwardly and trust God for the inward part. Well, how even do we go about that outwardly? How do I humble myself? Since the Bible makes it clear, if I don't humble myself, God's going to humble me.

It's a lot better to humble yourself than to wait for God to humble you. If he humbles you, he humbles you pretty hard sometimes. But if you go to Philippians chapter 2, we can get an answer to this question.

My goodness, where did our time go? It's all gone. I'm just getting to the main part. Philippians 2, verses 5 through 11.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross. Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Now, there's two parts to this. There's a discussion of what Jesus did, and then of what God did. Jesus humbled himself and became truly humble.

Then, as a reward for that, God exalted him, and of course that's what Jesus said would happen. In that verse we saw in Luke 14, he said, he that exalts himself shall be abased, but he that humbles himself shall be exalted. Well, Jesus humbled himself more than anyone could.

Any other person could, because he stepped down lower. The step down for him was a greater dissension than any other man could, and since his self-humbling was greater, so his exalting was greater than any other, and his name is exalted above every other name. But what did he do to humble himself? It's fairly clear.

It says, first of all in verse 6, he being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Now, that's not a very good translation. The New American Standard is a lot better, and I'm not sure exactly how it reads.

I've read it before, but the Greek actually says, though he existed in the form of God, he did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped. The word is grasped in the Greek, and what it means is he didn't cling to it. Now, here he was equal to God, but he didn't insecurely cling to that.

He wasn't afraid to lose his reputation for a while. You know, one thing that's obvious about proud men is once they attain a lofty position, they become very defensive of it. They cling to it tenaciously.

If anyone else seems to be approaching their level or their rank, it threatens them. The thought of stepping down in rank voluntarily never occurs to them, because it's been so hard for them to get up there. Now, with Jesus, he didn't have to cling to it.

First of all, he had had no struggle getting there. He was God by nature. And therefore, he wasn't insecure.

He didn't pretend that he was lesser than he was, but he wasn't concerned about his reputation, at least this aspect of his reputation. He didn't cling to his reputation. Some people are demolished if they lose face.

Think of the person Ahithophel in 2 Samuel. He was a counselor to King David, and when Absalom drove David out of Jerusalem, Ahithophel changed loyalties and became counselor to Absalom, David's son, who had rebelled against his father. And David prayed and said, God, confuse the counsel of Ahithophel.

Ahithophel had a reputation in Jerusalem. It's said that he had such a reputation for wisdom, that people would say to inquire at the mouth of Ahithophel is like to inquire with the Urim and the Thummim, in other words, to inquire of an oracle of God. Now, it

didn't mean that he was recognized as a prophet, but simply that his wisdom was comparable to the wisdom of God.

And he, as a counselor, he was the most respected. Well, what happened, eventually, Absalom consulted Ahithophel and another counselor. And the two counselors gave opposite counsel.

Ahithophel really did give the wise counsel, but if Absalom had followed it, he would have destroyed David. But the other counselor was a plant, who was loyal to David and gave him counsel that gave David a chance to get away. And Absalom, because he was confused, took the other guy's counsel and David did escape.

But Ahithophel couldn't handle the fact that for the first time, someone didn't take his counsel. And he went and he hung himself. Now, there's a case of a man who's really insecure about his reputation.

He had a reputation of being like God, but as soon as someone didn't treat him like God anymore, he couldn't handle it. But Jesus wasn't like that. Ahithophel was a proud man.

Jesus was humble. He was willing to lay down his reputation. He didn't think of equality with God as something to hang on to and to grasp that insecurely, as some people do with their positions.

But true humility is willing to step down in the will of God. It is willing to let God promote or abase. It says in Psalm 75, promotion cometh not from the east or the west.

Promotion is from the Lord. And a person who is willing to seek the Lord as sovereign over the matters of promotion and is not always grasping for a higher position, but is very content to be in the lowest position, even if it means never any advancement, because they know it to be the will of God. That person is following the example of Jesus and humbling himself.

He is willing to leave promotion in the hands of God. It was very clear that it was the will of the Father that Jesus come to earth, and that meant laying down his high rank temporarily. The high esteem that he received and so forth as being worshipped, and actually come down where he'd be spat upon and be treated like the lowest of men.

And therefore we can see that part of humbling oneself is to put one's promotion, self-promotion, aside and to let God handle promotion. This is what it means when it says he made himself of no reputation. In verse 7, he made himself of no reputation.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus when he would heal people, he'd frequently say, don't tell anyone about this. Isn't that just the opposite of what you'd expect a person to do? You know, if I raised a man from the dead, don't you think I'd want to publish a magazine? Start Steve Gregg miracle ministries, you know? Everyone wants everyone

else to know how great their spiritual attainments are. And it seems like Jesus, when he'd heal a leper, he'd say, don't tell anyone about this, or when he'd heal the blind man, don't tell anyone about this.

They never obeyed. They always did tell. And some people think that was Jesus' psychology.

He really wanted them to tell, so he said, don't tell. He knew that they would if he said that. But I don't think that was his game at all.

I think the whole idea was, he was not trying to promote himself. And he wanted to keep the matter of promotion totally out of his own hands. And out of the hands of man.

He wouldn't commit himself to man because he knew what was in man. He wanted to leave himself in the hands of God. He knew that if he obeyed God and humbled himself, promotion would come from God alone.

And he wouldn't have to have a PR crew going around advertising his miracles. And he wanted to stay as far from self-promotion as he could get. And therefore, when he did something that might incline him to become more famous, he would try to look to a diffusing of the purer of idol worship or whatever that might come, even though he deserved to be worshipped.

He wanted to be worshipped. And he wanted to be glorified. But he wanted to make sure the Father glorified him, rather than glorifying himself.

He said, I don't come to glorify myself but my Father. And he was constantly telling people that even the words he spoke were not his words, but the Father's words. The works he did were not his works, but the Father's works.

When he saw the Father do. He was always trying to deflect the glory from himself, even though he deserved it. And he knew that if he would deflect the glory from himself, he would be exalted in due time by the Father, by the sovereignty of the Father.

And sure enough, it happened. God did highly exalt him and gave him a name above every name. So, he made himself of no reputation.

In our lives, this can take a lot of forms. It means, of course, being content with a relatively obscure status, even though we might feel like we deserve to be recognized more than some of the people who are recognized. A lot of times we feel that way.

How come he was promoted when I've been a lot more faithful than he has? Well, if we're thinking like that, we're forgetting that we're nothing. The guy that was promoted, he's nothing too. But it's up to the grace of God to decide who he's going to promote.

Whether it's nothing A or nothing B, it doesn't matter. If you're nothing B and you don't

get promoted, that's no big thing. Because you don't deserve it any more than the other guy does.

The fact is that true humility will be content not to be promoted, but to remain in an obscure and lowly status. He will also not try to make himself a reputation for his superior spirituality. Now, it's hardly likely that a person who is spiritually superior will go unnoticed.

People who are truly spiritually mature and superior are noticed. And people with spiritual minds notice them and usually honor them. And the Bible says honor should be given to whom honor is due, but let God be the one who gives the honor.

Let God be the one who brings to people's attention that you're superior. The Pharisees always pretended to be spiritually superior. They were seeking to make themselves a reputation of being holy men.

When they wanted to give gifts, they wanted to make sure everyone was looking. So they found a trumpet before them to make sure they got everyone's attention. Then they dropped their money in the poor man's bucket.

Or when they were fasting, they just figured their faces and where their hair all messy, so everyone would know how humble they were. And how they were fasting, you know, how pious they were. When they would pray, they'd pray on the street corners and pray all kinds of fancy flowery prayers.

And we even have an example of one of their prayers in the synagogue. One Pharisee prayed, Oh God, I thank you I'm not as other men. That was his first mistake.

He was as other men. If anything, he was worse than most. But he says, I thank you I'm not as other men, for I fast twice a week.

I pay tithes of all that I have. I'm not like this publican here. Sure enough, he wasn't like that publican.

The publican was saved and he wasn't. But the fact is, the prayers of the Pharisees were in order to give themselves a reputation, not to glorify God or not to let God glorify them, but to take matters into their own hands and fabricate a reputation for being spiritual giants among their contemporaries. Jesus didn't make himself with any reputation.

He certainly didn't behave religiously. He lived a righteous life. He couldn't help that without violating his principles.

And some people recognized him as the superior person that he was, but many didn't because he was not ostentatious about his spirituality. Another thing about Jesus, and about us, as far as not making ourselves with any reputation, is learning to be quiet. Now

this has a lot of applications.

But when a person is noisy, noisier than most, it's probable that they have learned how to be the center of attention. The life of the party. Now I realize we could say some people just have louder voices than others.

And that is true. But to a great degree, this is trained. This is learned behavior.

I think some people, obviously, are born with somewhat softer voices. In fact, I've even seen that among my own children. Some have louder voices than others right from a very early age.

But even that, it's hard to say how much of that is acquired. Because to shout the loudest means to irritate people the most and get their attention the most. If you're a baby, the louder you scream, the sooner you get attention.

And as you grow up, it very often is plain that the more you talk, the more you can hold people's attention. There are even devices that we sometimes use in conversation where when we've finished our thought, we'll say, and, uh, and we don't know what we're going to say next. We just say that so that we still control the floor.

It's clear we haven't stopped yet, and don't anybody else speak? Because I've said, and, uh, or another one. Another one is where after a person has said something, they say, so. I don't know if you ever noticed that.

You might have become conscious of it now, but I know some people who do that. When they've said all they have to say, they say, so. Now why do they do that? I'm sure they don't even know why they do that.

But it's very clear that they leave their statement unfinished so that they still hold the floor, you see. And by filibustering in that manner, or by talking more loudly than others, people can assure themselves that they have a reputation for being, uh, you know, whatever they think they are, witty. This is another aspect, you know, uh, being, uh, Mr. Life of a Party, you know, being the guy with the funniest jokes.

This is just an attempt to make oneself have a reputation. That's what it is. It's making a reputation.

Jesus apparently didn't tell a lot of jokes. Uh, we don't know of any, in fact, that he told. The Bible mentions he wept, but it doesn't mention that he ever laughed.

But he probably did laugh, but it certainly wasn't very characteristic of him to be, you know, always Mr. Humorous, trying to get, trying to be the Life of the Party. He wasn't out to make a reputation for himself. Now, the Bible says we should study to be quiet in 1 Thessalonians 4.11. 1 Thessalonians 4.11. So study to be quiet.

It's kind of hard to teach children this, but it really should be taught them from an early age. Because boisterousness and noise is, I think, now I've never studied psychology or anything, I've never heard this, but just from my understanding, looking at the situation, I think boisterousness is an attempt to have attention, to get attention. And being clamorous and loud.

And to study to be quiet is in a sense to humble oneself. When you're in a crowd and they're discussing something that you happen to be the most expert in of anyone there, but they're not asking your opinion. To hold your peace requires a great deal of self-abasement.

Because you know that when you speak up, you'll show that you're superior to them in the particular subject being discussed, that you know more. And of course if it's an important thing where the best knowledge has to be brought out, because there's some issue hanging on it, then you should humbly bring out your superior insights. But if it's just a matter of people shooting the breeze and you know that you can blow a wall away with your superior insights, how many of you don't? We need to study to be quiet and to learn how to speak only those things which will not be intended to promote ourselves.

Now there's times when we speak and we'll get promoted. But it's not that that wasn't our motive for speaking. God exalts.

And you can't kick yourself if you get exalted when you weren't trying to be. Jesus got exalted without trying to exalt himself. The Apostle Paul certainly humbled himself a great deal, but think of the great reputation he has now.

God exalts humble people. And don't feel guilty if you get exalted, but you should definitely pay attention if you have habits that are intended, that are subconsciously ways of getting people to think about you more or make you the center of attention. And by the way, the reverse is kind of true too.

Though I haven't seen this very often, I can think of at least one case where a person always seemed to speak in a much lower register than everyone else. Whenever he spoke, he'd speak so low you'd almost have to lean forward to hear what he said. And I don't know what the motive was to tell you the truth, but I always wondered, is that sort of a psychological device to get people to lean forward? I mean, it does something for the ego when everybody's leaning forward, speaking one ear towards you, they hang on your every word.

And I know it works, it works, you know, but I certainly can't say what the motive of the person was for doing it, but I thought, I remember it crossed my mind, that'd be a tremendous psychological device for making oneself feel important and making other people act like you're important. All noise has to stop so everyone can hear what you're saying, and even then they have to lean forward because they can't hear unless they do.

And there are ways that the voice can be used, either too loud or too soft, really, or too much, that are manifestations of pride and really have to do with seeking to make oneself have a reputation.

But Jesus made himself of no reputation. By the way, another way that people try to make themselves have a reputation, especially in our society, but I suppose it's always been this way, is by the way they adorn themselves. Everyone knows that the most popular girl in our carnal society is going to be the girl who's the most physically attractive.

Now that shouldn't be the case in the church, and to the extent that Christians are mature, it isn't true. But not all Christians are mature, and I have to say that in the church it's very seldom that a woman's looks are not ever brought into consideration as far as discussing a woman's attractiveness. Now the Bible says a woman's true ornament should be that of a meek and quiet spirit, because in the sight of God, that is of great price.

It says that in 1 Peter 3. Let me read verses 3 and 4. 1 Peter 3, verses 3 and 4. Let it not be that outward adorning, of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, and of putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. It would seem that those who think the way God thinks, and are spiritually minded, would be much more attracted to a meek and quiet spirit than to a good figure or a beautiful face or something like that, because God doesn't place a higher value on physical attractiveness, but he does place a higher value on a meek and quiet spirit, and that should certainly be the direction that our tastes are developing also. But just as a matter of fact, everyone knows that in the church as well as out of the church, it helps to look like a model.

That is, it helps if you want to have a lot of men chasing you. If that's your goal, then you've got problems as far as your spiritual life is concerned. But there are many people who think to make themselves a reputation by the way they dress or adorn themselves, and it's very clear that Christians are to avoid doing that.

Now, you're not supposed to make yourself voluntarily ugly. Most of us don't have to worry about that. And a person who is physically attractive has really, let's face it, there are some of you here, both men and women, who probably would be considered physically attractive to the opposite sex.

That's nothing to be ashamed of, but you would have to admit, if you've sought after spiritual relationships, it has been a burden. Some of you maybe haven't had that problem, but it is a cross to be born for a person who is really looking for meaningful relationships with a Christian. On a spiritual level, it's a burden to be physically attractive.

Now, I'm not speaking from my own personal experience, but from knowing people who are physically attractive. The thing that people who aren't attractive are trying to attain is something that if you attain it, it only becomes a burden to you in the spiritual life. And it's much better to concentrate on a meek and quiet spirit.

And meekness and quietness, of course, is humble. But adorning the outward person is not humble, and it's seeking to build a reputation on something that has no value at all. By the way, there's a certain way to dress to gain a religious reputation, too, biblically.

The Bible indicates this. Jesus said it in Luke chapter 20. In verse 46, Jesus is talking about the scribes and Pharisees.

He says, Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at the seats. In other words, all of these are so many manifestations of their pride. They like to have the chief positions.

There were seats of honor, and they always wanted to have those. They wanted to have the highest seats in the synagogues. They liked these pulpits that were elevated off the ground, and that they could look down on the lowly laymen from.

And they liked to wear these long robes. There is another case where physical adornment, or the way a person dresses, can be a manifestation of pride. This is not necessarily to make oneself physically attractive, so much as to wear clothing that just kind of carries the message that I'm holier than others.

Wearing long robes, that was a sign of a man who was very pious. And to this day, there are churches where the pastors wear those kind of things. I wouldn't say it's always a manifestation of pride.

Sometimes it's just a tradition. They just feel like preachers are supposed to dress that way, and people expect it, and so they do. But very clearly, the custom began from a prideful desire to set oneself apart from the laity.

Or else why in the world would they do it? It's evident that the apostles, when they preached, preached in their street clothes. And there's certainly nothing to indicate that either Jesus or the apostles wore any different kind of clothes when they preached than the average person wore in everyday life. And if a person wears a suit and a tie all the time in their daily life, which some people do, then if they also wear it when they're preaching, it seems normal enough.

Now, I just got a smile from one of our students who wears a suit and tie to church, and I should make this statement too. I should make this statement that there are other reasons besides pride to dress up for church. Some people dress up for church because that's what is considered to be right by other people, and that you do so not to offend

other people.

There is certainly nothing humble. I would say this too. There's really nothing humble about going to a church where you know everyone's going to be dressed up and you're wearing your jeans with the holes in it.

Now, if you're in a church where everyone dresses that way, then it's fine. But if you're going to a place where everyone's dressed up and you go deliberately wearing your hippie garb, you know, or whatever, or your work clothes or something, a lot of times there's pride in that. I remember when the Jesus movement was happening, it was kind of a new thing for any Christians to wear jeans to church.

Where I went to church, people actually went barefoot to church, and in summer they wore their swimming clothes to church. And, you know, they had long hair and beards and stuff, as I also did. I didn't have a beard, but I had long hair, and I just wore the same kind of pants, Levi's, and everything, and went barefoot to church.

We all did that. Everyone was doing that. And we thought, well, it's great to be liberated from this old traditional stuffy church thing where everyone wears suits and ties, which I'd been raised in a suit and tie kind of church.

And then just during the Jesus movement, it kind of broke loose from that, and people could wear whatever they wanted to wear. Well, I can distinctly remember thinking that that was really good, and that the churches that required suits and ties were all wrapped up in a pride trip and so forth, and that's the way they dressed. But I found that when I would visit churches that were still straight, or churches that were still formal, I would revel in the fact that I was more enlightened than they, because I would go in my patch, Levi's, with my hair down to the middle of my back and all this stuff, and they were all straight people.

It would be like, there was as much pride, probably more pride in me dressing like that in that condition than was in any of them wearing their suits and ties. They probably weren't even aware of what they were wearing. They always wore those things.

But I was there conscious of the fact that I was different, and in a sense I thought myself superior because of my being more liberated or whatever, you know, from the customs and the traditions. So, the way you dress can definitely be a display of pride, and a lot of times we need to look at what we're dressing up. I'd say the best rule is not to wear clothing that is intended to draw attention to oneself.

Now, some people have different rules, you know, in some churches women should wear their dresses to the middle of the calf or longer, or they should never have their elbows exposed. I've heard all kinds of different rules about those kinds of things, and one group of Christians that we've met here, actually even the men wear trench coats down to the

mid-thigh, or mid-calf, because they want to be modest. Everyone has their different standard of what Christians should dress like, but I would just say clothing that is intended to draw attention to a person, that's when it's wrong.

Clothing is supposed to cover one's nakedness. It is not supposed to be used to draw attention to oneself. And therefore, to wear a trench coat down to the middle of my calf in the summertime, in a place where no one else dresses like that, the man who does it thinks he's being modest, but in fact he is drawing more attention to himself than anyone else is.

And he knows he's doing that. I mean, he can't be unaware of that. Therefore, it is not modest.

It might be a small one, but it's a manifestation of pride. A man who prides himself on the fact that the knees of his pants are worn through, because that conveys to his Christian friends that he's been praying more. That, obviously, is dressing oneself with a mind to promoting one's own reputation.

So, there's a lot of ways that we make ourselves reputations, or seek to do so, and we only do so to our own hurt. Jesus made himself of no reputation, it says. And then God gave him a name.

God gave him a reputation. God exalted him. But any of these subtle little things we do to get people to think more highly of us are only working against us, really being exalted.

Because if we do manage to get ourselves exalted in these ways, God's just going to have to knock us down. Because he said he would. He promised.

Okay, well, I'm going to have to cut through some of this stuff a little more quickly. The next thing it says about Jesus in Philippians 2, he made himself no reputation, and he took on himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man. His servant role was a manifestation of his true humility.

Now, when Jesus made himself like a servant, and put on the towel and washed the disciples' feet, what he was doing was associating himself with the lowest rung of society in his culture. The servants who had the lowest esteem of all people were the ones who had to meet the guests at the door and wash the feet. A man of average standing or above would never dream of washing another person's feet.

It was too lowly. It was like the lowest janitorial work. It's like the guy who climbs down into the septic tank to clean up the septic tank.

We had a guy who would do that here, and I thought, this guy is humble. He goes right down into the septic tank. I mean, that's what a guy who washed another guy's feet was.

He was like the garbage man or something. We don't really have anything in our society comparable to it, because we aren't slaves like they did. But Jesus was making himself do what a slave does, and that which most dignified persons would be repulsed at the thought of doing.

And that's why Peter was repulsed. When Jesus came to wash Peter's feet, Peter said, you're never going to wash my feet. This is an insult.

Not an insult to Peter, but he thought it was an insult to Jesus. For Jesus to do that. And Jesus said, you don't know what you're talking about again.

And he said, if I don't wash you, you've got no part of me. And then Peter being the extremist of the way said, oh, wash my head, my hands, my whole body too then. Jesus again corrected him and said, no, he did his washing.

He told him to have his feet washed. He doesn't need a whole bath. But what Jesus said, what I have done here is I have made myself a servant, though I am Lord and Master.

You've called me Master and Lord, and you're right, I am. But if I have washed your feet, you need to be like that. Now, one of the sticky things about it today is that when Jesus made himself a servant, there was no honor in being a servant.

He was among men who would not think, wow, what a virtuous thing to do. Because it was a new concept. The idea of making oneself a servant in order to be great was something Jesus was introducing.

But we live 2,000 years later, after the church has for these 2,000 years had this teaching from Jesus that the greatest is the servant of all. So, there's always the temptation to ostensibly be more of a servant than others because you know people are going to say, what a servant. You know? If people in Jesus' day said, what a servant, it was an insult.

But today in the Christian body, there's a certain way to get everyone to admire you by being such a servant. You know, I mean, it has a totally different connotation to Christians today than it meant at the time. So, it's necessary for us to be servants without secretly hoping that people notice what a servant we're being.

Now, again, people can get all bound up legalistically about this thing. I can't do anything if someone's going to notice. I can't let my right hand know what my left hand's doing and so forth.

But to live a Christian life should be, I think, relatively relaxed in some of these areas. And I think that we should serve whenever we have opportunity to serve. And the person who does so the most cheerfully and the most naturally and so forth is probably the humblest person among us.

But, of course, it is possible, like I said, to make oneself a servant for the sake of getting credit for it in the eyes of men. And therefore, as often as it is possible, of course, it's good to do your acts of service in a way or in a place where you're not likely to get credit for it. That's what Jesus meant when he said to the disciples, don't be like the Pharisees.

When they give, they make sure everyone's looking. But when you give, don't let your left hand know what your right hand's doing. Now, he wasn't saying that if someone noticed that you did good, then you're lost or that you're horrible or something.

But your motive is, you do it not to be seen of men. And this is something where we can struggle a lot because a lot of times we don't know our own heart. And when in doubt, serve anyway.

It's better to serve and later find out you served for the wrong motive than not to serve. Because not serving, you can't not serve with the right motive. Service is something that we're called to.

The greatest is the servant of all. Jesus himself made himself the lowest servant. Therefore, to make yourself low and to serve is always safer than not.

Even though there's the possibility of having wrong motives in serving, there's never the possibility of having right motives in refusing to serve. So, again, it is always good, if possible, to serve in such a way as probably people aren't going to notice. But there are other times when you can't avoid being noticed.

But that doesn't mean don't serve. Don't say, well, I'm not going to serve here because everyone's going to notice and then I'd be doing it for bad motives. Just realize that God may exhaust you.

You can't help it if he causes people to notice and say, hey, you're really a neat servant. There's a lot of people that I know, Christians I know, that the first thing I can think of when I think of them is, what a servant. And really, that's the highest commendation you can give to a person.

But he would feel embarrassed, a person like that. I'm thinking of a particular person right now who has really got a servant's heart. And if he knew that behind his back, I would say, boy, that brother's really a servant.

He'd know he was being commended and he would feel uncomfortable about it because he's not being a servant so people would praise him for it. He's being a servant because that's what Jesus is. And because he's doing that to humble himself and to take the most humbling job and to be submissive under authority, like a servant is.

A servant takes orders. Remember, one of the meanings of humble in the Hebrew was to submit or to act submissively. That's a good way to humble yourself, to submit,

especially when the person you're submitting to is manifestly your inferior.

I was in a church once where I determined I'd humble myself and come under authority where all the elders were younger in the Lord than I was. And the particular elder under whom I was assigned to be directly answerable had only been a Christian two years. And I'd been a Christian for 18 years and been in the ministry full time for six years.

And here's a guy I was submitted to in every detail of my life because this was a shepherding church at the time. And this guy had only been a Christian two years. But I submitted myself because I determined I was going to humble myself.

Now, I could have found all kinds of good reasons not to submit. The guy doesn't know the Bible half as well as I do. He's hardly out of his diapers yet.

He's only two years old in the Lord. He's in his terrible twos. He's not even a toddler.

And I'd been walking strong in the Lord for years. I could have thought of all kinds of reasons not to submit. But Jesus made himself subject to his parents when he was a child, even though he was their superior.

In Luke chapter 2, it says that when they found him in the temple when he was 12 years old, he said, why were you looking for me? Didn't you know I must be about my father's business? And it says his parents didn't understand what he said. They didn't understand what he meant. They were dull.

They were spiritually dull. He was baffling the lawyers and the teachers. And he was every man's intellectual superior.

Especially his parents, who were uneducated tradespeople. His father was a tradesman and his mother was just a homemaker, uneducated. He was definitely their superior, morally and intellectually and probably in every way.

And yet, it says specifically at the end of Luke chapter 2, he went down and was subject unto them. He submitted to them. He made himself lower than them.

And to act submissively, especially when you know that you're superior to the person that you're submitting to, is one of the key ways to make oneself a servant. To take on the form of a servant. Not imagining that you have the right to have a higher position.

To humble oneself requires this. Another way to take the form of a servant, and this is more in a spiritual sense, is to have a teachable spirit. To make yourself lesser than another person and submit to them.

Not because you submit to them in this case, but so much because you submit to truth. A person who is proud very seldom will allow himself to be taught, at least not by an inferior. The hardest people to convert to Christ are your parents.

While they might receive the gospel from another person their own age, or from a minister, or from someone who's their superior in some sense, it's very humbling. And some parents, to their credit, have been humble enough to do this. But it's very humbling, and many parents are not willing to do it, to receive the answers to what life's all about from your own children.

I mean, just think of it. A lot of you aren't parents yet, and you couldn't really maybe imagine that, but think of it. This little baby that you produced, who owes its whole existence to you, whom you nurtured when it didn't know anything, who you taught its ABCs, and you taught it everything it knows about life, and then it comes back around when it's 16 years old and says, Hey Dad, Hey Mom, you've missed the whole point.

It's all about Jesus. And you never knew it. You know, I mean, that's a humbling thing for a parent to receive from that.

But it's humbling for anyone to be teachable, and especially when it's somebody who's somewhat, you're inferior in some sense, that's teaching. But a person who's humble trembles at God's Word, and is willing to be taught, and to be corrected. And I heard of one case in particular, where a man who was a very famous pastor in Pennsylvania, I'd been in his church, and he had thousands of people in his congregation.

He also had an extensive pape ministry around the world. Very well-known pastor. He had been teaching very critically against other churches through his congregation for a while.

And then he had a guest speaker in, who had a ministry of just kind of stressing unity and love for the brethren and so forth. And this guest speaker came in and gave a message about loving the brethren and those who were not in your group and so forth. And this pastor realized that that's just the opposite spirit of what he'd been ministering.

He got up afterwards and he says, I need to repent of giving the wrong message to you people. And he just humbled himself and received correction right in front of his own congregation. You know, a lot of men would never do that, because they say, oh, the congregational, they'll never respect me again if I do that.

I've got to maintain a sense of, I'm right anyway, kind of a thing. But actually, of course, you can imagine the congregation respected him far more, because he humbled himself and was teachable and allowed himself to be corrected. And you'll find that pride, the devil will tell you that you've got to maintain your pride.

You've got to maintain your image, because if you don't, you'll lose all influence. You'll lose all respectability. But really, if you become teachable, answerable, transparent, just be a servant in your attitude and submissive to others, you'd be amazed how much God will honor that and how much honor will come to you.

I heard of a Russian pastor, I don't remember if I heard this from Rick or someone else, but a Russian pastor, whom the KGB was trying to get him to stop preaching the gospel, and he wouldn't stop preaching it. So what they did, they found out that his marriage was a little bit shaky, and they hired this beautiful woman to come to him ostensibly for counseling, but really to seduce him. And eventually, after several sessions of counseling, this woman succeeded in seducing the pastor.

And the KGB had it all arranged, they got photographs of the whole thing and everything, and then they came to him with the photographs and said, look, if you don't stop preaching the gospel, we're going to publish these photographs. And so the guy was obviously in a really hard spot. And he went before his congregation, he said the only thing he could do is, he went before the congregation and confessed his sin to them.

He just laid it all out to them and made it public what he'd done. And then of course the KGB could do nothing more to him. Therefore he kept preaching the gospel, because it wouldn't matter if they published the pictures or anything, because he'd already come out about it.

I learned a long time ago, it's a lot, I don't know, I guess I'd say wiser, it's a lot more peaceful, restful in my spirit to be the first person to tell other people my fault, before someone else tells them. If gossip about me is going to get around, I'd like to be the source of it, rather than to hear it come around after it's been uttered by someone else. I've always found that it's not really that humbling.

I mean, it is humbling. It's humbling to tell people what you've done wrong, to confess your faults one to another, which the Bible says to do. It's humbling to do that, but it's more humbling to pretend like you don't have those faults and have people find out from another source.

And so, it's really wiser and consistent with what Christian duty is to confess your faults one to another. And confession is of course commended and commanded in James 5, in verse 16. Confess your faults one to another.

This is a way of humbling yourself too. Admitting you're wrong. Of course, this is the first step of even getting saved.

One thing that keeps people from getting saved more than anything is pride. Because the first step toward salvation is confessing you're a sinner. Confessing you don't have it all together.

Confessing that your whole life, in spite of all your efforts to get it together, has been offensive to God, and that you've been wrong. And a lot of people, their pride will just not permit it, and it'll keep them from salvation. The first step to getting saved is

humbling oneself and repenting of your former way of life.

But after you're a Christian, you still have to maintain that kind of humility and a life of confession when you're the wrong. So, these are some of the major things. I've left out some things.

I'm going to have to quit anyway just because of the time element. But let me run quickly over what Jesus did. Again, Jesus did not cling to his status.

He was not grasping his equality with God. He was willing to let God promote or demote. And it was definitely a demotion that he took, temporarily, in becoming a man.

But he was willing to leave his status and his rank in the hands of God. And if that meant taking a lower status for a lengthy period of time, or even permanently, he was willing to do that. And so, to humble oneself, you have to put your whole thing in God's hands, your whole status and your rank.

Then he made himself of no reputation. And we talked about a number of ways that people wrongly seek to make themselves a reputation, and we can see how Jesus deliberately avoided increasing his reputation with his own efforts. He made himself of no reputation.

He also took on the form of a servant. And there's a lot of ways that we can do that, and the best way to do it, of course, is, if possible, not very ostensively. But don't avoid doing it simply because someone's going to find out about it or see you do it.

Because a life of servanthood, of cheerful servanthood, is the way to building patterns of humbleness in your behavior. And there's a lot of other things, sub-points we've mentioned under these, but Jesus is the example of that. And, of course, what happened to him as a result is that he was exalted above every other name.

And that's what Jesus said would happen in general. That's a principle of God's administration, that if we humble ourselves, God will exalt us. But, again, if you don't feel humble and you act humble, that's not hypocrisy.

Sometimes you'll feel like this is a false humility because I'm saying something humble but I really feel puffed up. Well, a lot of times there is a false humility, but it's not always a false humility. When you are at an act of obedience to God, humbling yourself outwardly, trusting that he will make your heart more humble also as a result, and you will build habits of humility which God will honor, and he'll change your character and cause you to be more humble inwardly as well.