

1. Humility a very important quality in the Christian life.

At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3). Later, when the disciples were arguing about which of them was the greatest, Jesus called a child over to Himself and said to them, “Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:4).

While a humble person may not experience blessing as this world defines blessing, God promises that the humble in heart will know *His* blessing. As believers, we know that this blessing is of far greater worth than anything and everything in this physical world. Humility is indeed a very important quality in the Christian life. (p. 23)

2. Pride is the root and essence of sin.

Pride consists in attributing to ourselves and demanding for ourselves the honor, privileges, prerogatives, rights, and power that are due to God alone. Thus, it is the very root and essence of sin because pride, at its core, is idolatry of self. A proud person has put himself or herself in God’s place. (p 26)

3. Humble people realize they are totally dependent on God.

Humble people have a great sense of their ignorance, their weakness, and their unimportance. They know that if “the nations are like a drop from a bucket” in God’s eyes (Isa. 40:15), then they are far, far less than that. They recognize the insufficiency of their own power. They understand that only God is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, all-wise, full of grace and truth and righteousness. They realize that they are totally dependent on God for everything: wisdom, health, safety, and even the ability to obey. In fact, it is only by God’s grace that we can even do anything that pleases Him.

Still further, humble people are deeply aware of their lack of greatness and lack of right to exercise authority over anyone. On the other hand, they are acutely aware of God’s greatness and God’s supreme right to rule over all. This means that truly humble people put themselves entirely under God’s authority. Whatever God says to do or not do, they obey completely and without question because they recognize the Creator—creature distinction. God is the Creator, and we are His creatures. (p. 26-27)

4. God loves us so much that He is willing to humiliate us to rid us of our awful pride.

In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan was on target biblically when he indicated that the valley of humiliation is a valley that every Christian will encounter and needs to encounter as he journeys through the wilderness of this world toward heaven. Praise God that He loves us so much that He is willing to humiliate us in order to rid us of our awful pride! (p. 30)

5. Truly humble people need to depend on God completely for all things.

As truly humble people, we need to depend on God completely—for all things at all times. I believe that is why God sometimes allows us to be let down by other people. When other people break their promises or let us down in some way, it causes us to turn to God and to remember that putting our trust in man is foolish. Consider the words of Jeremiah:

Thus says the Lord,
“Cursed is the man who trust in mankind
And makes flesh his strength,
And whose heart turns away from the Lord.
“For he will be like a bush in the desert
And will not see when prosperity comes,
But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness,
A land of salt without inhabitant.
“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord
And whose trust is the Lord.
“For he will be like a tree planted by the water,
That extends its roots by a stream
And will not fear when the heat comes;
But its leaves will be green,
And it will not be anxious in a year of drought
Nor cease to yield fruit.” (Jer. 17:5-8)

When we humbly place our trust in God alone, we will find that we are sustained and blessed by Him continuously. If, on the other hand, our trust is in people, we will often find ourselves left dry in difficult times. Only God's strength, His provision, His comfort, and His wisdom do not change. He is that stream which never, ever runs dry and which will sustain us at all times. (p. 38-39)

6. A humble person gives God praise and thanks for everything.

A truly humble person gives God praise and thanks for everything that he has and everything he has done that is good. (p. 42)

7. Humility manifest itself before God by respecting, receiving, and responding to the Word of God.

A fourth way that humility manifests itself before God is by respecting, receiving, and responding to the Word of God. In Isaiah 66:2, God describes a humble person this way: “ ‘But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.’ “ A person who trembles before the Word of God is a person who takes God’s Word very seriously. He listens carefully when it is spoken and responds to it with great conviction and repentance when he is admonished by it. (p. 42)

8. A person who takes his orders from God will never question God’s right to ordain the events of his life. (p. 43)

9. Submitting to God’s will despite the consequences.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego demonstrated humility by taking a stand against the emperor of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. In Daniel 3 we read about how these three young men refused to fall down and worship a golden image, though they knew that the consequences for failing to do so were severe. Instead of bowing to the command of men, they bowed to the command of God, “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Ex. 20:3). They submitted to God’s will despite what could very well have meant physical death. (p. 44)

10. True humility evidences itself in a willingness to submit to God’s will no matter how difficult it may be.

Our Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated the highest degree of humility and submission to the will of God when He “humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:8). True humility evidences itself in a willingness to submit oneself to God’s will no matter how difficult it may be. (p. 44)

11. A humble person always submits to and never questions God’s authority.

Obedying God can lead to unpleasant and difficult circumstances, but if we desire to manifest truly humble spirits, we must do it because God is the authority in our lives

and we are not. A humble person always submits to and never questions God's authority. (p. 45)

12. A humble person willingly accepts whatever God ordains.

A sixth way that humility is manifested before God is by submitting oneself to the providences of God without complaint. Those who grumble and complain about the circumstances of their lives are manifesting a spirit of pride. A person who complains about his circumstances does so because he thinks he deserves better. A humble person, on the other hand, willingly accepts whatever God ordains. He says with Paul, "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am" (Phil. 4:11). (p. 45)

13. A truly humble person constantly comes to God in prayer.

The apostle Paul, an extremely humble man, also spent much time in prayer. Almost every letter to the churches begins with evidence of his prayers for the people of God. He admonished his readers to be in constant prayer, and he coveted their prayers for himself. In fact, Paul credited the prayers of God's people for the things that he had accomplished in ministry: "You also join[ed] in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many" (2Cor. 1:11). A truly humble person constantly comes to God in prayer. (p. 48)

14. A humble person gladly serves the Lord regardless of the job.

A way that humility is manifested before God is by considering it a privilege to serve Christ in any capacity—a privilege that we are not worthy of or deserving. A truly humble person gladly serves the Lord regardless of the job, whether leading or following, preaching or taking out the trash, receiving thanks or being completely unnoticed by anyone. (p. 49)

15. A humble person will serve Christ no matter what the job is because they have a humble and godly perspective on their work.

Truly humble people will serve Christ no matter what the job is. They are willing to wash the feet of others as much as they are willing to lead because they have a humble and godly perspective on their work. Consider this illustration: Three men were working on constructing a church building. Someone approached the men and asked, "What are you doing?" The first man replied, "I'm laying bricks." The second said, "I'm earning money to put food on the table." The third answered, "I'm building a place where people will worship God and help each other."

All three men were doing the same thing, but their attitude toward their work was very different. A humble person can wash the feet of others and truly enjoy his work because he is doing it all for the glory of God. A proud person may become discouraged and bored by menial tasks because he thinks he deserves to be doing something greater. In truth, however, whatever we are called to do in life is exactly what God wants us to do, and it is our privilege to do it for His glory. (p. 50-51)

16. True humility must be willing to acknowledge that God’s wisdom and knowledge are infinitely superior to ours.

God does not owe us an explanation for anything in our lives. Deuteronomy 29:29 teaches, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.” According to His great wisdom, God has told us exactly what He wants us to know, and He has chosen to keep many other things from us. If we desire to manifest true humility in our lives, we must be willing to acknowledge that God’s wisdom and knowledge are infinitely superior to ours. (p. 54)

17. If humility is the most important Christian virtue, then pride is the greatest sin.

C.S. Lewis once proposed that if humility is the most important Christian virtue, then pride is the greatest sin:

There is one vice of which no man in the world is free, which everyone in the world loathes when he sees it in someone else, and which hardly any people except Christians ever imagine that they are guilty of themselves. The only people who do not see it that way are Christians. There is no fault that makes a man more unpopular, no fault which we are more conscious of in ourselves. And the more we have it in ourselves, the more we dislike it in others. According to the Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is pride. Unchastity (unfaithfulness), anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that are mere flea bites in comparison. It was through pride that the devil became the devil. Pride leads to every other vice. It is a completely anti-God state of mind. (p. 62)

18. A humble person is more concerned about others than he is about himself.

A humble person makes an effort to talk to all kinds of people, regardless of how uncomfortable it may be, because a humble person is more concerned about others than he is about himself. Second Corinthians 5:9 says, “Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.” Humble people

are more concerned about serving others in order to serve Christ. They are more concerned about pleasing Christ than pleasing themselves. (p. 69-70)

19. A humble person will dress in such a way so as not to call attention.

When our appearance is showy for the purpose of making us stand out to other people, then our appearance manifests pride. A truly humble person, on the other hand, will dress in such a way to as not to call attention to himself. In our day, that means not deliberately dressing sloppily or immodestly. (p. 71)

20. Our humble spirit should be evident in our unassuming appearance.

This teaching goes for men as well as for women. Nowadays, both men and women call attention to themselves with body piercings, tattoos, dyed hair, sloppy clothes, and immodest dress. As Christians, we should aim to evoke neither shock at nor great admiration for our appearance. Rather, our humble spirit should be evident in our unassuming appearance. If people are drawn to us or notice us for any reason, it should be only because we magnify Christ's character in a way that they are not used to seeing in the world around them. (p. 73)

21. Quality of humility.

Though the Scripture is clear in its condemnation of pride, the Bible also has many positive things to say about the quality of humility. Psalm 25:9 says, "He leads the humble in justice, and He teaches the humble His way." Psalm 37:11 teaches, "But the humble will inherit the land and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity." Psalm 138⁶ says, "For though the Lord is exalted, yet He regards the lowly..." In other passages we learn that God lifts up the humble, beautifies the humble, gives grace to the humble, honors the humble, dwells and makes His home with the humble, and blesses the humble. (p. 77)

22. Humility is a grace with many promises given to it.

Charles Spurgeon once said, "Humility is a grace that has many promises given to it in the Scripture. Perhaps most promises are given to faith, and love is often considered to be the brightest of the train of virtues, yet humility holds by no means an inferior place in God's Word. Every grace seems to be like a nail on which precious blessings hang, and humility has many a mercy suspended from it." (p. 78)

23. The qualities of a proud person versus a humble person.

Proverbs often describes people who are scornful and contentious. "Through insolence comes nothing but strife . . ." (Prov. 13:10). Someone who is always in

fighters with others and finding fault with everyone is a proud person. The scornful words of proud people cause others to become angry and stirred up against them. “A worthless man digs up evil, while his words are like scorching fire” (Prov. 16:27). As a result, everyone involved is disgraced. “When pride comes, then comes dishonor . . .” (Prov. 11:2)

A truly humble person, as Paul commanded in Ephesians 4:31, will “let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.” They will also “be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32). Their words will be kind rather than contentious, soothing rather than scornful. (p. 82)

24. A humble person is willing to turn the other cheek. A proud person always has to retaliate.

Humble people are willing to turn the other cheek, as Jesus commanded in Matthew 5:39, when they are offended or wronged. Conversely, proud people always have to retaliate when they are offended by someone, no matter how small the offense. A slap on the cheek immediately elicits a punch in the nose. The pride in our hearts causes us to jump up to defend ourselves or pay back every slight. A humble person accepts the wound and is even willing to receive more if need be. (p. 84)

25. A humble person welcomes correction and needs help in being righteous.

In Psalm 141:5 David said, “Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me; it is oil upon my head; do not let my head refuse it....” A mark of true humility is our willingness to be rebuked, corrected, and instructed when we are wrong. A truly humble person welcomes it because he knows that he has a propensity for being sinful and needs help in being righteous. (p. 88)

26. Pride makes self the focus. Humility makes God the focus.

In regard to a view of oneself, pride makes self the focus. Proud people think about their needs, their wants, and their reputations. They expect praise from others, and they are blind to their own faults. They are easily offended. Humility, on the other hand, makes God the focus. Humble people think about what pleases God and what His will is. They are willing to be both attacked and critiqued. They overcome evil with good. They desire above all for Jesus to be magnified and themselves to be diminished. (p. 89)

27. Proud people do not submit to authority.

In regard to a view of other people, pride refuses to admit mistakes and never asks to be forgiven. Proud people do not submit to authority; they are disrespectful, slanderous, and rebellious. They blame others and justify themselves. They reject correction or instruction, and they do not listen well. They are self-serving and expect to be served by other. Essentially, proud people have a distorted view of reality; they delude themselves into thinking that they are superior to other people and that they understand other people's thoughts and motives. They trivialize the bad things they have done to others and exaggerate what others have done to them. (p. 89)

28. Humble people seek godly counsel and graciously submit to authority.

Humility, however, seeks godly counsel. Humble people seek out correction and instruction and are quick to admit when they are wrong. They are quick to ask forgiveness, and they graciously submit to authority. Humble people strive to resolve conflict and listen carefully to others. They are thankful when they are rebuked. Humble people seek to help others be more Christlike, and they love to serve others. They speak softly and encourage others. They view others as better than themselves.

(p. 89-90)

29. Pride is frequently and emphatically condemned in Scripture.

As Charles Spurgeon explained, "There is nothing into which the heart of man so easily falls as pride, and yet there is no vice which is more frequently, and emphatically, and more eloquently condemned in Scripture." (p. 98)

30. Pride: Its Fruits

First, pride causes us to forget God. Second, to make poor decisions. Third, to act in wicked ways. Fourth, pride produces ingratitude. Fifth, to sin in our speech and sixth, pride causes us to close our ears to God's Word and to lean on our own understanding. (p. 109-111)

31. Things that pride prevents.

Pride keeps us from praying, from reading God's Word, from receiving life-giving rebuke, from seeing our own sin, and from repenting. It prevents us from truly listening to others, from developing deep and meaningful relationships, and from

being truly useful in the kingdom of God. These are just a few in a long list of spiritual blessings that are prevented by pride.

Jonathan Edwards summed up this idea well: “Pride is the main handle by which Satan grabs hold of Christian persons and is the chief source of all the mischief that he introduces to clog and hinder the work of God.” It is foolish for us to be proud because of the many things that God’s Word reveals to us about what pride produces.

(p. 111)

32. Times of testing to show us what is in our hearts.

The Lord puts us in the wilderness at times to show us what is in our hearts. These times of testing show us our tendency toward discontentment, selfishness, and bitterness when things do not go as we wish. Ultimately, our pride is revealed as we find ourselves thinking, “I don’t deserve this! Why is this happening to me?!” When the Lord’s manna is not good enough for us, we may be sure that there is pride in our hearts.

God uses difficult times in our lives to teach us that there is only one reason that anything works in our lives: God ordains that it should work. The only reason things happen as they do is that He ordains them. That is what Deuteronomy 8:3 means by: “Man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.” *Whatever* God ordains to be will be, and *only* what He ordains to be will be. Difficult circumstances show us the reality of our lives: we are dependent on God for *absolutely everything!* (p. 128)

33. Humbled by the lives of faithful believers down through history.

We may also allow ourselves to be humbled by the lives of faithful believers down through history. Recently, I have been tremendously challenged by biographies of two giants of the faith. One was a biography of William Carey, who was a missionary to India for many years. For a long time he labored for Christ with no real results, and yet he continued on in his ministry. People who should have supported his ministry financially and with prayer instead became very critical of him. He lost his first wife, married again, and struggled with rebellious children. In situation after situation, Carey experienced difficulties that would cause most of us to complain, be bitter, or throw in the towel completely.

As I read his story, I found myself thinking, “What would I have done in these situations?” Throughout his life, Carey responded with Romans 8:28 “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Carey’s life of humility is a helpful rebuke

and challenge to me as I strive to decrease pride and increase humility in my own life.

Another was a biography of Jonathan Edwards, one of the most brilliant, learned, and gifted men America has ever known. We know him as the man who preached the message “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” when a large group of people were brought under conviction and professed faith in Christ. We know him as the man whom God used in an unusual way during the Great Awakening of the eighteenth century. We know him as the man who wrote numerous theological and practical books that are still being printed and studied today. We know him as the man who was the father and patriarch of a line of numerous descendants who have made significant contributions to the church and to our nation for centuries. (Among his descendants are hundreds of people who became pastors and missionaries, college presidents, government officials, college professors, etc.)

Yes, we know many of these outstanding accomplishments of Jonathan Edwards, but we don’t know nearly as much about the fact that for many years Edwards was the subject of nasty, vicious, and unwarranted criticism, opposition, false rumors, and slander. What we don’t know or think about nearly as much is the fact that he was hated intensely by many who did everything they could to destroy him and his family. What we don’t know is the way he was mistreated in the city and church in which this gifted, competent, dedicated, humble man labored and ministered. We are often not aware of the fact that after many years of sacrificial service to the church in Northampton, Massachusetts, he was voted out of the church and asked to leave. The truth is that after many years of faithful service, the people rejected him and indicated that he and his ministry were not acceptable to them anymore. In fact, it would seem that many in the church and town hadn’t liked him for most of the time he was there.

What we don’t know is that Edwards did not respond in kind to his enemies; what we don’t know is the way he continued to show compassion and kindness to those who reviled him and said all manner of evil against him. What we don’t know about is his exemplary humility, which was as remarkable as his brilliance and giftedness. The biography of Jonathan Edwards has been a tremendous challenge to me in that it has caused me to recognize how much I lack the kind of humility that he demonstrated. It has caused me to confess my sin and to seek God’s help to become more like Edwards, who was so much like his Savior.

God has used the lives of Carey and Edward to show me my pride and (I hope) teach me some humility. And God can use the lives and struggles of many other believers for the same purpose in the lives of all of us. Ah, what lessons on humility God could teach us by studying the lives of John Bunyan, John Paton, Charles Simeon, Amy Carmichael, Joni Eareckson Tada, and countless others! Their lives are a testimony

to God's grace in humbling those He loves. They should be an encouragement and challenge to us as we face difficulties, or even as we enjoy the blessing of few difficulties. (p. 130-132)

34. Reflecting each day on how we have failed the lord.

I believe that it is good for each of us to spend some time each day reflecting on how we have failed the Lord: sins of thought, work, desire, and action. If we use the Word of God as our standard for excellence, we will undoubtedly find that we have no lack of material for reflection. I believe that if we made this a regular practice, we would find it to be a tremendous help in increasing the humility in our lives because it is usually when we start to forget how sinful and fallible we really are that our hearts become proud. (p. 136-137)

35. Putting off pride and putting on humility.

According to Paul in Philippians 2:13, God is graciously at work in us to will and to do His good Pleasure.

Part of His good pleasure is to make us meek and lowly in heart just like His Son. To accomplish this good purpose, God graciously and lovingly uses the circumstances we encounter in life, the study and preaching of His Word, our own sin, and the lives of other people. God's active involvement in our valley-of-humiliation experiences is certainly the most important part of the ongoing process of putting off pride and putting on humility in the lives of His people. This fact, however, doesn't mean that we just let go and let God do it without any personal effort on our part. In fact, Scripture makes it very clear that there are things we must do to develop and sustain the kind of humility that God wants us to have. James 4:10 commands, "*Humble yourselves* in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you." First Peter 5:6 echoes, "Therefore *humble yourselves* in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you." First Peter 5:6 echoes, "Therefore *humble yourselves* under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you at the proper time. (p. 143-144)

36. When we recognize pride in our hearts it ought to cause us to be humbled before him.

The thought of being an abomination to our Lord and Savior ought to be a terrible thing for us as believers. The last thing we should want to do is to invoke our Lord's anger against us. For that reason, when we recognize pride in our hearts, it ought to grieve us deeply and cause us to be humbled before Him. If we truly want to please God, it is helpful for us to spend time meditating on how much He hates pride and how much He loves humility in His children. (p. 146)

37. Contemplating our daily sin should help us become more humble.

Contemplating our daily sin should help us become more humble in several ways. First, it should cause us to want to take the log out of our own eye before we consider the speck in another's eye (Matt. 7:3). In other words, it will help us to be less judgmental, which is a sign of pride. Second, it will help us to stop making excuses for our sin. Instead of blaming our circumstances, our co-workers, our supervisors, our finances, or anything else for our failures, we will humbly admit our inability to please God on our own in any way. (p. 151)

38. Put down pride by God's grace by a change in our heart.

The true throne of pride everywhere, is the heart of man. If, my dear friends, we desire, by God's grace, to put down pride, the only way is to begin with the heart. (p. 161)

Humility: the Forgotten Virtue, by Wayne A. Mack with Joshua Mack, P & R Publishing, 2005, www.prpbooks.com, ISBN: 087552639X