

# Humility the Pathway to Greatness

1 Peter 5:5-7

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Peter laid down the pen long enough to allow the ink to dry, then he reread the words he had written. They were words packed with emotion because they had been given—no, a better choice of words would be—taught to him by God. Now he was in a position to teach others, not because he had completely learned the principle involved, but because he had accepted, embraced, and learned to value humility in light of God's love for him. It was a revelation that had taken root in his heart and was in the process of growing and expanding into every area of his life.

Humility—godly humility—has to be taught to us by God. Usually, it is not something that we easily learn. "How to" books on gaining humility rarely work. Taking time to sit at the feet of Jesus does.

This is because humility, like the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit, is something we acquire from God as we commit ourselves to Him, forsaking all that we are and seeking to become all that He desires for us to be.



## A Change in Us

Humility changed the way Peter viewed God. He learned to submit his heart to God instead of pushing his desires or viewpoints to the forefront of his life. It also changed the way he viewed those around him. He no longer viewed himself as being more important, but now he saw himself as a servant and many times less than others. This does not mean that Peter had a low self-esteem.

Instead, godly humility taught him how to evaluate his life from God's perspective. He developed a sense of lasting courage once he realized it was God who was providing the strength and wisdom he needed.

It also was a firm sense of humility that led Peter along a pathway of greatness, though he never realized just how significant his life would become. None of the apostles understood this. Why? Because they were no longer focused on what was great or powerful or mighty or pleasing to men and women. Instead, they were focused on God and not their talents or personal achievements. **This is the same pathway that God calls us to travel.**

*"Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another,"* writes Peter, *"for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you"* ([1 Peter 5:5-7](#)).

Have you come to a point in your life where you are seeking God with such a passion that you are no longer concerned about your ability or your talents? Humility is not denial of self. It is an embracing of

Christ's life within you where you lay aside your personal wants and needs and adopt His desires and goals for your life.

James was the first apostle to write about humility. In his letter to Jewish believers who were forced to live outside Jerusalem, he writes, "***Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you***" ([James 4:10](#)). The men and women who received James's letter were persecuted believers. They were struggling with discouragement and fear. They could not understand why their faith was being tested in such a severe way.

As Jews living in Jerusalem, they had grown accustomed to having certain rights. When they complained to the religious leaders, they usually received results. But under the dictatorship of Nero, these Christians were not heard. He showed no evidence of temperance or empathy for their cause. He only sought to end their existence and their religion.

At first, James's exhortation of humility must have seemed cruel. After all, they were suffering. However, James knew that if they focused on their situation, they would be consumed by it. He also realized that God had a plan for their lives. However, the only way they would discover it was by embracing their circumstances in light of God's present will for them.

This meant humbling themselves under God's hand and allowing Him to raise them up to greatness at the proper time. They also had to learn that greatness from their perspective was different from God's viewpoint. **God is far more interested in our humility than He is in our "great" works.**

Jesus gave us insight into this principle when He said, "***Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant . . . just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many***" ([Matthew 20:26-28](#)).

## **Humility in the Life of a Servant**

Jesus humbled Himself and came to earth as a servant. He gave His life for us. When we humble ourselves before God, we gain new strength and insight. God prepares us for greatness and blessing.

These early believers were being commissioned by God to carry His gospel message to a lost world, but they did not know it. They did not realize that their adversity and humility were the matches God used to start an evangelistic firestorm throughout the world. Had they remained in Jerusalem, this would have been impossible. While God was not the author of their adversity, He was the One who used it for His glory.

**God often uses intense pressure and adversity to humble us and refocus our thoughts so that we begin to think the way He thinks.** We also learn how to pray what Jesus prayed to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, "***Not My will, but Yours be done***" ([Luke 22:42](#)). Pain, embarrassment, and criticism are God's safety checks to keep us from being prideful and arrogant.

When facing a difficulty, we have a choice. Either we can become hardened by our circumstances or humbled by them. If we are humbled, we will gain God's perspective and quickly discover that He is guiding us to spiritual victory. If we are hardened, we become disillusioned and run the chance of becoming bitter and spiritually shortsighted.

How do we gain godly humility? The first step toward true humility involves truth—God’s truth. This means that we must commit to studying His Word and be willing to submit ourselves to Him. Only He knows the steps we must take to gain true humility.

## The Principle of Humility

One thing we can be sure of is that if we **"feel"** humble then we are not living a life of humility. Humility is something that God develops within us through the power of His Spirit.

There are two principles we need to know, especially when it comes to God’s humility:

God will resist the prideful in heart.

God will reward those who are humble in heart.

Before the coming of the Holy Spirit, Peter was strong-willed, opinionated, and impulsive. He may have been an excellent fisherman and a successful businessman, but his life lacked true strength. His success was a result of human ability and not because of God’s grace and mercy. Many people view humility as a sign of weakness, but it is not. It is a sign of strength and spiritual maturity.

There is no humility in Satan. All pride has its beginning in him, and rebellion is the evidence of its presence. Isaiah records Satan’s words of pride and self-exhalation: *"I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly. . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High"* ([Isaiah 14:13-14](#)). The bitter end of pride always is separation from God.

The Enemy’s fall was the result of his refusal to worship God. Pride and rebellion always stand in stark opposition to humility. They are traveling companions and pose the greatest threat to our spiritual maturity and intimacy with God. A person with a sense of pride will think he does not need God nor will he feel he must give an account for his actions.

Pride is not only dangerous, it is tremendously destructive. But even more than this, pride does not fit who we are in Christ. Jesus has saved us from the power of sin and, especially, pride. It is a hindrance to everything He has prepared for us to experience and enjoy. If we are willing to deal with it, He will give us a spirit of humility as we submit our lives to Him.

False humility can be just as dangerous because it places too much emphasis on our desire to be meek. We must realize that humility is not just a trait. It is one of the most significant graces that God gives. **It reveals who we really are and who we truly serve.** If our lives are earmarked with the grace of humility, everyone we meet will know that we are intimately involved with the Savior.