

## Humility the Jesus Way Luke 14:7-11

Do you appreciate encouragement, to be promoted, praised, honored, patted on the back? In today's passage, I believe Jesus is telling us that it's okay to desire these things! But there's a certain way he prescribes for us to be able to receive these. Let's listen closely to His words in [Luke 14:7-11](#)... In this passage, Jesus was reminding the people of what is written in [Proverbs 25:6-7](#) which says *"Do not claim honor in the presence of the king, And do not stand in the place of great men; For it is better that it be said to you, 'Come up here,' Than for you to be placed lower in the presence of the prince, Whom your eyes have seen."*

Our society in the United States has gradually become less and less formal, and in modern times we are very careful to, (at least on the surface) attempt to treat all with social equality. So perhaps the formality of seating according to social status at a wedding party is a little foreign to us. Now this type of caste arranging is still very alive and well in places like India, China, or Japan- but there are some settings here in America that are still very formal, and might illustrate as well the concept Jesus is presenting here. I think about a martial arts dojo, where students line up according to belt ranking- it would be highly unacceptable for the white belt student to line up close to the Sensei among the black belts. There's a certain order and ranking applied according to your belt color. There's a formality to where you can sit at a concert or a football game, right? We don't have a social caste system here, but if you spend more money than others on the ticket, then you'll definitely sit closer. At our weddings, there's not a ranking order- but there is special seating reserved for the bride and groom, and special seating for the bridesmaids and groomsmen, and special seating for family members. At funerals, there's the special "reserved" seating up front for close family members- and perhaps this parable would equate to the embarrassment one would experience if they sat down in the family reserved seating at a funeral or wedding, only to be called out and asked to go sit somewhere else further away. It would be much better to think to oneself "Although I feel close like family, since I'm really not, I better sit outside the family section," and then what an honor it would be for someone from the family section to call you up to sit with them saying "We consider you family, come sit with us!"

The point of the illustration is in [verse 11](#)... At the home of this Pharisee, Jesus had just healed a man of dropsy- intense, abnormal swelling- and now He is

looking to heal those present of their spiritual dropsy- to cure them from being swollen up with pride. Now we all want good things for ourselves, to be exalted in some form- praised, promoted, respected, patted on the back. And what's beautiful is that Jesus doesn't say it's wrong to want those things, but what He is saying is that there is a different path one takes in order to be praised, promoted, respected, patted on the back. I think often we miss this in Christianity. We assume Jesus wants us to be broken, sad, poor, not to have any fun- but no- He wants us to have life and to have it more abundantly. ([John 10:10](#)) He has a better, fuller, truer definition of good things to be desired in life, and He wants us to know that often the rewards we seek on this earth will end up not really being good true rewards in the end. He is saying slow and steady wins the race. He doesn't want us to win the lottery only to lose the wealth in a lawsuit a year later. He wants us to invest in what we can never possibly lose, investments that will make us happy for all eternity, not investments that will make us feel good and bring happiness only for a limited amount of time.

Pride is a quick fix. It comes easy and naturally, and can perhaps give a boost to someone wanting to move up and accomplish more in life. Pride can give the power to walk on top of other people in an attempt to climb to the top. Pride can justify one's wrongful actions (that feels good, right?), it can boost one's self esteem (that sounds nice too?), and can draw out respect from others, it feels powerful- but its effects are only temporal. What is it that we often say- pride comes before what? A fall, right? The Bible says pride actually leads to something much worse than a fall. [Proverbs 16:18](#) says "Pride goes before *destruction*, and a haughty spirit before stumbling." Pride leads to destruction! It's a haughty spirit- an arrogant, disdainful spirit- that leads to stumbling and a fall. But pride will destroy you! Actually, if we looked at the word definitions, we might have a hard time telling the difference between arrogance and pride. They go hand in hand- I would tend to believe if arrogance is present so is pride, and if pride is present then so is arrogance. So, either way there will be a fall and a destruction, the fall perhaps leading to the destruction for the arrogant and prideful.

In contrast- "He who humbles Himself will be exalted." Humility is not engrained in us from birth like pride is, no- humility takes work. It takes effort, it's a conscious mind reset. It's a more difficult road, one that takes longer to travel. It takes time, and paying attention to life's lessons in order to cultivate a true sense of humility. If being exalted, lifted up, and honored is what Jesus wants for us,

then its ok to make that our destination. But He says that the easy, prideful highway is the wrong way to get there.

Anyone been to the Arboretum in Bent Creek? How do you get there? Highway 280, left on 191- then you'll see the sign for it, to turn left. Pretty simple directions, and it's only 45 minutes or so away. Now, there is another way you could get there. You could set out on foot, through Pisgah National Forest, hike some trails, cross over some mountain ridges, do some bush whacking, cross over the Blue Ridge Parkway and eventually you could make your way to the Arboretum. Now the highway sounds much easier, right? As you get close to the Arboretum, there's a place where you pass under a bridge, it's the Blue Ridge Parkway crossing over the French Broad River. What if I knew that that bridge was going to collapse on top of your car the moment you passed under it? If you had to pick between the harder, longer hiking route and the easier, faster highway route- you would be probably picking the highway and would really be enjoying it, right up until the point that you passed under the bridge and it collapsed on you. If you *had* to get to the Arboretum, and I told you what would happen to you if you took the highway there, although the hiking path would be difficult and long, you would much prefer arriving to your destination via that hiking path, than to take the easy way and become destroyed by the collapsing bridge.

Under normal circumstances, hiking to the Arboretum would be completely counter intuitive, it would really be a backward way of planning to arrive there- and likewise what Jesus is teaching in verse 11 is completely counter intuitive, and would appear to be a backward way of thinking. But He knows beyond what we know, He sees the future, and wants us to know that pride, which comes so easy- will lead to destruction. Rather the pathway to the destination of honor, praise, affirmation- is the harder road of humility.

It's not easy to admit that we may struggle with pride. Perhaps a really good indicator that someone has an issue with pride is when they don't think that they struggle with pride. Most of us are probably pretty good at avoiding obvious signs of pride, we've learned to not walk around with our nose high in the air, we've learned not to say certain things out loud in a public setting, things like "I'm obviously the best." "I'm always right." Or "If only everyone else could get it together like I have..." Now, maybe you are willing to admit to yourself at least, that you might consciously or subconsciously think some of these things from

time to time, but perhaps there's some other indicators out there that might help us become more aware of pride creeping into our lives. Here are 10 subtle indicators of pride I found interesting as I was looking into this.

- 1.** Assuming you already know something when someone is teaching. Ever tune someone out when they begin teaching on a subject that you might be somewhat familiar with? It could be because of some pride.
- 2.** Being unwilling to ask someone else for help. It's good to be independent, but there are times in life when we need to be able to admit that we need help, and this unwillingness could be a sign of pride.
- 3.** Disregarding the advice of others. I love the wisdom of [Proverbs 11:14](#), it says *"Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory."* If you are unwilling to seek counsel from others, then you might be dealing with some pride.
- 4.** Not being able to receive constructive criticism. Pride will prevent you from seeing the value in criticism that could lead you to become a better person.
- 5.** Ignoring attempts from others to communicate with you. We all get busy, and perhaps forget, but blowing off people who text, email, or call- could be a sign that you pridefully feel you are more important, or what you are doing is more important, than the person attempting to connect with you.
- 6.** Justifying sin instead of admitting it. When the Bible speaks of sin, it is usually very clear, and when we attempt to justify our sin, we are in effect demonstrating that we pridefully think we know better than God.
- 7.** Being consistently critical. When we are quick to criticize others and their actions, pride is often the root. (<https://www.allenparr.com/15-subtle-signs-pride-life/#>)
- 8.** Rarely saying "thank you." Ingratitude and pride are close friends.
- 9.** Thinking your predecessor was an idiot. Thinking that people should be so happy now that you are here to fix all the mistakes of the person before you, might be a sign of pride.
- 10.** Not being able to learn from people different than you. Pride will block you from gaining wisdom from others. (<https://ericgeiger.com/2017/04/10-signs-you-are-more-prideful-than-you-realize/>)

More than likely, we can each see areas in our lives in which we are prone to struggle with the sin of pride. Realize its power of destruction. Pride can be rooted in fear, it can make us ungrateful, it can give us a feeling of entitlement, it can keep us from praying, it goes hand in hand with hypocrisy. In contrast, I hope you can see the value, significance, and blessing of what Jesus is teaching here in this passage- that humility is the better path- the path that leads to blessing. So

how do we get there? How do we begin walking down this path of humility and blessing? What does true humility look like?

C.S. Lewis, in his classic book, *Mere Christianity*, wrote about what he imagined a humble person to be like. He says “Do not imagine that if you meet a really humble man he will be what most people call ‘humble’ nowadays: he will not be a sort of greasy... person, who is always telling you that, of course, he is a nobody. Probably all you will think about him is that he seemed a cheerful, intelligent chap who took a real interest in what you said to him. If you dislike him it will be because you feel a little envious of anyone who seems to enjoy life so easily. He will not be thinking about humility: he will *not* be thinking about himself at all.”

I read a really good article online about humility that outlined three different characteristics of humble people.

(<https://www.spirituallylivingforbusyypeople.com/3-signs-humility>) A lot of what I am about to share with you I have pulled from that article.

One characteristic of humble people that it mentioned, is that they don't go around talking about their humility. We've probably all met someone who was attempting to promote their humility. Perhaps someone who over and over says things like, “Oh I'm just a nobody.” Or, “Oh thank you, it's nothing really, I just try to stay humble.” Perhaps they attempt to downplay their gifts. And the result of encountering people who promote their humility, is that you walk away feeling somehow that they are being in-authentic. Truly humble people don't go around saying that they are humble. In contrast, humble people are people who are in a constant state of awareness of their tendencies to be prideful. They are authentic in admitting their weaknesses. They aren't afraid to admit that they struggle. Humble people are highly self-aware and are quick to ask for forgiveness. Are you aware of areas of pride in your life? Are you quick to admit a wrong? Do you have authentic relationships with others where there is freedom to express your struggles? If not, dare I say that there might be a bit of pride that is holding you back from experiencing the blessings of humility.

A second characteristic is that humble people think more about others than themselves. Their humility shows up very quickly in conversations, as they ask questions and are genuinely more interested in hearing from who they are talking with, than they are in hearing themselves talk. Let me read to you a powerful

quote, it says “Humble people develop a level of curiosity which drives them to learn from the best instead of striving to be above the rest.” Are you being humble in your conversations? Are you learning more about others? Are you strengthening your relationship with them by growing in your knowledge of who they are and growing through learning from their experiences? If not, dare I say that there might be a little bit of pride that is holding you back from experiencing the blessings of humility.

Something I have noticed particularly in our mountain culture, is that not only are we often not actively seeking to know more about someone else- asking them questions, desiring to hear from them- but actually it seems in our culture there is a tendency to avoid *altogether* engaging in *any* type of conversation with someone we don't know, who isn't from around here. Maybe we feel threatened by an outsider, maybe we feel shy, maybe we feel like we already have enough people in our life- friends and family- and it's too much work to try to get to know a new someone else. We shouldn't be like this as followers of Jesus. We should be actively looking for ways to engage in conversations, and share the love of Jesus with those we don't know.

Another thing I've noticed is how often we ignore someone who enters into the space that we and our friends are occupying. We might even know that person, but for whatever reason there is a tendency to ignore that person's presence, as we continue in our conversation, or whatever it is that we are doing. Why do we hesitate to acknowledge that person, is it too difficult to make eye contact and at least give a head nod or short greeting? I also see the opposite of this, where person A and B are conversing, and person C walks up, and person A cuts off their current conversation with person B, and immediately engages with the new person C while completely ignoring person B from their original conversation, sometime even leaving them in mid-sentence while they now engage with their other friend. We shouldn't be like this as followers of Jesus, in His humility we should all strive to very aware of the presence of others, and in humility allowing them to feel a sense of belonging, value, and worth as a person.

A third characteristic of humble people is that they choose being at peace over being right. My Father-in-law puts it this way, he told me the secret to his marriage is that he figured out he would “rather be *happy* than *right*.” It's really easy to disagree with others over little things. It's really easy to prefer our ideas of

how to do things, over others' ideas of how to do things. And often we can fight for our way, and maybe win, but there's a high chance of losing our peace in the process- or even trampling over others in the process. Pride leads to destruction, and often our pride not only harms ourselves, but it very likely will harm others as well. Humble people will resist the desire to always be right. They are ok with allowing others to make the decision, they are ok with allowing others to feel empowered. They are more interested in others being able to save face, than they themselves to save face. Humble people don't take things personally, they are quick to let go and move on, and as a result- they are able to enjoy life at a higher level than the proud.

I want us to take some time in personal reflection and introspection, and allow the Lord to make us more aware of pride in our lives. And as you pray, I want you to jot down some areas of pride that you feel like the Lord is working on in you. I encourage you not to take this time lightly, depending on how you respond, these next few minutes could very well prevent some stumbling, falling, and destruction from happening in your life and in the lives around you. Ask God to show you how you can humble yourself- note Jesus doesn't say "Pray that God would humble you." No- *we* are to humble *ourselves*, it's an act that *we* do, and when we do our role of humbling ourselves- it is God who does the act of exalting.