

*Before sermon:* Redeemed people...SING THE WORD (February – Romans 11:33-36)

Welcome fellow pilgrims! We continue today on a journey we began two weeks ago, a journey towards becoming people who walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). Is the trek easy? No. It’s more grueling than running a marathon with a backpack. Is it worth it? Absolutely. Eternally so. Today we’re going to learn about humility from Jesus Himself. Let’s open our Bibles to Matthew 5 for part three in our series, *Killing Pride, Cultivating Humility*.

*Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:1-10*

Ponder this statement by John Stott, “At every stage of our Christian development pride is our greatest enemy and humility our greatest friend.” That’s not an overstatement either. Pride is our *greatest enemy*. Why? Because pride is at the heart of every other sin. And why is humility our *greatest friend*? Because the Scriptures declare, “God gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).” Think of it this way. Humility is the key that unlocks the storehouse door to the limitless supply of God’s amazing and life-transforming grace. Indeed, humility is our greatest friend.

Sadly, pride is often excused (if not promoted) and humility is seldom encouraged, even in churches. In his book *Humility: True Greatness*, C. J. Mahaney shares a story that captured my attention when I first read it.

A few years ago our church—Covenant Life Church in Gaithersburg, Maryland—celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. As we gathered on this occasion to rejoice together, Gary Ricucci, who’s part of our pastoral team and one of the church’s founding pastors, stood before us to present an overview of our history. He observed that though much had changed over the previous twenty-five years—such as the physical appearance of certain pastors like myself—the particular values that were present at our church’s inception had remained unchanged.

Listening intently to Gary that morning was a church member and small-group leader named Jim. Before attending Covenant Life, he’d been a part of a congregation where, regretfully, a serious church split had taken place. As he listened to Gary describe our church’s enduring values, Jim’s mind was busy comparing these with the values evident in his former church. ‘Why was my experience so different?’ Jim wondered.

He heard Gary affirm that, right from the beginning, Covenant Life Church had a love for God’s Word.

And Jim said to himself, *Yes, we had that.*

Gary continued, ‘We were in love with Jesus Christ and grateful for His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross.’

*Yes, Jim thought, we had that, too.*

‘We loved grace, and we loved worship.’

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<sup>\*\*</sup>Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>2</sup> For a previous development of this important topic, please see the series at WBC in 2006.

*Yep, had that.*

‘We believed in the importance of relationships,’ Gary added.

Once again Jim inwardly responded, *Okay, we had that.*

Then Gary said, ‘And there was a strong emphasis on humility, especially among the leaders.’

And Jim thought, *Nope. That we did not have.*<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, Jim’s experience isn’t isolated. Far too many churches, including Bible-teaching, righteousness-promoting ones, get a failing grade when it comes to humility. How are we doing at WBC?

That’s a slippery question, isn’t it? I looked back at my 2006 sermon notes and found this statement. “May God help us to be a church that *truly values humility*, starting with our leadership and throughout, to be people who are taking tangible steps to put on humility by the grace of God. Without humility we may be able to impress the world with our programs but we’ll never experience the help of God, for *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble—and only to the humble.*”

God has been answering that prayer. I say that not because we aren’t still battling pride, for we most certainly are and unfortunately pride rears its ugly head on a regular basis. But by God’s grace, we are battling it. The need for humility is now on the radar, and the pursuit of humility is a core value to us.

We know that humility isn’t just a good idea. It’s essential to our calling, a point Jesus emphasized in the Sermon on the Mount. I’d studied the Sermon on the Mount many times, but it was during our humility pilgrimage back in 2006 that something struck me. Jesus has a lot to say about pride and humility in the Sermon on the Mount! In fact, if we took the time now to read this sermon, we’d see pride confronted and humility called for in nearly every statement.

The setting is significant. According to Matthew 5:1 the crowds were after Jesus. There are lots of reasons people come to Jesus, not all of them God-pleasing either. Jesus walked up on a mountainside, sat down, and began to address His disciples, apparently with the crowd eavesdropping. He delivered His kingdom manifesto, think of it as a crash course, “Discipleship 101,” in which He said in essence, “If you want to follow Me, here’s what’s involved.”

Our aim today is to do an overview of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, paying particular attention to what He taught about pride and humility. To His disciples as well as to would-be disciples, the Lord Jesus communicated three vital lessons.

I. In order to enter God’s kingdom, I need humility (5:1-20).

II. As a sinner, I lack humility (5:21-7:6).

III. If I am humble, I will live in desperate dependence upon God (7:7-27).

#### I. In order to enter God’s kingdom, I need humility (5:1-20).

The Master’s very first words underscore the need for humility. He says in Matthew 5:3, “Blessed are **the poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>4</sup>

Who qualifies for God’s kingdom? What Jesus says is astounding. He states that requirement #1 is *poverty*, spiritual poverty. To be blessed, to possess the kingdom, you must be *needy*. You must be *lacking*. You must *have nothing*.

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<sup>3</sup> C. J. Mahaney, *Humility: True Greatness*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>4</sup> Most of the quotations in this sermon are taken from the NIV1984.

You say, “Sounds easy then to enter God’s kingdom! All you need is *nothing!*” Yet that’s our problem. We don’t like to admit we have nothing. We see ourselves as good decent people, worthy of God’s attention and blessing. Why? Because we have a fundamental problem. It’s called *pride*, and from the outset Jesus hits our problem head-on.

You say, “I don’t understand. How exactly does a person enter the kingdom?” As we listen to Jesus, we discover the answer. To enter God’s kingdom, I must admit three realities.

**A. I lack what God requires (5:1-12).** Jesus begins with eight beatitudes, essentially eight indicators of who has the blessing of God on their lives. As with the ten commandments, there are two categories in this listing. Beatitudes 1-4 identify how the blessed person views his relationship *with God*, whereas beatitudes 5-8 focus on how he relates *to people*. Here are the first four characteristics of God’s kind of person:

#1 *The poor in spirit*

#2 *Those who mourn*

#3 *The meek*

#4 *Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness*

These four marks tell us how the blessed person sees himself. He sees himself first of all as *poor in spirit*. God’s kingdom is not for the self-sufficient movers and shakers of the world. It’s not for the self-made man. You must admit you’re spiritually bankrupt to get in.

What happens when you’re gripped by your spiritual poverty? You *mourn*. And not just about your own spiritual condition, but also about the dreadful consequences of living in a sin-cursed world.

Furthermore, Jesus says that the *meek* are blessed. He doesn’t mean “weak,” for “meek” by definition means “power under control.” The meek person doesn’t live for his rights, for he recognizes that he is a servant who lives to please his Master and King.

It’s not surprising that such a person *hungers and thirsts* for something. What’s that? Jesus says it’s *righteousness*. If you’re hungry, it’s because you lack food. If you’re thirsty, it’s because you lack water. The blessed person *hungers and thirsts* because he knows he lacks (indeed the world lacks) something. *Righteousness*. He knows he does not have inherently (nor does anyone else) what it takes to be right with God. Later a former Pharisee made this joyful announcement in 1 Corinthians 1:30, saying, “Christ is our righteousness.” This is what the blessed person *hungers and thirsts* for, not righteousness in the abstract, but the person who gives it. He longs for Christ!

Here’s the good news. What do the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness experience? Jesus says:

#1 *Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

#2 *They will be comforted.*

#3 *They will inherit the earth.*

#4 *They will be filled.*

In other words, God blesses those who admit they don’t deserve His blessings, indeed, who admit they don’t deserve *Him*. Who admits that? Not the proud, for sure. Only those who humble themselves. And only the humble will exhibit the next four beatitudes in their relationships with people:

#5 *The merciful*

#6 *The pure in heart*

#7 *The peacemakers*

#8 *Those persecuted because of righteousness*

God's kind of person *shows mercy* to others. The proud person demands perfection. The proud person looks down on the "imperfect." The blessed person shows mercy because he knows how desperately he needs mercy.

He has a *pure heart*, too. When he does a good deed, there's no hidden agenda, no ulterior motive. Pride often disguises itself. The proud-hearted person will do good deeds, but does them so you will think well of him and maybe return the favor some day.

The blessed person is a *peacemaker*. He knows that life isn't about *him* and *his personal comfort*. Consequently, he's willing to take personal risks to help bring about peaceful relationships with those at odds, something a proud person won't do.

Finally, such a person is *persecuted for righteousness*. He has died to self and is willing to suffer abuse for doing what is right. Frankly, it's easy to be proud. A proud person thinks he's strong but in reality he is quite *weak*. It takes power to be humble. So when you see humility, you are not seeing weakness but incredible out of this world strength.

What is Jesus' point in the beatitudes? It's quite simple. He's making it clear that to enter His kingdom, a person must admit that he or she *lacks what God requires*. But there's more. To enter God's kingdom, a second admission is needed.

**B. I exist for the glory of God and the good of others (5:13-16).** Jesus gave two identity statements for His followers in this section:

*"You are the salt of the earth."* (13)

*"You are the light of the world."* (14)

What do salt and light have in common? They don't exist for themselves. Their presence brings benefit to that which they touch. Salt preserves meat, for instance. Light causes the contents of a room to be visible. Jesus made the point of this illustration clear in verse 16, "...Let your light shine before men *that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*"

Though Jesus certainly had more in mind with these two word pictures, here's a primary lesson. To become His disciple, you must adopt a new fundamental perspective. As His follower I exist, not for myself, but for the glory of God and the good of others. A proud person won't agree to those terms. Only the humble will.

At this point you may be thinking, "God's standard is high, much higher than I can achieve!" Indeed, it is. That's the very point Jesus makes next. To enter God's kingdom I must admit a very specific need.

**C. I need Christ's righteousness because mine falls short (5:17-20).** Listen to Jesus' declaration in verse 17, "I have not come to abolish them [the Law and the Prophets] but to fulfill them." Why did Jesus come? He said it was to fulfill God's Law. Why was that necessary? For the simple reason that sinful human beings can't keep it, not fully. Is partial obedience a problem?

Let's listen to Jesus' answer to that question. He says in verse 20, "For I tell you that *unless your righteousness surpasses* that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, *you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.*" So the righteous deeds of a sinner, even a "good" sinner like a Pharisee or a religious teacher, fall short of God's standard. And those who depend on their own righteousness will never enter God's kingdom.

That is why God sent His Son into the world, my friend. Jesus came to do for you and me what we cannot do for ourselves. As the perfect man, He fulfilled God's law. He met God's standard. He is our hope, our only hope, for the righteousness we need.

Let this sink in. My righteousness and your righteousness fall short of God's standard. We miss the mark. We're not even close. We are *helpless sinners*.

Why then do we often not view ourselves this way? A comment by John Calvin explains, "It is evident that man never attains to a true self-knowledge until he has previously contemplated the face of God and come down after such contemplation to look into himself."<sup>5</sup>

And this is our problem. We compare ourselves with other people and feel pretty good about our chances. And proud, too. Only when we, as Calvin puts it, *contemplate the face of God*, do we begin to see ourselves accurately.

It's kind of like the story of *The Emperor with No Clothes*. The man thought he looked just fine and everybody else played the game with him. But he wasn't just fine. He was *naked*, and what he needed was an honest assessment of himself.

This is what we need as well, if we're to mortify our pride and cultivate true humility. C. J. Mahaney offers this definition, "Humility is honestly assessing ourselves in light of God's holiness and our sinfulness."<sup>6</sup>

This is what Jesus is helping us do in the Sermon on the Mount. *Honestly assess ourselves in light of God's holiness and our sinfulness*. Jesus makes it very clear that to enter God's kingdom, *I need humility*. That's lesson #1. The second is related.

## II. As a sinner, I lack humility (5:21-7:6).

Jesus uses the bulk of the Sermon on the Mount to establish this point. As sinners, we lack humility. What we have from birth is pride and it services in a host of ways. In this section Jesus gives us five characteristics of proud people.

**A. Proud people settle for selective obedience (5:21-48).** There's a key statement that appears six times in verses 21-48, a contrast, "You have heard that it was said...But I say to you..."

By using this contrast, Jesus exposes one of the follies of proud people. They don't disobey *ALL* of God's commands. They exhibit a *selective obedience*. In other words, they have just enough obedience to be dangerous.

Six times Jesus says, "You have heard that such and such a sin is wrong [typically some very blatant, external infraction], but I say to you that something else is wrong, indeed, is far worse." I won't take time to develop Jesus' examples, merely to list them.

*You have heard that this is said...*

*"Do not murder (21)."*

*"Do not commit adultery (27)."*

*"If you divorce make sure you give a certificate (31)."*

*"Do not break your oaths (33)."*

*"Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth (38)."*

*"Love your neighbor and hate your enemy (43)."*

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<sup>5</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, vol. 1, p. 38.

<sup>6</sup> C. J. Mahaney, *Humility: True Greatness*, p. 22.

What do you notice about that list? It hits the “big sins,” the visible sins, the externals. And quite frankly, it’s pretty keepable, at least in the eyes of a proud person. Now watch the contrast Jesus makes to these six common statements.

*But I say to you...*

*“If you’re angry with your brother, you’re guilty, and if your brother is upset with you, go make things right.”*

*“If you’ve lusted after a woman, you’ve committed adultery in your heart, and if you struggle with lust, take drastic action to deny yourself.”*

*“If you have marriage trouble, humble yourself and work things out.”*

*“If you say something, mean it, and do what you say every time.”*

*“If you are wronged by someone, take it. Don’t retaliate.”*

*“If you have enemies, love them and pray for them.”*

What do those six responses have in common? Don’t miss it. To do them, you must exhibit *humility*. To ask forgiveness of a brother you’ve offended takes humility. To acknowledge that you’re struggling with lust takes humility. To work at your marriage instead of running from it takes humility. To mean what you say all the time, when it’s easier to fudge the truth to make yourself look good, takes humility. To be hurt by someone and to choose NOT to retaliate takes humility. To love your enemy, of course, that takes a ton of humility.

Beloved, we are prone to settle for externals and think we’re okay with God. But Jesus makes it clear that selective obedience is *disobedience*.

**B. Proud people use religion to impress other people (6:1-18).** Jesus exposes this reality with a series of warnings in verses 1-18. Proud people can be very religious people, and Jesus identifies some of the religious things proud people do.

*Alms-giving* (that’s the AV; ‘practicing your righteousness’ ESV)—verses 1-4

*Prayer*—verses 5-14

*Fasting*—verses 16-18

It’s easy to think God is pleased just because we are doing “religious” activities. But He’s interested in the *why* question. What’s our motive? Listen to Jesus in 6:1 (NIV), “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, *to be seen by them*. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.”

God is repulsed when we do good things for self-promoting reasons. John Calvin explains, “God cannot bear with seeing his glory appropriated by the creature in even the smallest degree, so intolerable to him is the sacrilegious arrogance of those who, by praising themselves, obscure his glory as far as they can.”<sup>7</sup>

**C. Proud people hoard their possessions (6:19-24).** Listen to Jesus in Matthew 6:19-20, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth...But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven....” Then He gives this indictment in 6:24, “You cannot serve both God and money.”

Proud folks are self-focused. Consequently, they cling to what they have, and since it’s never enough they long to have more. Jesus next confronts a related tendency.

**D. Proud people worry about material things (6:25-34).** Jesus says in 6:25, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear.” That’s what proud people do. They *worry* about stuff.

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<sup>7</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson, n.p. (in Mahaney, p. 33).

They have such a small view of God that they think He can't supply or might forget to supply their needs.

What's the solution for the worrier? Jesus gives it in 6:33, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

A worrier seldom sees himself as a proud person, but he is. He's obsessed with his needs. It's no wonder that Jonathan Edwards called pride, "the worst viper that is in the heart" and "the greatest disturber of the soul's peace and sweet communion with Christ" and "the most hidden, secret and deceitful of all lusts."<sup>8</sup>

We seldom talk about our struggle with pride, but Jonathan Edwards did. He confessed that he constantly battled his own pride. Listen to this admission, "What a foolish, silly, miserable, blind, deceived poor worm am I, when pride works."<sup>9</sup>

Mahaney makes this significant observation about Jonathan Edwards. "In his sermons and in his vast writings he constantly warned against pride, especially spiritual pride, which he viewed as the greatest cause of the premature ending of the Great Awakening, the revival that had brought so much spiritual vitality to the church in Edwards's day."<sup>10</sup>

**E. Proud people judge the sins of others and excuse their own (7:1-6).** Jesus asked a probing question at the beginning of chapter 7. Notice Matthew 7:3, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?"

This is precisely what the proud person does. Why is it that I am quick to bring to my wife's attention the things that she does that bug me, yet minimize my own shortcomings? It's the same reason why when there's tension in the air, my first response is to assume that the other person is the cause of the problem, not me.

Now it's time for a question. How do you feel at this point in Jesus' sermon? If you're taking to heart the Master's words, probably not so good. And that's a good thing. Jesus is helping us see that in order to enter His kingdom, we need humility, and yet as sinners, we lack the humility God requires, and the lack of humility shows its ugly head in countless ways over and over again.

Is there hope for the proud? It's at this point, when we're at our lowest, that Jesus provides the solution for our problem. He says, "**Ask** and it will be given to you; **seek** and you will find; **knock** and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened (Matthew 7:7-8)."

It's such a simple command, so unassuming that we often miss its significance. Yet it's the climax, the punch-line of the sermon. Having shown us our deficiency, Jesus now presents us with the solution. *Just ask.*

"That's it?" you say. "All I have to do is ask?" Yes. That's it. You can experience the wonder of God's kingdom life if you'll simply do this. *Ask.* Ask the Living God to do for you for you cannot do for yourself, and you will receive from Him precisely what you need. This is Jesus' promise to you.

Do you want to be set free from your pride so that you can walk humbly with God as He created you to do? Then ask.

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<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Advice to Young Converts* (in Mahaney, p. 34).

<sup>9</sup> From the March 2, 1723 entry in Edwards' diary, *Memoirs of Jonathan Edwards*

<sup>10</sup> C. J. Mahaney, *Humility: True Greatness*, p. 34.

“But are you sure He will help me?” you respond. “I know He has what I need, but will He help me?” Listen to Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:11, “If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who **ask him!**”

This brings us to our third lesson about humility.

### III. If I am humble, I will live in desperate dependence upon God (7:7-27).

By this point in Jesus’ sermon, it’s obvious I am in huge trouble. It’s not that I merely need a *little* assistance. I *cannot* live the kingdom life. On my own I’ll miss the mark every time. But here’s the good news.

**A. What I lack, God freely offers (7-12).** This is precisely why He sent His Son. And this is precisely why His Son took the hard road to the cross, died as a sin-bearer, and rose again. He did this to *save helpless sinners* like you and me. God’s salvation is a free gift that He extends to all in the name of the person of His Son. But here’s the qualifier.

**B. What God offers, I must receive by asking, seeking, and knocking.** To be saved, I must ask. Ask whom? Ask God. Ask God what? Ask God to save me.

But the asking doesn’t end once He saves me. To live as a saved person ought to live, I must ask God every day, every moment to help me. And that’s what humility is. At its core, humility is *living in desperate dependence upon God*.

At the beginning of this message, I shared an illustration about a church that embraced humility as a core value. What’s the difference between a church where there’s pride and one where its people exhibit humility? The difference shows up in big and small ways every day. Here are some examples:

Pride says, “Well! Why wasn’t I asked to be on that committee?!” Humility says, “I’m thankful to be in a church where there are so many gifted and willing servants. I’ll serve somewhere else.”

Pride says, “Why didn’t someone visit ME when I was sick?” Humility says, “The Body must be helping others in need right now. That’s why they didn’t come. Or maybe my brothers just didn’t know I needed some encouragement.”

Pride says, “I saw someone yawning during my Sunday School lesson! How rude!” Humility says either, “I wonder if my brother isn’t feeling well today. It’s not like him to not pay attention to the teaching of God’s Word.” Or perhaps, “Maybe the problem was me. I’m not sure I was as prepared as I should have been to teach today’s lesson.”

Pride says, “You mean the church isn’t displaying that picture I donated? Well, I’m offended.” Humility says, “I’m so grateful the Lord used that picture I gave twenty years ago to encourage His people all these years. I’m also glad to know other people are using their creative abilities to promote His excellence.”

And none of this comes naturally. Humility comes to those who *ask*. Which brings us to the question, *how?* In practical terms, how can we humble ourselves?

### Practical Steps in the Pursuit of Humility:<sup>11</sup>

Again, I’m grateful for C. J. Mahaney and the practical steps he offers. Last time we identified three steps. Let’s review them, and then consider several others.

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<sup>11</sup> Adapted from Pastor C.J. Mahaney, [www.sovereigngraceministries.org](http://www.sovereigngraceministries.org).

**A. Study the attributes of God.** This is the chief end of man, to know and glorify God and enjoy Him forever. A sure way to pop an inflated view of self is to get to know God better (see Job 38:1-7; Ps. 50:21; 1 Tim. 1:17).

**B. Meditate on the cross every day.** John Stott explains why this is vital, “Every time we look at the cross Christ seems to be saying to us, ‘I am here because of you. It is your sin I am bearing, your curse I am suffering, your debt I am paying, your death I am dying.’ Nothing in history or in the universe cuts us down to size like the cross. All of us have inflated views of ourselves, especially in self-righteousness, until we have visited a place called Calvary. It is there, at the foot of the cross, that we shrink to our true size.”<sup>12</sup> (see Gal. 6:14; Heb. 12:2-3)

**C. Learn to laugh at yourself (others do!).** In the book *Surprised by Laughter: The Comic World of C. S. Lewis*, Terry Lindvall writes, “Laughter is a divine gift to the human who is humble. A proud man cannot laugh because he must watch his dignity; he cannot give himself over to the rocking and rolling of his belly. But a poor and happy man laughs heartily because he gives no serious attention to his ego.”<sup>13</sup>

Here are some new suggestions.

**D. Study and apply the doctrine of sin to your own life.** Meditate on Romans chapters 1-3. Carefully work through a book like *The Enemy Within* by Kris Lungaard, which is a modern synopsis of the Puritan John Owen’s Vol. 6 on temptation and mortification of sin. Why is such study necessary? Because most people don’t really understand *how sin works*. The study of the doctrine of sin leads us to two important discoveries.<sup>14</sup>

1. *There are two kinds of sinners: those who admit their sin, and those who don’t.* The person who won’t admit their sin is in trouble. That’s obvious. But the person who does admit his sinfulness may also be in danger. Why?

2. *Those who admit their sin fall into two more categories: those who do something about it, and those who do not.* Listen to two Bible texts. The first is 1 Corinthians 10:12, “Take heed those of you who think you stand, lest you fall.” The second is Numbers 32:23, “... be sure your sin will find you out.”

Brothers and sisters, it’s not enough merely to agree that we are sinners. We must confess our sin, to God and all appropriate others. And we would do well to remember this warning by Pastor Brad Bigne, “If you won’t confess your sin to the appropriate individuals - in His time and not yours - He will make it VERY PUBLIC – because He opposes the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.”

**E. Consistently practice the spiritual disciplines.** When I carve out prime time in the morning for Bible reading and prayer and Scripture memory, I am making a statement. I am saying to God, “I need You. I cannot face this day without You.” I am also taking a step to mortify my proud flesh.

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<sup>12</sup> John Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, p. 179.

<sup>13</sup> Taken from C. J. Mahaney, *Humility*, pp. 94-5.

<sup>14</sup> Mike Renahan, “Men do not like to admit their faults, nor confess they are sinners... But the sooner we admit and confess, the quicker we can deal with our pride. The taxonomy of the problem looks like this. Premise: All men are sinners. Upon further examination we find that sinners fall into two distinct classes, those who admit their sin, and those who don’t. Those who admit themselves to be sinners fall into two more classes, those who do something about it, and those who do not. It is only those who deal with their soul’s true dire need before God who may make progress out of their sin.” from “Tabletalk” magazine

On the other hand, when I don't begin my day in the Word and prayer I am making another statement, one that says, "I can make it today on my own. I don't need to hear your voice this morning, God. And I don't need to ask You for anything. Maybe tomorrow. We'll see."

But even spiritual disciplines can produce pride, so C.J. Mahaney offers this suggestion. At the end of your time close your Bible and say, "God, what I just did make absolutely no contribution to the basis of my justification, but what I just did is a statement of my need for you and dependence on You."

**F. Invite and pursue correction.** Are you open to correction from others? Do you seek it? If there was something God wanted to tell you through your spouse, could He? Would those who know you best say you are approachable and teachable?

The Lord tells us in Proverbs 15:31-32, "He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise. He who ignores discipline despises himself, but whoever heeds correction gains understanding."

**G. Recognize your relative unimportance and prepare to be replaced.** No one is indispensable, *no one*. Listen again to C. J. Mahaney, "When I claim to be the author of what is purely a gift, I commit cosmic plagiarism." As Charles De Gaulle rightly observed, "Graveyards are filled with indispensable men."

I've said it many times and believe it. One of the great evidences of a truly successful ministry is what happens when the person is no longer there. What will happen to your ministry when you're no longer there? Are you training others to do what you're doing? "But if I train others, maybe I'll lose my job," so says the proud person.

Fellow pastors, prepare yourself to be replaced. Deacons, trustees, Sunday School teachers, prepare yourselves to be replaced. Parents, prepare yourselves to be replaced. The positions we now hold are stewardships, not entitlements. Can you say that? If you can, it's evidence that you're doing a lot of *asking*.

Friends, should we give attention to killing pride? Yes. And should we make the cultivation of humility a priority focus? Again, yes indeed. But why? What's the goal of killing pride and cultivating humility? It's expressed in the final verse of our closing song. This is why God redeemed us, and what He has in store for us in eternity future. Something glorious, something that includes us but is not about us.

*O that with yonder sacred throng we at His feet may fall!*

*We'll join the everlasting song and crown Him Lord of all!*

**Closing Song:** #97 "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" (all verses)

Community Group Discussion:

1. Today is part three in our series *Killing Pride, Cultivating Humility*. How is your understanding of humility growing? What new challenges did you experience this week in your pursuit of humility?
2. This morning we looked at what Jesus taught about humility in His sermon on the mount. What stood out most to you? Take time to read again the beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-12.
3. In Matthew 5:21 to Matthew 7:6 Jesus exposes several indicators of pride. What are they? Which one stands out most to you, and why?
4. What does Matthew 7:7 have to do with experiencing humility?
5. As we finished, we discussed several practical steps involved in the pursuit of holiness. Which stands out most to you? What are some others? What is something you plan to do this week in your pursuit of humility?