

Series: *Killing Pride, Cultivating Humility*

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

It’s wonderful to watch how the Lord is working through the ministry of His Word in this current series *Killing Pride, Cultivating Humility*. He’s increasing our joy as we’re learning to die to self and make much of Him. Today we come to part five, and for our Scripture reading we’ll be reading in a moment from Philippians 2.

Years ago when I was a little boy, I assembled a couple of plastic model cars. Since I’m creativity-challenged, I needed the kind of cars with clearly marked parts, instructions, and of course, a picture on the box. When you’re working on a project it’s nice to know what it’s supposed to look like when it’s done.

We are in the middle of a “humility” project. We’ve learned that since God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble, we need to pursue humility by the grace of God. But that raises the question, *what does humility look like?* We need models, and thankfully, God has provided them, both in the Old Testament (as we saw last week) and the New Testament (as we’ll see today).

Scripture Reading: Philippians 2:1-11

In previous weeks I’ve quoted Jonathan Edwards several times (and will again in this message). Some might wonder, “Who is Jonathan Edwards and what qualifies him to teach us about humility?”

Jonathan Edwards was one of the most brilliant, gifted, and influential Americans to have lived. He’s well known as a preacher for his famous sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” which the Spirit used to bring many to faith in Christ. He was a tremendous revivalist that God used in the Great Awakening in the eighteenth century. He wrote many books that are still being read today. He was a missionary to the Indians, the president of Princeton College, and a very successful pastor.

What many don’t know about Edwards was the hardship he endured. Wayne Mack explains: “Edwards was the subject of nasty, vicious, and unwarranted criticism, opposition, false rumors, and slander... He was hated intensely by many who did everything they could to destroy him and his family...After many years of sacrificial service to the church in Northampton, Massachusetts, he was voted out of the church and asked to leave... In fact, it would seem that many in the church and town hadn’t liked him for most of the time he was there.”³

Despite all of this, Edwards responded with compassion and kindness to those who maligned him. Indeed, God used the fire to burn away pride and shape humility in his choice servant. If we’re serious about cultivating humility, dear friends, we too can expect hardship because it is the laboratory God uses to produce humility in His people.

Models are so important, and thankfully, God has graciously given them to us in His Word. For instance, last week we looked at several, including Moses, and pondered this statement in Numbers 12:3 (NIV84), “Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.” That’s quite a compliment. But it wasn’t always true. Moses was the most humble man on the earth in his day, but he was

^{**}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.

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

³ Wayne Mack, *Humility: The Forgotten Virtue*, p. 131.

past eighty when the statement was made. He had spent forty of his first eighty years in obscurity on the back side of a desert. Again, humility is developed, not inherited. And the laboratory that God often uses to develop humility is hardship.

Now let's turn our attention to the New Testament and examine several individuals who can teach us about humility. We'll look at four who lacked it, and six who by grace exhibited it.

I. We see individuals who lacked humility.

Our first example was a self-focused government official.

A. Herod (Acts 12). There are several "Herods" in the New Testament. Herod the Great was the notorious killer who massacred the babies in Bethlehem in his attempt to get rid of baby Jesus. He's the grandfather of the Herod we're considering. There's also Herod Antipas, the adulterous ruler who beheaded John the Baptist and later mocked Jesus in a fraud trial. He was our Herod's uncle. Our Herod is Herod Agrippa I, the king of Judea from A.D. 37-44 (which is about seven years after Jesus returned to heaven). Herod came to rule at the time when the young, predominantly Jewish church was experiencing rapid growth in Israel. This provided Herod with the perfect opportunity to win Jewish favor, and he took it, which highlights the first evidence of his pride.

1. *He used people to promote his own agenda (1-4).* We meet Herod in Acts 12:1-4. The text says,⁴ "It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover."

You will recall the Lord Jesus' words, "Do to others what you would have them do to you (Matthew 7:12)." That's what a God-fearing person does. Here's what a proud person does. He *uses* others even if it means bending or breaking laws. Laws exist for him. The *world* exists for him. Herod could care less about what was *right*. His concern was to do what was *expedient*.

So, to get voters he killed James, and since it worked so well he intended to do the same to Peter. His plan backfired, however, when God sent His angel to break Peter's shackles, open the prison doors, and guide His servant to freedom. Herod, who thought only of himself and was oblivious to the dignity of human life, "cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed (Acts 12:19)."

That's pride. When promoting your agenda becomes so important that you'll *use* people as if they were disposable commodities, you have a pride problem.

At this point, with egg on his face, Herod decided a change of scenery might help. So he moved from Judea to the coastal city of Caesarea (19b). But, of course, he did not leave his proud heart behind. In Caesarea he demonstrated his me-first approach to life in another way, and this time it cost him his life.

2. *He took honor that belongs to God (19-23).* Here's how he did it. We read in Acts 12:20-23, "He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. Having secured the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply. On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal

⁴ Most of the Scripture quotations in this message are taken from the NIV1984.

robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, ‘This is the voice of a god, not of a man.’ Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.”

There’s an extra-biblical source that elaborates on Herod’s demise. The historian Josephus describes the dazzling bright, silver robe with which Herod decorated himself that day. And when the crowd proclaimed his deity, crying out, “Be gracious unto us! Hitherto we have revered thee as a man, but henceforth we acknowledge thee to be of more than mortal nature,”⁵ Herod did not rebuke them. Josephus states that immediately a terrible pain seized Herod in his belly, that he was carried to his palace where he suffered continuously for five days and then died at the age of fifty-four.

You say, “Okay, that guy was proud. But I’d never let anybody call me God. The story doesn’t apply to me.” Oh really? Have you ever taken credit for something that God did? Why did you get the job you now hold? You say, “Because I was the most qualified person for it. I had the right experience and education, and I interview well and I...I...I...” Friend, most of us are more like Herod than we care to admit.

Herod killed Christians. Our next example claimed to be a Christian.

B. Diotrephes (3 John). Pride destroys churches. More accurately, proud people destroy churches. This is precisely what was happening to a church that the apostle John loved dearly, and it’s one of the reasons why he wrote 3 John.

Listen to 3 John 9-10, “I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.”

We learn three things about Diotrephes from John’s comments.

1. *He loved being first (9).* Does that mean he jumped in front of everybody else at fellowship meals, and that he made sure his name appeared first in the bulletin credits, and that he insisted that his ministry idea be given priority in the church budget? I don’t know about those manifestations of pride, but I do know about this one.

Diotrephes loved to be first. Diotrephes loved the spotlight so much that he was threatened by other leaders, in this case, by John. John says that Diotrephes would have nothing to do with him.

Can you believe it? John was an eighty-some-year-old church leader who’d served Christ faithfully for years. John had probably helped Diotrephes get his first job in the church, but now the power has gone to this younger man’s head. He is supposed to be a shepherd, but he has become a dictator.

2. *He made others look bad to make himself look good (10a).* According to John, Diotrephes was “gossiping maliciously about us.” You wouldn’t think it would happen in the church, but it did, and does. Beware of leaders who build their ministries by tearing others down. There is a time to warn a congregation and name names of problem people. Paul did. John did it right here. But if possible, God’s kind of leader seeks to talk TO people rather than ABOUT people concerning their problems. It’s dangerous to speak negatively about someone without first addressing your concern with that person.

Jonathan Edwards observed, “Some persons are always ready to level those above them down to themselves, while they are never willing to level those below them up to

⁵ Taken from F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, p. 255.

their own position. But he that is under the influence of humility will avoid these extremes...”⁶

Edwards also said that a truly humble person doesn’t demand equal position for all, “He [the humble person] will not desire that all should stand on the same level, for he knows it is best that there be gradations in society; that some should be above others, and should be honored and submitted to as such...He is willing to be content with the divine arrangements.”⁷

That might be a good quote to hand out to the parents of little leaguers. A child’s lack of playing time and poor performance is not always due to bad coaching.

3. *He refused to help other ministries succeed (10b).* John says, “He refuses to welcome the brothers.” These brothers, according to verse 5, were apparently traveling missionaries. Another church member named Gaius housed these brothers, and John commends him for it. But Diotrephes gave them the cold shoulder.

Did you ever visit someone and get the unmistakable feeling that you weren’t wanted there? This is precisely the message Diotrephes communicated to the other ministers. He cold-shouldered his brothers in Christ. The only people he helped were those who could return the favor.

Sadly, he did something even worse. John says, “He also stops those who want to do so [that is, help the missionaries] and puts them out of the church.” This church leader actually prevented the members of the church from helping the missionaries. Why would he do that? Apparently, *money*. He wanted resources for himself, for his agenda. And if someone resisted, he kicked them out of the church. It was his way or the highway.

4. *He treated the church as though it existed for him (10c).* Beloved, the church does not exist for me, or for you, or for anyone else in this room. This is Christ’s church. We have no right to use our ministry positions to accomplish our personal agendas.

Let me offer a specific challenge. In all that you do, look beyond your ministry. Be a team player. It’s easy to get tunnel vision and think that what *you* are doing is the most important thing that’s happening in the church. Diotrephes’ example portrays the ugliness of pride and reminds us of the necessity of humility in church life.

It’s not coincidental that John could describe so well the pride-problem of Diotrephes. There was a day in his own life when Jesus had to confront him about the same heart issue.

C. James and John (Mark 10). In Mark 10 we see John again. But this time he’s not an eighty year old church leader. He and James are probably in their early twenties. They’d been selected by Jesus to be apostles and received authority from Him to do miracles. Apparently, it went to their heads, and one day they approached Jesus with a request.

1. *They wanted positions of honor (37).* Listen to Mark 10:35-37, “Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. ‘Teacher,’ they said, ‘we want you to do for us whatever we ask.’ ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ he asked. They replied, ‘Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.’”

How old should a man be before he is put into a leadership position? There is a reason the Bible says, “Not a novice.” If you put an untested, unproven person into a church leadership position too quickly, he “he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil,” says Paul in 1 Timothy 3:6.

⁶ Jonathan Edwards, in Wayne Mack, *Humility: The Forgotten Virtue*, p. 85.

⁷ Jonathan Edwards, in Wayne Mack, *Humility: The Forgotten Virtue*, p. 86.

Positions, promotions, prosperity. Good things, yes. Potentially. But if humility is absent, they can go to a person's head. Spurgeon remarked, "Many have I known who in a cottage seemed to fear God, but in a mansion have forgotten him. When their daily bread was earned with the sweat of their brow, then it was they served the Lord, and went up to his house with gladness. But their seeming religion all departed when their flocks and herds increased, and their gold and silver was multiplied. It is no easy thing to stand the trial of prosperity."⁸

James and John tasted privilege and wanted more. Part of the problem was this.

2. *They defined greatness as being over other people (41-42).* Listen to Mark 10:41-42, "When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles **lord it over them**, and their high officials exercise **authority over them.**"

Proud people love to climb ladders and be on top of the pile. What they need is to learn the lesson Jesus is teaching James and John.

3. *They needed to see themselves as servants (43-45).* Notice Mark 10:43-45, "Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you **must be your servant**, and whoever wants to be first **must be slave of all**. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Pride shows up in all sorts of ways in all kinds of people, including Christians. There's value in looking at the lives of those who lack humility and learning from them how NOT to approach life. Do you see yourself in any of the above examples? If so, stop now, confess your sin and turn to Christ for cleansing.

II. We see individuals who demonstrated humility.

We'll consider four men and two women. Again, our aim isn't to do a thorough biographical sketch but to identify evidences of humility which can guide us.

A. John the Baptist (John 1). Concerning John the Baptist Jesus has this to say in Matthew 11:11, "I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has **not risen anyone greater** than John the Baptist..." John was a great man. He certainly didn't dress for success, nor preach a popular message. What made him so great? He modeled humility. How? In four ways.

1. *He understood and accepted his role (1:6-9).* Listen to John 1:6-9, "There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. **He came as a witness** to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came **only as a witness** to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world."

What was John's role? His God-given purpose was to be a witness, to prepare people for Christ. He accepted that role, though it led to a premature death.

2. *He lived to exalt Christ, not himself (1:15, 19-23; 3:30).* That's exactly what he told people, too. In John 1:15, "John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, 'This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'"

We read this in John 1:19-23, "Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "**I am not the Christ.**" They asked him, "Then who are you? ... John

⁸ Charles Spurgeon, in Wayne Mack, *Humility: The Forgotten Virtue*, p. 41.

replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, “I am the voice of one calling in the desert, **‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’**”

And no statement made it any clearer than the one John uttered when some of his followers were upset because people were following Jesus rather than him. We read in John 3:30, “He must become greater; I must become less.”

That’s humility in living color. It doesn’t matter if people recognize me, as long as Jesus is honored.

3. *He confessed that he was unworthy (1:26-27).* It’s not “low self-esteem” to admit you are unworthy. John was a very secure man, unafraid to confront kings, priests, even Roman soldiers. But in comparison to Jesus, he freely admitted about himself in John 1:26-27, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of **whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.**”

4. *He encouraged people to turn from him and follow Jesus (1:29-31, 35-36).* We tend to forget that John had quite a following. The common people flocked to him in the wilderness. So did religious leaders and soldiers. But once Jesus began His ministry, John did everything he could to turn his followers to the Christ.

Notice John 1:35-36, “The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God!’” And in the very next verse we are told that Andrew and John the son of Zebedee left the Baptizer and followed Jesus.

There’s a compelling indicator of a successful ministry. It’s not getting people to follow *you*, but persuading them to follow *Jesus*.

Do you have to receive recognition for what you do at church, or in your family, or at school, or where you work? I’m not saying recognition isn’t appropriate at times. But do you have to receive it? Do you get upset if you don’t? It’s evidence of humility when, by the grace of God, we joyfully serve for the pleasure of God alone.

B. Mary (Luke 1). If anyone had reason to boast, humanly speaking, this young lady did. She was chosen by God to carry, bear, and raise the Son of God. The message the angel gave her in Luke 1:28 would be enough to make most heads swell.

“Greetings, **you who are highly favored!** The Lord is with you.” But by the grace of God, Mary responded humbly. Indeed, we see her humility in three ways.

1. *She submitted to God’s plan even though she didn’t understand it (30-38).* Put yourself in Mary’s shoes as you listen to the angel’s announcement in Luke 1:30-33, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”

Most teenage girls are starting to formulate their own plans for their lives. Mary submits to God’s plan. She does have a question, which she asks in Luke 1:34, “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” Mary wasn’t resisting the plan, just having trouble understanding it.

Here’s the answer. In Luke 1:35-38, “The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God....’”

How would Mary ever explain this in a finger-pointing world? She couldn’t. “It’s not what you think,” she might say. But they would think, and the thoughts wouldn’t be good regarding her reputation. To accept God’s plan means she must forsake a normal life, deny herself, and sacrifice her own reputation.

And how did she respond? Listen to Luke 1:38. “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. ‘May it be to me as you have said.’ Then the angel left her.” That kind of submission is wonderful evidence of humility. So is this.

2. *Though honored by God, she gave glory to God (46-55).* Luke 1 records a hymn, the Magnificat, which Mary spoke (and sang?). It reveals her perspective on the honor she received. Notice Luke 1:46-48, “And Mary said: ‘My soul **glorifies the Lord** and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the **humble state of his servant**. From now on all generations will call me blessed...’”

Mary humbly saw herself as a servant and gave the glory to God for the undeserved privileges she received from Him. But there’s more, and this is the most important demonstration of humility in Mary’s life (and in anyone else’s life).

3. *She admitted her need for a Savior (47).* Listen again to what Mary says in Luke 1:47, “...My spirit rejoices in God my Savior...”

Contrary to the teaching of some, Mary was a sinner and here she herself admits her need for a Savior. She called God her *Savior*.

This is important, for this is where humility begins. Like Mary, we must admit our sinful, self-promoting tendencies and come to know God as our Savior. Proud people don’t need a Savior and therefore proud people perish in their sin. But if we humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord, says James 4:10, “He will lift us up.”

My friend, this is why Jesus came. He humbled Himself and became obedient until death, even death on the cross. And then He conquered death. Why did He do this? To save sinners like you and me. Have you ever asked Jesus to save you? Why not now?

C. Paul (2 Cor. 12:1-10). There’s so much that could be said about Paul. We could consider several passages that reflect his humility, but I want to ponder just one. In 2 Corinthians 10-12, Paul uses the term “**boast**” twenty-one times. The Corinthian church was being infiltrated by Diotrophes-like leaders, self-promoting men who boasted of their credentials while undermining Paul. In defense, Paul “boasted” as well, but not about his strengths. In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul tells us two things about himself.

1. *He had a God-given thorn to keep him from being conceited (7).* Fourteen years prior, God gave Paul a trip to heaven. Paul says he was “caught up to paradise” and there “heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell (4).”

Have you ever talked with someone who had recently traveled to a unique place, who wouldn’t stop talking about their trip? Well, nobody could ever match Paul’s trip. He went to *heaven*. It could have gone to his head, too, but God gave him something to keep his feet planted on earth.

Paul tells us what it was in 2 Corinthians 12:7. “To keep me from becoming **conceited** because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me **a thorn in my flesh**, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.”

We don’t know what this thorn was. Some suggest it was poor eyesight or some other physical affliction. Others think the thorn was a problem person (or people) who made life rough for the apostle. Paul says this thorn was a *messenger of Satan* that tormented him. Whatever or whoever it was, we know this. The byproduct of this thorn’s presence was the removal of pride.

It might surprise us to know that Paul was a boaster. Humble people do boast. Paul began this chapter, saying, “I must go on boasting.” Boasting in and of itself isn’t wrong. It’s what you boast about that matters. And what was it for Paul?

2. *He learned to boast about his weaknesses (8-10).* Listen to what Paul said about his thorn in 2 Corinthians 12:8-10. “Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it

away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore **I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses**, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

If you have to be strong, to be in control, to be “respectable,” it’s evidence of pride and a lack of humility. God often highlights His sufficiency through our weaknesses.

C. J. Mahaney tells the story about someone who modeled humility for him, his own sister Sharon. Sharon’s husband, Dave, developed an aggressive brain tumor. The doctors tried surgery and chemotherapy, unsuccessfully, and Dave was brought home to hospice care. During his last few weeks of earthly life, Dave’s bed was set up in the living room where people could visit him, with Sharon at his side. C. J. relates the following:

On one occasion, a relative of Dave was visiting, a man who was not a Christian. As he watched Sharon caring for Dave and thought about Dave’s relative youth and the children he would leave behind, anger seemed to well up from within him—anger directed at the God whom Dave and Sharon were professing to believe in.

He asked Sharon, ‘Why aren’t you angry?’ She turned to him and answered with the truth of the gospel: ‘Dave deserved hell for his sins, just like you and me, and yet God, in His mercy, forgave him because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Dave is going to heaven,’ she said. ‘How could I be angry at God for taking him to heaven?’

It was an answer I’m sure he wasn’t expecting, and one that I doubt he’ll ever forget.⁹

For when I am weak, then I am strong. Due to time constraints, I’ll just mention three more models, give the skeleton points, and encourage you to flesh them out later.

D. Timothy (Phil. 2:19-24)

1. *He didn’t live for his own interests.*
2. *He lived to serve Christ and His people.*

E. Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25-30)

1. *He was willing to die for the work of Christ (30).*
2. *He and others like him deserve our honor (29).*

F. Dorcas (Acts 9:36-43)

1. *She had a reputation for doing good and helping the poor (36).*
2. *She left behind evidence of her humility (39).*

Timothy, Epaphroditus, and Dorcas were all unsung heroes. And they were *content* to be such. This is key, my friend. The proud want recognition, approval, and affirmation, and they want it from people, and they want it now.

Not so the humble. They too are seeking recognition, approval, and affirmation, but not from people, and not for now. They have set their sights on Another Person and another day, and it inspires them to serve no matter how minimal the response and how menial the task in the present.

Wayne Mack shares the following illustration and observation, “Three men were working on constructing a church building. Someone approached the men and asked,

⁹ C. J. Mahaney, *Humility*, p. 151.

‘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.”¹⁰

Getting Intentional about Humility: As your day ends...

What do you do when nighttime comes? Just fall into bed? A prime time to cultivate humility occurs at the end of every day. I’m again indebted to C. J. Mahaney for the following suggestions. Here are three actions to take before we close our eyes at night.

1. *Give God the glory for your accomplishments.* Ponder this advice from Thomas Watson. “When we have done anything praiseworthy, we must hide ourselves under the veil of humility, and **transfer the glory** of all we have done to God.”

So often, I fail to do that. I finish the day by thinking about tomorrow’s challenges rather than thanking God for today’s demonstrations of grace. Every day God enables us to accomplish things, projects at work, lessons taught to our children, money earned, and more. The question is, *who gets the glory for these accomplishments?*

Suppose you taught a Sunday School lesson today that helped people grow. Maybe you fixed a meal that brought compliments from guests. Perhaps someone thanked you for the good work you did fixing their broken car. *Who gets the glory for these accomplishments?*

As you finish each day (and during the day too), make a concentrated decision to transfer the glory to God. “Lord, I give you praise for that Sunday School lesson, that meal, that repaired car, for You gave me the opportunity, the skills, the health, and everything else that made it possible to do what I did. You deserve the glory, not me.”

You say, “Well, should we even thank people for things they do, since the glory is supposed to go to God?” Sure we should. We honor God by expressing appreciation to the people He uses. They honor Him by transferring the glory.

2. *Cast your cares upon God, for He cares for you.* Peter shows the relationship between *humility* and *casting our cares on God* in 1 Peter 5:6-7. “**Humble yourselves**, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. **Cast all your anxiety on him** because he cares for you.”

In the original Greek, the word “cast” is a participle that modifies the verb “humble yourself.” In other words, a very practical way to humble yourself is to *cast your anxiety on God*.

Does your mind ever race when you go to bed? What causes that? For me, I’m often preoccupied with an unresolved problem I’ll be facing the next day. But notice this. What does a humble person do with his cares? He casts them on the Lord, that is, he acknowledges he isn’t strong enough nor wise enough to face the challenges in his life, so he humbly turns them over to the Lord. *Have Thine own way, Lord. Have Thine own way. Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.*

Before you go to sleep, do something with your problems. Don’t try to fix them. There’ll be a place and time for that in the daytime. Now it’s time to turn them over to the Lord. He doesn’t need to sleep, and He knows you do.

¹⁰ Wayne Mack, *Humility: The Forgotten Virtue*, p. 51.

3. *Accept the gift of sleep from God and affirm its purpose.* Did you realize sleep is a good gift from our gracious God? It is. Psalm 127:2 says, “In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat— for he grants sleep to those he loves.”

Why does God give us sleep? Because He knows we aren’t like Him. He is all sufficient and all powerful. He never tires, never grows weary, never lacks, and never needs to be replenished. But we do. When we accept the gift of sleep, it’s an act of humbling ourselves. To sleep we must surrender our care and control to Him.

Work is good, but by God’s design our work ceases every day. We have built in limitations that remind us we are not self-sufficient. Just try to ignore those limitations and watch what happens.

Sleep is good. It refreshes our minds and bodies and prepares us to serve God another day. But sleep accomplishes something even more important. C. J. Mahaney observes, “The fact is, God could have created us without a need for sleep. But He chose to build this need within us, and there’s a spiritual purpose for it. Each night, as I confront my need again for sleep, I’m reminded that I’m a dependent creature... There is only One who ‘will neither slumber nor sleep’ (Psalm 121:4), and I am not that One.”¹¹

Try it. Before you go to bed tonight, affirm the purpose of what you are about to do. Pray something like this, “Lord, You never get tired, but that’s because You are God. I’m tired now because I’m a needy creature. I need the gift of sleep which You’ve provided, and I accept it now. Most of all, I need YOU.”

In a very real sense, sleep is a picture of what it means to be a Christian. Mahaney explains, “Your sleep tonight will be a small but real act of faith. You’ll lay your full weight on a bed, trusting this structure to support you. You can fully relax, because no effort at supporting yourself is required; something else is holding you up. And in the same way, throughout the night as you sleep, *Someone else is sustaining you.* This is a picture of what it’s like to belong to Christ.”¹²

So don’t just go to bed tonight. Humble yourself by transferring the credit for today’s accomplishments to God, by casting your care upon Him, and by accepting the gift of sleep and affirming its God-given purpose.

Closing Song: #438 “*Cleanse Me*” (verses 1, 2, 3)

Community Group Discussion:

1. We are calling our current series, *Killing Pride, Cultivating Humility*. When you think of a proud person, who first comes to mind and why? When you think of a humble person, who first comes to mind and why?
2. This morning, we looked at models of pride and humility in the New Testament. Take a moment to review highlights from the handout. Which of the biblical characters we examined stood out most to you from today’s study, and why?
3. What are some characteristics of **pride** that are common to the biblical examples we considered? What are some characteristics of **humility** that are common to the biblical examples we considered?
4. Thomas Watson said, “When we have done anything praiseworthy, we must hide ourselves under the veil of humility and transfer the glory of all we have done to God.” What are some practical implications of that sentence for church life? For family life?
5. Since beginning our series, what changes have you made in your daily routine that have helped you in your pursuit of God-honoring humility? Are there additional changes you plan to make? After sharing, spend time praying for one another.

¹¹ C. J. Mahaney, *Humility*, p. 84.

¹² C. J. Mahaney, *Humility*, pp. 84-5.