

# STUDY #3 - HUMILITY

## Reflecting the Heart of Christ

BE TRANSFORMED

JOHN R. MURPHY

### Series Theme Verse

*Romans 8:29 AMP*

“For those whom He foreknew [of whom He was aware and loved beforehand], He also destined from the beginning [foreordaining them] to be molded into the image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness],...”

### Study Verse

*Philippians 2:5-8 AMP*

Let this same attitude and purpose and [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: [Let Him be your example in humility:] Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God [possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God], did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained, but stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was born a human being. And after He had appeared in human form, He abased and humbled Himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross!

### Key Concepts

Christ's humility empowered Him to fulfill God's plan to leave behind His place with God and take on the form of man. For Christians, humility represents a powerful enabling force that allows us to comply with God's plan for our lives.

No one person is loved more or is more deserving of God's love than another. We are all equal in God's sight, and are not greater than nor lesser than any other, whether we are kings or homeless people. When we truly believe this, we can meet anybody and be at peace knowing we are equals, because we all make mistakes and fall short of the glory of God.

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I discovered one day that humility can be elusive even in the most humble of circumstances. It seemed a bizarre request when I was asked to speak on self-righteousness to a group of mostly homeless addicts. More surprising

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was the realization that I shared this trait with them. Through this experience and many to follow, I can only conclude that self-righteousness is a temptation of man that can be present in any circumstances. The temptation of self-righteousness opposes God's will for His people to reflect the humility of His Son.

As a lay minister for a local addiction and life recovery program, I expected to find humility abounding in a place full of people so severely beaten down by life. Not so. There were actually surprising displays of self-righteousness in the group. Many of the men believed they were better than some of the others and deserved some relative prominence or special consideration. It was not uncommon for these guys to stratify themselves into different levels of "goodness" by comparing themselves on the basis of which substances they had abused or on the type of offenses they had perpetrated against others. The standard was that the less heinous the act, the better they felt about themselves.

For instance, some alcoholics disdained cocaine users, who, in turn, saw themselves as better than crack users. Child abusers were seen as worse than wife abusers. Most of the men participated in an elaborate system of self-righteousness that allowed them to medicate their shame by positioning themselves as better than others with worse behavior.

My heart was struck with conviction about the self-righteousness in my own heart when I began to study the Word in preparation for the talk to address the issue. First I sensed a belief that I was better than some people, including the guys in the program, based on the relative success of my life compared to theirs. I came to understand how my home-grown righteousness had always been there to help make me feel more worthy and valuable because I was unable to fully trust God with my need for righteousness and self-worth. I began to see how commonly we are tempted to point out the mistakes of others (the ones we haven't made yet) to demonstrate our superiority. The weakness of this strategy is that we can be counted on at some point to eventually make one of those mistakes or a worse one, and thereby nullify our brilliantly constructed self-righteousness, leaving us back where we started – hopelessly condemned to death without the righteousness available through Christ.

The truth is that we are all just a few bad decisions away from being in the same shape as the men in the program, the homeless, or the murderers on Death Row. Put under the right pressure at the right time in the right

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situation, I think anyone's history of good behavior can cave in. Self-righteousness is bondage that occurs when we try to build ourselves up by tearing others down. We like to think there is something special about us such that we could never make that mistake. We believe there is some goodness within us that could never be defiled. However, when we make that claim or entertain that thought, it is the same as saying that we have God-like qualities. And that is exactly the deception Satan wants us to believe, because it inflames the pride that opens us up to his influence and our eventual fall.

Humility is realizing that no matter what behavior you see demonstrated by another, you know that if you had led their life you could have easily done the same thing or something equally regretful. Humility is knowing that you are no better than anyone else—that you have no inherent goodness that makes you less dependent on God's grace or on the salvation offered through His Son.

The answer for me that day was simply repentance. God led me to put on my head down my desk and repent of self-righteousness, asking also to be healed of the self-condemnation I felt whenever I made a mistake. He accepted my prayer, and now when I make a mistake, my self-worth is not at stake. I can see that when I make a mistake, I have just demonstrated a common characteristic of all mankind. Our mistakes do not change God's love for us. He loves all people without regard to status.

Soon after my repentance I discovered that for the first time in my life I could make a mistake without beating myself up. I was free of self-condemnation for the first time at age 47 and have been free ever since. With my self-righteousness largely out of the way, I could rest in the righteousness of Christ and be much more at peace when I failed. I am so grateful to God for this freedom. I want this freedom for you.

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To battle the pride that leads to self-righteousness, it helps to be able to sense it beginning to stir from our sin nature. The questions below will help you identify the urging so you can do battle against it in your life with the prayer that follows. Pray to God that He reveal to you any heart-level conviction about feeling or wanting to establish that you are better than others.

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- When we believe that we are righteous or have inherent goodness because of who we are, whose heart does that most resemble?

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- If you were told a stranger was going to walk in the room where you were, based on that limited information, would you feel that you are better than he is?

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Now, consider how you might feel towards this person based on the following information about the stranger. Would you feel better than him if...

You learned he'd been arrested for domestic violence?

☐ YES ☐ NO

He slipped and fell as he entered the room?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Last year he lost his home and had to file bankruptcy because he was put on a sex offenders list?

☐ YES ☐ NO

You found out he was just fired?

☐ YES ☐ NO

He works near here as a busboy in a local restaurant. He works there to hold him over since he was busted for selling drugs in a local high school?

☐ YES ☐ NO

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He told you he had just lost his home?

☐ YES ☐ NO

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He smelled bad?

☐ YES ☐ NO

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He spit on the floor?

☐ YES ☐ NO

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Knowing everything about you and that stranger, who does Jesus think is the most righteous?

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Who does He think has the most value?

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Who does He love more?

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Who would He rather die for?

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Have you had no failures in your life or just different failures than the stranger?

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[illegible]

Amen.