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HUMILITY

In our competitive culture and polarized church, humility is very rare. Humility is a biblical virtue, though it has often been misunderstood both inside and outside the church. We understand that humility is important, but we struggle to practice it. Sometimes we think we are humble, but we are not at all. I once had to go through that pitfall.

God taught me that hard lesson in California. It was the time I thought I was a humble person. But from the sight of God, I was not at all humble. I was pursuing my role as a pastor with competitive arrogance inside. I thought I was far advanced spiritually compared to other pastors; I was free to appear humble. God had to let me learn a lesson.

We know that God is the potter, and we are the clay. God hit the clay to the ground hard so that a bubble—arrogance or pride—in the clay, Hae-Jeong, might disappear. God didn't want the vessel to be ruined after the potter baked it in the kiln. I had a big bubble of arrogance in me, and it had to come out so God could use me as His servant. I cannot explain the entire process of removing pride from me; it was a very hard process. And I learned humility before God. It was about finding a real grounded position where I stand before God. It is truly to know who I am and truly to know who God is. Do you think you are a humble person? Then it is wise to consider that you are very far from the true place of humility.

It is a spiritual quality that should be developed deep inside. Pride was the first sin of Adam and Eve. It was the sin of the most beautiful and perfect angel, Lucifer, who wanted to be God before Adam and Eve. Satan ruined the human race by using the deception of pride in paradise. How deep it would be! It is in our deep consciousness. So, it is very difficult to practice.

Many of us struggle to practice it because we misunderstand it as a sign of weakness, even though we give lip service to the contrary. Even inside Christianity Humility is equating humiliation and smallest. Humility has bad reputations such becoming door mats. No. It is not at all those meaning.

Popular presentations of humility encourage us to avoid some pitfalls of personal pride; go low, but not too low! We fear that humility will weaken us rather than empower us; we give greater energy to self-preservation than to collaboration. We avoid sharing personal details and are careful not to display any shortcomings. We do not yield much ground to others while simultaneously avoiding accusations of arrogance.

In us, the aspect of humility needs to recover and be respected. How do we cultivate biblical humility? When we know from what darkness God took us out, we come to understand the inexpressible greatness of God's love and mercy. We have tears in our eyes. It humbles us. The realization of this fact brings us to the special place of humility by knowing who I was, who I am now, and who God is.

Let's explore the etymology of **the word "humility." It comes from the Latin term "fumus," which means "of earth" or "ground." The word "human" also shares the same etymology.** It signifies understanding our place of belonging. We belong to the ground. When we are grounded in humility, we gain an accurate self-perception that is neither too high nor too low. **This perception is shaped only by an intimate relationship with God.** It is like tuning an orchestra to the first violinist. My sound should align with the central tone, God. In every devotional time, we tune again and again. If it is loose, then tighten it; if it is too tight, then loosen it a little.

When we can be truly humble, we can share our grounded nature with other creatures, where we can find joy and wisdom. It sounds a little abstract, but it is true. It is a pure, powerful, beautiful, holy state of spirit, like that of St. Francis.

People who are humble are grounded. The lowly show us the way of Christ. Low doesn't mean small or insignificant. We are so divinely loved that Jesus, the unique Son of God, died for us. Therefore, the cultivation of humility means pursuing intimacy with God and compassionately serving others without worrying about my needs or stressing over my popularity. **It begins with submission to God; it is a relationship with God. It extends to embodiment in all areas of life, including the creation and strengthening of Christian community.**

Lord Jesus is the ultimate example of humility. Today's scripture, Phil 2:6-11, shows what humility in us should be like: 'Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross!'

Jesus abandoned aspects of deity (e.g., omniscience, omnipresence) to become human, but it is better to understand kenosis as metaphorically describing the Lord's sacrificial life and death. There was never a time when Jesus Christ ceased being God. However, God humbled Himself to the point of death. Max Lucado wrote the following about the Kenosis hymn."

"Love puts the beloved before itself. Your soul was more important than his blood. Your eternal life was more important than his earthly life. Your place in heaven was more important to him than his place in heaven, so he gave up his so you could have yours. Would you do what Jesus did? He exchanged a spotless castle for a grimy stable. He exchanged the worship of angels for the company of killers. He could hold the universe in his palm but gave it up to float in the womb of a maiden. If you were God, would you sleep on straw, nurse from a breast, and be clothed in a diaper? ... If you knew that those you loved would laugh in your face, would you still care? If you knew that the tongues you made would mock you, the mouths you made would spit at you, the hands you made would crucify you, would you still make them? Christ did. The palm that held the universe took the nail of a soldier. Why? Because that's what love does."

Humility is the raiment of Godhead, the most beautiful and perfect community in the universe. The Triune God is fully surrendered to each other. Jesus is fully surrendered to the Father, the Holy

Spirit is fully surrendered to the Father and the Son, and the Father is fully surrendered to the Son. There is full love and harmony, ever-increasing. It is a welcoming and peacemaking community toward each other.

Do you want to love others as God has loved you? Come thirsty. Drink deeply of God's humility for you and ask Him to fill your heart with a humble love. Humility puts others before yourself. We can learn to embody humility through obedience to God and the imitation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and there are manifold ways this learning takes place. **If God's community is grounded in humility toward each other, then how indispensable humility is for establishing and maintaining Christian community!**

Esther Kim knows what this means. For thirteen years, she had one dream: the Summer Olympics. She wanted to represent the United States on the Olympic Taekwondo squad. From the age of eight, she spent every available hour training. It was in training that she met and made her best friend, Kay Poe. The two worked hard. Both qualified for the 2000 Olympic trials in Colorado Springs. Everyone, however, was surprised when they were placed in the same division. They had never competed against each other, but when the number of divisions was reduced, they found their names on the same bracket. One would win, and one would lose. As if the moment needed more drama, two facts put Esther Kim in a heartrending position. First, her friend Kay injured her leg in the match prior to theirs. Kay could scarcely walk, much less compete. Because of the injury, Esther could defeat her friend with hardly any effort. But then there was a second truth: Esther knew that Kay was the better fighter. If she took advantage of her injured friend, the better athlete would stay home. So, what did she do? Esther stepped onto the floor and bowed to her friend and opponent. Both knew the meaning of the gesture. Esther forfeited her place. She considered the cause more important than the credit.

What's more important to you? To be right before God, or to be seen before others? When a brother or sister is honored, are you joyful or jealous? Do you have the attitude of Jesus? Do you consider others more important than yourself? I am trying to learn all these. If I am jealous, I intentionally go against the jealousy. I speak or do something to bless the person. Then, the energy of jealousy disappears.

Imagine you are a person who received an accolade for a project at your company: "You are the best in our company!" How would you feel? How should you feel? Is there a proper way to handle such praise? What feelings and responses would be humble one? On the contrary, what if your colleague simply ignores you, doesn't even look at or talk to you after a presentation? What should your reaction be? Where would the humility factor lie?

Humility governs our ability to allow compliments to nurture our spirits and gives glory to God because all good things come from the Lord, Rather than feed the monster of self-gratification. It also allows us to learn from criticism without letting it derail us. How are you nourishing the humility factor within you, and how do you find your solid ground?