

“Humility is the Path Up in God’s Kingdom.”

A Four-Day Meditation and Devotional

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*Many tasks are left undone in the kingdom of God because of false humility. Christians back away from God’s invitations to “Come up here,” (Proverbs 25:7) for fear of appearing arrogant. They turn down opportunities that would advance the kingdom and so the load becomes heavier on everyone else and some things are simply left undone. That should not be. Let’s look at five examples of true humility in scripture. It will help us recognize the counterfeit.*

### **Day One-Joseph**

**Scripture:** “So Joseph said to his brothers, “Come near to me, please.” And they came near. And he said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. <sup>5</sup>And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life,” Genesis 45:4-5 ESV.

A true test of humility is how we treat people who have wronged us when we are given the opportunity. What Joseph’s brothers did to him was illegal, immoral and exceptionally cruel to their father, Jacob. Joseph had every right to sentence them to prison or death in his new position as Egypt’s prime minister. He didn’t. Joseph spent his years in captivity learned to humble himself before others through many forms of degradation, but our verse shows us that he learned something equally important during that time. He learned how to humble himself under God’s mighty, sovereign hand. God may use wicked people to accomplish his purposes in our lives. He may allow them to manhandle us in cruel fashion. What happens in our character during those hard times will be revealed when we are given opportunity to retaliate or when our tormentors no longer have any authority over us. True humility begins with a reverential fear of God and complete submission to his plans for us.

### **Day Two- Esther**

**Scripture:** “Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, <sup>16</sup>“Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish,” Esther 4:15-16 ESV.

Another test of humility is our view of ourselves in the grand scheme of things. Esther could have looked at Mordechai’s request to approach the king in a different way. God elevated her to a position of the highest influence. Wasn’t it foolish to risk death with such a gamble? Wasn’t it better to protect her position of influence and favor so she could help the Jews in the future? The text indicates that Esther definitely had doubts about Mordechai’s plan based on the back and forth messages between them. It’s not an easy thing to risk your life for a greater cause. A great

deal of humility is needed. Ultimately though, I believe Esther recognized that God did not present her with any other viable option to save the Jewish people from Haman's wicked plan. She decided that her life was less important than the potential survival of her people. God rewarded her humility with a miracle. I think of men and women in the armed forces now and in the past, willing to make those same kinds of sacrifices on battlefields. If God asks us to risk our position and accomplishments for his purposes can we say, "Yes Lord, use me however you will to accomplish your purposes."

### **Day Three- John the Baptist**

**Scripture:** "He must increase, but I must decrease," John 3:30 ESV.

How do we behave when God doesn't promote us the way we think he ought to? Consider the hard life of John the Baptist, living alone in the wilderness, preparing the way for Jesus by preaching about sin. Yet, he was faithful to his calling to the very end of his life. I don't know about you, but if I had been John, I think, I might have quietly planned on being an intimate part of Jesus' ministry once he started rolling. Didn't you ever think it odd that John was not chosen to be one of the disciples? Who knows what inner wrestling might have occurred? John makes the statement in our verse when helpful "friends" comment on people leaving his circle of followers to follow Jesus. John knew his role and accepted it enthusiastically and humbly. How do we behave when someone we've helped or mentored, or trained rises much higher than ourselves? Are we envious? Humble people understand their God-ordained roles. They wait on him for further promotions and celebrate those who surpass them.

### **Day Four-Paul**

**Scripture:** "I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ," Philippians 3:8 NIV.

How do we behave when God doesn't seem to care too much about our credentials, our education and social standing and promotes us backwards instead? Paul's life, prior to becoming an apostle, was golden. His lineage and training set him up as a significant person of great religious authority. He held the power of life and death over the followers of the new faith. People held him in high respect, or at least were duly afraid of the power he wielded. After his conversion, God sends Paul back to school and he quietly disappears into Arabia for three years to learn the ways of Jesus. (Galatians 1:15) Paul knew the scriptures that existed at that time very well. He also thought he knew God's ways. God knew otherwise. Paul subsequently suffered the loss of many things including his social standing, his health, safety, and his freedom. He didn't care about any of that as much as he cared about serving Christ. He refers to himself as "the least of the apostles," (1 Corinthians 15:9) and the "chief of sinners," (1 Timothy 1:15). When God seems to overlook what we've worked hard to acquire, and promotes us backwards, the humble person will be grateful God is using him at all.