

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Volume 65, Number 11

Editor ~ Wade Stanley

Publisher ~ Doug Twaddell

November, 2023

Leaning Into Humility

Kevin Crittenden

“It’s hard to be humble when you are as great as I am.”

So said Cassius Clay, Nebuchadnezzar, Adolf Hitler, Ozymandias, the Pharisee in Luke 18, Pharaoh, and a host of others. How close is this to saying, “It’s hard to be humble when you are as great as I AM”? “*God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’*” (Exodus 3:14a). We may not feel as prideful as those mentioned, but, if we’re being honest, excessive pride can certainly be a stumbling block in our lives.

So how can we learn to cast aside our arrogance, tame our ego, and become humbler in our Christian walk?

#1 - Realize that the gifts and abilities you have come from God.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows (James 1:17).

We need to always remember that the talents that we have aren’t of our own making but are a gift from God. To Him be the glory!

#2 - Always remember that God is God, and you are not.

Spoiler alert! – You are not in charge!

#3 - You are not above menial labor.

Mundane, daily activities, such as house-cleaning, etc. are good ways of developing humility for both men and women. No job is “beneath you.” Observe the people that you see who work at menial labor or who belong to different churches or different religions. Do you feel superior to them? Does God love you more than them? What about those who have not found God yet or those who reject Him entirely? Are you superior to those?

#4 - Affirm areas of meaning.

The way that we see the world fashions our sense of meaning.

We believe that **our** reality is the **only** reality – an attitude that leads to judgment. Other viewpoints can be threatening to us. But if we can find **new** ways to bring meaning into our lives, we can loosen our defensiveness.

By reflecting on our core values (what do I believe in?) or on a cherished relationship (Why do I love this person?), we find meaning that gives us the security to accept differences and open our minds to change.

#5 - Acknowledge your limitations.

Realize and accept that you might be wrong on some things. “*Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?*” (Matthew 7:3). It’s a mark of humbleness to accept that somebody else’s opinions have validity. If we are in the habit of always mentally defending our own “truth,” while hearing something different, or in the habit of cutting someone off with our own comeback before they’ve even finished talking, then we need to think deeply about how disrespectful that is.

An open mind leads to an open heart. Mutual edification means we **can** and **should** be able to learn from each other.

#6 - Diversify your social investments.

Who do we allow into our lives? Most of us choose those who share our beliefs and interests because being with them feels comfortable. But being with **comfortable** people and avoiding people who are different creates insular echo chambers where we form one-sided opinions. Again, this is stepping away from humility.

And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” (Matthew 9:10-11).

Who did Jesus hang with? Just the apostles and disciples? Hardly. But He WAS criticized for mixing with these “others.” And we may be as well.

Mixing with “different” people helps us become less
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prejudiced. Our empathy and compassion grows as we become accepting of them as we learn from them, and grow ourselves.

As a church, we need to stay in touch with the world, as Jesus did, so that we may be relevant to it.

#7 - Prove yourself wrong.

We have a natural tendency to seek out information that will confirm the beliefs and attitudes that we already have. This is called confirmation bias. If something happens that runs **counter** to our bias, we tend to ignore or discount it.

Again, this is **not** acting out of humility. It is helpful to **intentionally** challenge our prejudices.

#8 - See and treat others better.

Some people are easier to like and treat well. As far as irksome people, if you find that it's hard to treat **them** as well as your friends, then ask God for help. Christ humbly served everyone, even those who were His enemies. He washed the feet of ALL of his disciples, even the feet of the one who was to betray Him.

Meditate on His humility to help yourself. Realize that every human being alive is created in God's image, so **all** people have innate value.

#9 - Continuously be willing to see your sin.

Do you consciously agree that sin is a part of your life? "*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us*" (1 John 1:8). Of course, endlessly dwelling on our shortcomings is not healthy – we just need to acknowledge our **complete** selves and grow.

#10 - Don't boast about what you do for God's kingdom.

If you find yourself finding ways to make known that you are an officer in the church, then you might want to examine why you do that. Of course, some are better at singing or giving sermons or teaching than others, but is that them, or is that a spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit? Are we singing, "How Great I Am" rather than, "How Great Thou Art?"

But, again, **any** spiritual gift is from God; it is not of our own doing, so there is no room for boasting.

Do we serve God to be noticed by others, or do we serve God just to serve God?

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matthew 6:3-4).

#11 - Never seek to please other people, especially not the powerful or rich self-serving people.

Our actions and attitudes should be based on love, not on the need for others' approval. Only and always seek to please the Lord and Him alone. "*Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10).*

And how do we please the Lord?

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. (James 4:10).

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Undercurrents

Dan Huff

This past summer, I read articles about people dying in and from the results of undercurrents in the ocean near the shore. One person who caught my attention was a strong retired professional athlete who was swimming in the ocean with friends. While they were struggling to make it back to shore, he drowned. Undercurrents are a strong current of water that is moving below the surface. Often, they can be deceptively strong and deadly, for they can pull people away from the shore and even pull them under. Often, when undercurrents are known, officials will put out red flags to warn swimmers, surfers, and such that it is dangerous to go out into the waters.

This caused me to stop and consider the waters of life. In the waters of life, there are many unseen undercurrents that attempt to pull you and me away from THE Rock and the shores of safety (2 Samuel 22:2, 32, 47). Sometimes, there are

red flags, and we ignore them. Other times, things appear to be normal — a beautiful sunny day with a cool wind blowing and the waves gently falling onto the shore. There is the temptation to think, “I am strong enough. I can handle it; I know better.” The devil is an old pro at making situations appear as something they are not. We are warned that he can appear as an angel of light, which he is not (**1 Corinthians 11:14**). He is the author of confusion because God is not (**1 Corinthians 14:33**). He and his henchmen twist the truth to the destruction of many un-discerning souls (**2 Peter 3:14-16**). For a text taken out of context is a pretext.

*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world (**1 Peter 5:8-9**).*

The devil, our adversary, offers many attractions and distractions in life. This world is his domain. The undercurrents of temptations and worldliness can gently sway and move us — they are so subtle that we don't notice or recognize what is happening. If we are not careful, the gentle sway of the undercurrents and flow of this world will carry us further away than we could ever imagine.

We read in **Joshua 9** about the crafty deception of the Gibeonites. Earlier, in **chapter 8**, Joshua and the children of Israel were coming off a great victory at Ai. They had built an altar to the LORD, sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings, and read in the presence of all the assembly all that was written in the Book of the Law (**8:34-35**). They must have been feeling really good. Often when things appear to be going well, we have a tendency to let our guard down, trusting in our own wisdom and strength. This appears to have happened to Joshua and the leaders of Israel, for they “*did not ask counsel of the LORD*” (**Joshua 9:14**). They were deceived by the cunning craftiness of the men of Gibeon, who presented their old worn out sacks, torn and mended wineskins, old and patched sandals, worn out clothes, and dry and moldy bread. These all gave the appearance that the Gibeonites had come from a very distant country. Their pretense and lies worked: Joshua and the leaders of Israel were mesmerized by the illusion. They made an unwise covenant with the people of Gibeon, which they were not to do. They did not seek the wisdom and guidance from the King in whose service they were employed.

If we are not careful and discerning, seeking God's will

through His word, and striving to please Him in all that we do and say, we can be found guilty of similar offenses. Deception can come from the outside; and also from the inside. When we want something, we can turn a blind eye to the facts, to the truth, because we want it to be true. We deceive ourselves.

Paul warns and tells us, “*Let no one deceive himself*” (**1 Corinthians 1:18a**). “*So that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs*” (**2 Corinthians 2:11, ESV**). Our heavenly Father puts out the red flags through His word, through His people proclaiming and sharing His word. He doesn't want us to be deceived, sucked under by the undercurrents or drift away from Him.

*The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance (**2 Peter 3:9, ESV**).*

*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded (**James 4:7-8, ESV**).*

If you are being pulled under, drifting away from the Lord and safety, it is not hopeless. That is another lie from “*the father of lies*” (**John 8:44**). “Reach out to Jesus, He's reaching out to you.” Reach out in obedient faith (**Romans 1:5; 16:26**), submitting to Him and His plan. There is help and safety for the soul in the Lord!

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Blessed Are the Dead

Frances Stanley, 94, of Greenwood, MO passed away September 23. She was a church of Christ member all of her adult life, meeting with the brethren on **Murray Road** in **Lee's Summit** for the past 31 years. Frances was born on September 30, 1928, in rural Carrol County, MO, and graduated from Carrollton High School in 1945. On June 15, 1952, she married **Oscar Stanley** also of Carrollton. She worked for the Farm Bureau and Banner Foods in Carrollton and, while being a stay-at-home mom, worked for a CPA, was a babysitter and typist. After their four children had finished high school,

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Frances worked for Burns & McDonnell and Employers Reinsurance Corporation. Frances was preceded in death by her parents, her three brothers and one sister; and her infant grandson Kurt. She is survived by four children, **Harold (Lorane)**, **Steve**, **Lisa**, and **Dennis (Cindy)**; six grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren, and one step-great-grandchild; sister **Fae Nolte**; and nieces and nephews.

Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

Special Meetings

The annual **Winter Youth Rally** hosted by the **Gregory Boulevard Church of Christ** and led by your publisher, **Doug Twaddell**, is scheduled for **December 26-28, 2023**. Students from age 11 to junior in high school can enjoy three days of Bible study, fellowship, and spiritual activities. For more information, please scan the QR code with your phone or tablet's camera app.



The church in **Lone Jack, MO** will host a **Winter College Rally December 26-28, 2023** led by **Evangelists Tad Morris and Joshua Riggins**. Seniors in high school through college age are invited to participate in an all-day, intense Bible study. Please scan the QR code to find more information on the church's website.



The church on **Murry Road, Lee's Summit, MO**, is hosting a one-day Bible study for men on **Saturday, December 30** from



9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Elders from congregations in the greater Kansas City area will present lessons on topics relevant to men in the church. The congregation will provide lunch. More details can be found on the flyer accessible via the included QR code.

2023 Meetings

- December 26-28..... Youth Rally, Gregory Blvd.
- December 26-28..... College Rally, Lone Jack, MO
- December 30..... Men's Bible Study, Murry Road

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THE GOSPEL MESSAGE (USPS:576-040) (ISSN:1054-7991) is published monthly for \$7 per year by **THE GOSPEL MESSAGE**, 1700 S. Ann Ct., Independence, MO 64057. Periodicals Postage Paid at Independence, MO. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **THE GOSPEL MESSAGE**, 1700 S. Ann Ct., Independence, MO 64057