

## 19. Learning to Show Humility in Our Attitude to One Another

In our last topic, we saw that one of the ways that we show the love of Christ is by learning to show hospitality to one another so that each Christian feels comfortable and accepted by other Christians. Today, our topic will be how to help our physical and spiritual children learn to practice humility in our attitude toward one another. In 1 Peter 5:5, we read, “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’” The word that is translated “clothed” was the word that was used to speak of *the apron that was worn by slaves*. To be “clothed with humility” means *to have a humble opinion about ourselves*. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In the world, most people have no understanding of the word humility. An “attitude of humility” means that *a person does not feel that he is too good to serve others*. It was the attitude that Christ showed His disciples when He chose to wash their feet. That night Christ said in John 13:13-17, “You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” We will look at this passage in much greater detail in a future topic.

However, today we would just like to focus on the fact that Christ did not feel that He was too important to serve His disciples. This reminds us of the fact that humility is an attitude that has nothing to do with how important a person is in this world. Christ was the most important person that ever came into the world. However, He showed us the attitude that will develop in the hearts of those who grow in their spiritual maturity and become more like Christ. This is an attitude that must be shown by actions and not just be words that are spoken.

In 1 Peter 5:5, we see that we are to be submissive to one another. To be “submissive” means *to place ourselves under another person* so that we can best serve that person. One of the key things to notice about the humility of Christ was the fact that He chose to place Himself in a position where He could serve His disciples. Christ could have commanded one of the disciples to wash the feet of the others. Instead, Christ chose to show that He considered it a great privilege to serve His disciples. In Matthew 20:28, Christ told these same disciples, “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Christ came both to serve and to give His life for the sake of others.

The attitude that we have toward our physical and spiritual children will play a major part in their development. Many parents are very concerned that their children will cause them to experience embarrassment or shame. When a parent has that attitude, that parent can never help that child develop the full potential the Lord has given that child. Many parents are more concerned for their own reputation than they are about the healthy development of their children. As a result, they are unable to show love to their children when their children do anything that brings embarrassment

to the parent. In contrast, we see that Christ wept over the very people who rejected Him. Matthew 23:37 says, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” Christ was willing to gather the people who rejected Him just as a hen gathers her chicks.

1 Peter 5:5 also explains the reason why parents are more concerned about their own reputation than they are the healthy development of their children. The last part of 1 Peter 5:5 says, “For God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Pride is the reason that parents will focus on their own reputation even if it causes them to hinder the healthy development of their children. In contrast, parents that are concerned for the healthy development of their children will not be concerned about what others say or think when their children make wrong choices. Instead, they will continue to love those children in spite of those wrong choices.

Christ illustrated that principle so well in the story that is often called the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. The father accepted the wrong choices of the son and continued to show love and acceptance. However, Christ illustrated that principle in an even greater way when He said to Judas in Matthew 26:50 just after Judas had betrayed Him, “But Jesus said to him, ‘Friend, why have you come?’ Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him.” Christ continued to treat Judas as a friend at the very moment that Judas was betraying Him. That was probably one of the greatest examples of humility that Christ could give to a disciple that had just betrayed Him.

Paul also demonstrated the attitude of Christ in his ministry. Acts 20:19 says, “Serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews.” In this verse, we see that Paul continued to serve the Lord with humility at the very time that he was experiencing many tears and trials because of the efforts of the Jews to destroy his life. The very next verses show that the fact that Paul continued to serve the Lord with that attitude made it possible for him to continue to keep the development of his spiritual children as the center of the focus of his ministry. Acts 20:20-21 says, “How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul continued to train the leaders that he was developing by showing them both publicly and from house to house at the very time he knew that others were plotting against his life.

Later, Paul showed this same attitude when he was a prisoner in Rome. Ephesians 4:1-2 says, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love.” The Greeks and the Romans did not have any words for humility. However, Paul encouraged the Christians to demonstrate this attitude of humility in their daily walk so that the world around them would see that Christ transforms the attitudes of those who are shown by the example of others how to walk. The Ephesians had seen Paul demonstrate this attitude in his life and as a result knew what it meant to live out that attitude in their daily lives.

Paul also encouraged the Colossians to live out this attitude of humility in their daily walk.

Colossians 3:12 says, “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering.” In this case, Paul had never been to the city of Colosse. Colossians 2:1 says that these Christians had never met Paul face to face. Paul could say this to the Colossians because he knew that Epaphras had learned from his example and had provided the same example to the Colossians. Colossians 4:12-13 says, “Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.” Epaphras had seen the example of Paul and provided the same example for the Colossians that he had seen demonstrated by Paul.

Providing our physical and spiritual children an example of an attitude of humility will help them develop a similar attitude. This attitude in our lives and the lives of our children will also produce at least two other key attitudes. First, an attitude of humility will develop an attitude of respect. Philippians 2:3 says, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” Christ chose to show respect to every person. He was ready to serve the woman caught in the act of adultery just as he was willing to serve Nicodemus, the Pharisee. With both individuals, Christ took the time to talk with them and show respect to them even though neither of them were followers of Christ at the time that He met them. As a result, we see that the lives of both of these individuals were transformed because Christ accepted them and ministered to them at the point that they were at in their lives at the time that Christ met them.

Second, an attitude of humility will provide an attitude of service. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Here, we see that an attitude of humility will cause us to serve others. This is the attitude that makes it possible for us to help others develop their full potential for Christ. If we drive others, we will drive them until they can get out of the way. If we lead others, we can lead them as far as we have gone ourselves. If we serve others, we can help them develop the full potential that Christ has given them and they may go far beyond what the Lord has gifted us to do. We will be able to serve them because of the fact that the focus is not on our position but rather on their development.

When we have an attitude of humility that causes us to respect and serve our physical and spiritual children, we will see the Lord work in their lives to accomplish the purpose that He has for them in their lives. The Lord will open many opportunities of service for them as they also develop an attitude of humility in their own lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children develop an attitude of humility because they have seen that attitude demonstrated in your life.