

Just What Is Humility?

by Carl McMurray

*For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. **Romans 12:3***

In this passage the apostle Paul has given us a divine definition for humility. Being humble is not a weakness as many suppose, but instead is a beautiful characteristic desired by God in all of His children. Sometimes it is not an easy trait to develop and cultivate. Our ego and our pride can get in the way. Believing in all the praise that others may heap on us is one way to stall the growth of humility in our lives. Allowing others to flatter us for their own advantage is another way. However, understanding what real humility is can help us defeat these snares Satan lays for us. That's where the biblical definition above becomes valuable.

Godly humility is not demonstrated in constantly putting oneself down and claiming failure, as some might think. What an insult to the Creator who made us and gave us our abilities and opportunities to serve him, to be always disparaging that Creation. In Ephesians four, Paul writes that we are HIS workmanship. It is one thing to admit a mistake or study a weakness so that we can work on it. It is quite another thing to be always critical ourselves of God's workmanship!

Romans 12:3 indicates that God desires us to think "so as to have sound judgment." In other words, humility is not putting oneself down, it is identifying one's proper level, the place where God has placed him in life. It is not imagining that we are better, smarter, more skillful, or more spiritual than we are. And neither is it claiming to be worse, dumber, less talented, and less spiritual than we are.

True humility is the ability to look within and find those gifts that God has given to develop and mature them. It includes the attitude of recognition that all of one's blessing and talents come from God and He is deserving of thanks for them. And when it comes to others, it includes the attitude that each one is given their own set of gifts, talents, and/or blessings and they are all different. Because they are different, and yet all from God, no despite should be given to another because his gift is not the same as ours. Indeed, Paul mentions in Philippians 2 that each one should look out for the interests of others and consider their needs as more important than our own.

True humility is seeing one's proper place with God and with men. Not putting self above or below that place, but thinking so as to have sound judgment.