



371 West Main Street
Greenwood, Indiana 46142
317.888.8288
churchofchristatgreenwood.org

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The Benefits of Humility

Heath Rogers

“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’” (1 Peter 5:5).

As a rule, the world around us doesn’t value humility. Those who are self-assertive and uncompromising get all the awards and attention while the meek are, at best, given only token recognition. God has always promised to bless those who humble themselves before Him and others. The Bible speaks of some benefits and blessings promised to such individuals.

Saves us from shame. In Luke 14:7-11, Jesus spoke a parable to those who positioned themselves to enjoy the most honorable seats at a feast. If they placed themselves in the most important seat, and the master makes them move, the only seats left will be the lowest, “and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place” (verse 9). Instead, they should seat themselves in the lowest place and allow the master to move them to a higher position in the presence of all the guests. “For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (verse 11). Even if they aren’t moved any higher, at least they won’t be put to shame before the other guests.

“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18). Sometimes the “destruction” caused by our pride is a shameful “fall” from grace before others. This is prevented when we practice humility.

Promotes unity. Members of a local church are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). Before speaking of the doctrinal foundation for this unity, Paul first presented the attitudes that make this unity a sustained reality. “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which

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you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love” (verses 1-2).

In another epistle, Paul instructed the Colossians to put on these characteristics like a garment. “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do” (Colossians 3:12-13). Dressed in these virtues, we are now ready to work together in harmony in the local church.

Justifies us before the Lord. In another parable, Jesus spoke of two men who went to the temple to pray (Luke 18:9-14). One was a self-righteous Pharisee who praised himself before God by elevating himself above others. The other was a humble tax collector, who “would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’” (verse 13). The divine pronouncement was “this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbles, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (verse 14).

Please note, humility alone will not justify us before God. The Pharisee was doing the right things according to God’s law. He avoided sinful conduct, fasted, and gave tithes (verses 11-12). However, his pride made him an abomination to the Lord (Proverbs 16:5). We make mistakes as we strive to serve the Lord faithfully. It is our humility that allows us to come before God and seek His forgiveness.

Humility does not come naturally to most people. This is why the apostles tell us to “put on” and “be clothed with” humility (Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 5:5). When we do, great blessings will follow.