

## Episode 022

# Why We Need Deep Humility

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## Introduction

A successful leader is exposed to the accolades and out flowing of benefits of successes. If we are not careful, pride creeps into our hearts. Even if we are not yet as successful nor as visible, there is still a crucial need to deal with pride in our hearts and to deepen our humility. In fact, it is far better to deepen our convictions and attitudes of humility as a younger leader in order that we are better placed when recognition and success gather momentum.

Even if pride has not grown in our hearts, there is a tremendous need to deepen the humility in our hearts.

## WHY IS HUMILITY SO IMPORTANT IN A LEADER?

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### 1. Without deep humility, a leader cannot grow in areas of their weaknesses.

When there is pride, it breeds a disease called willful ignorance. We choose to ignore, because we think we don't need to know or deal with it. After all, we are good at so many things. And God seems to continue blessing us. So we ignore our weaknesses until it is too late. King David chose to ignore his lust and sin with Bathsheba because pride crept into his heart.

When others point out to us our areas of weakness, what is our attitude? Do we pull out an imaginary dagger and defend ourselves? Or do we thankfully receive their observation and go to God to ask for more grace? Such leaders easily take in people's suggestions on improvement. Prov 15:31-32 (NIV) "He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise. He who ignores discipline despises himself, but whoever heeds correction gains understanding."



Usually, humble leaders will continue to grow because they are more aware of areas they need to develop in. God can also speak into our hearts more easily.

## **2. Without deep humility, a leader cannot become balanced in life and ministry.**

Achieving balance is incredibly difficult, partly because we are often not aware of imbalances or weaknesses in our lives. How much more difficult it is to achieve balance when we do not listen to feedback or good advice. When we think our way is better.

When there is pride, we cannot objectively view our own life and ministry. We attach extra weight on certain things due to preferences, etc. I have had to deal with pastors and leaders who are just not balanced in their lives and ministry. But they refused to see what I was saying to them. As a result, many of them have got into trouble.

Do we listen to advice of our parents or work supervisors? They may not all be spiritual, but they do have some experience! I am not saying that every advice we receive is necessarily wise. The advice is often made with the best of intentions and with our interests in mind. A leader must be humble enough to be teachable but not gullible. A leader must learn to weigh up the counsel he receives in the light of the Bible and the welfare of the Kingdom.

Years ago a recommendation was made to us to moving to another location to lead another church. We humbly weighed up all the factors honestly before God and reached the conclusion that it was not the best course of action.



**3. Without deep humility, a leader will not be adequately accountable to others.**

A proud person finds it hard to submit to others. Because they consider themselves better than others. Submission does not require us to be less successful or adequate than the person we submit to. Consider athletes and their coaches. Many athletes are better athletically than their coaches ever were. But they needed the keen observations, experience, and wisdom of their coaches.

Joab was an example of a leader who was not adequately accountable to King David. Joab took matters into his own hands and killed Abner. 2 Sam 3:26-27 (NIV)"Joab then left David and sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the well of Sirah. But David did not know it. Now when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the gateway, as though to speak with him privately. And there, to avenge the blood of his brother Asahel, Joab stabbed him in the stomach, and he died."

When we are not accountable, we often mess up. I have seen pastors who are not accountable to others, and they eventually ruined their ministry. I know of pastors who taught their congregation that the first tithe is for pastor! And they fail to realise the dangers of such a practice.

I have learnt to be accountable. For example, being willing to admit my mistakes to Ps. Simon, who was my leader for many years! We must always be accountable, it provides us safety! Even now as HIM President, I keep myself accountable to our Global Elders. This provides me protection.



#### **4. Without deep humility, a leader will not make the best decisions.**

When there is pride, a leader will tend to make decisions that make himself look good, obtain honor and acclaim. Without deep humility, a leader will tend to protect himself above the good of the cause. Pride will blind a leader to finding the best path. I see this is politics all the time.

When there is humility, a leader is willing to admit they were wrong in a decision and make the appropriate changes. Otherwise, they refuse to admit they are wrong and keep digging the hole deeper. A humble leader will always seek advice because they want the best decision possible. Because a humble leader cares more about the good of the organization than their own reputation.

#### **5. Without deep humility, a leader will not truly rely upon God.**

Proud leaders tend to rely on their own strengths more than God. Because they think they can do better, in their preferred way. After all, they have done well so far, seemingly without much of God's help.

The Scriptures remind us that when we humbly rely upon God, God will bless and lift us up in His due time. 1 Pet 5:5-6 (NIV) "Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."

When God is with us, far more blessings flow than our competency deserves. We also listen to God more attentively and are more careful to obey Him. 1 Sam 15 showed that King Saul was a proud king who adjusted what he was instructed by God. Consequently, he did not carry out what God instructed but adjusted it to fit his own preferences. As a result of his pride, God declared that he would remove Saul as king.



## HOW DO WE DEVELOP DEEPER HUMILITY?

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### 1. Cultivate a thankful heart towards God

When we have a thankful heart, it nurtures our relationship with God. It keeps us humble because it keeps our focus on God and fosters a humble attitude that God knows best. It helps us recognize that all good things come from God. Hence, a God-centred thankfulness keeps pride at bay and fosters humility.

Every day, we should find things to be thankful for. Even through difficult times, we should ask God to show us what to be thankful for. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NIV84) give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

### 2. Cultivate a repentant heart

It is crucial to nurture a soft heart that is deeply aware of our sins. We should resolve not to gloss over our sins nor to hide it. A heart willing to confess our sins and repent. This attitude reminds us of who we are, of our absolute depravity and weakness. That without Christ we would be nothing. This is not to mean we beat ourselves up. Rather it should draw us towards a deeper appreciation of the mercy and grace of God. It reminds us that we are fallen people who serve by the grace of God. Romans 12:3 (NIV84) "...Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you." This help deepen our humility before God.

### 3. Realize that God did not design us to function by ourselves.

God designed His people to function in community (1 Cor 12). Our giftings and strengths become more effective when joined with others who complement us. Further, our raw edges are better refined because of others around us, as iron sharpen iron. The realization that we need others help us better appreciate and value them. It keeps us humble.



#### 4. Be ready to accept humiliations.

Sometimes things do not go the way we anticipated, and we may be humiliated. Perhaps we received an open rebuke. A demotion. A failure of our project. We can either allow a bitter root to grow or we allow it to humble us. After all, Jesus the King of Kings was utterly humiliated at the cross. But He bore it humbly. Humiliation can teach us a lot about our perspectives, attitudes and capacity to humble ourselves.

I am not suggesting that we simply allow people to step all over us. But there is a place to bear suffering as a silent lamb. We need much wisdom, resilience and strength to respond in the right way before God.

#### 5. Don't take yourselves too seriously

Learn to laugh and even laugh at yourselves. We should not take ourselves too seriously. When we are able to joke about our weaknesses and limitations, it helps us humbly accept them. It helps us not be a person who tries to maintain a perfect façade. It helps us to be quicker to admit when we are wrong.

#### 6. Consider others before ourselves

The Scriptures encourage us to consider others and their needs before our own. Philippians 2:3 (ESV) "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves."

As Rick Warren puts it, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less". Humility is not considering ourselves of less value than others but really spending less time thinking about ourselves and our needs. Hence, even if we have greater status or have authority over someone, we consider how we may benefit them more over ourselves. Such a posture helps us keep humble. This does not mean we don't look after ourselves, but it is about our general orientation.



## 7. Cultivate an open listening heart

When we recognize that we need others in our lives and their input, we will be more willing to open our hearts to listen to others. Sometimes what they have to say may be painful to hear because it exposes some significant weakness or flaw in our lives. We need that feedback if we are to grow and mature. By continually keeping our hearts open and listening to others, it also continually keeps us humble. Should we start avoiding or pushing away feedback, we are in danger of hardening our hearts. In my podcast “Did I Get What You Said?”, I unpacked in greater detail about the how and why for more effective listening and the key attitudes involved.

## Conclusion

Humility is a crucial attitude in any Christian leader. For it reflects Christ’s attitude. A humble leader is able to develop better, more wholesomely and function more effectively. The deeper the humility of a leader before God, the more mightily God can use him over the long haul.



## Discussion Questions

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These questions could be done personally or as part of a group discussion.

1. In the section on “WHY IS HUMILITY SO IMPORTANT IN A LEADER?” which point(s) speaks to you the most? Why? Discuss.
2. Which one of the points do you struggle with the most? Why is that so? Is it due to pride?

## Actionable Steps

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Following questions are to prompt us on suitable actions. Importantly, come up with steps you will take to make progress. Give them datelines and priority.

1. How can you deepen humility when you have humiliating situations? Identify some steps you could take, such as:
  - Pause to reflect before God why the humiliation could have occurred and particular your part which may have contributed to it.
  - Reflect upon your emotions as you were confronted with the humiliation. What range of emotions did you feel? Why? What does it reveal about our attitudes and perspectives? What does it reveal about our pride?
2. In the section on “HOW DO WE DEVELOP DEEPER HUMILITY?” choose 1 or 2 aspects that you think you will need to work on. Develop a simple plan and be accountable to someone who can help you check your progress.



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