

Walking Humbly with God

by [Ray E. Heiple Jr.](#)

“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” ([Mic. 6:8](#), NKJV).

Humility, like patience, is one of those virtues for which we would like to be known while not having to often express it. In [Colossians 3:12](#), God commands Christians to put on humility and meekness, but this is easier said than done. To begin we must ask, What is humility? Webster defines humility as “being free from pride or arrogance; not proud or arrogant, not haughty or assertive.” One Greek lexicon explains it as “the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance.” If Thomas Aquinas is right that pride is the root of all sin, every instance of putting on humility requires a corresponding death blow to the root. Therefore, the reciprocal act of putting on humility and putting off pride is a foundational part of the spiritual warfare that the believer has entered into. Here we must understand that for the Christian, being converted to Christ is not the end but the beginning of the Christian life. Scripture promises that God the Holy Spirit is at work in us, transforming our wills and our works, so that we can work out our saved status unto the holiness that is its goal ([Phil. 2:12–13](#)).

How does the Christian participate in his sanctification toward the virtue of humility? First, he must admit that according to his own strength of will, intellect, and heart, he has no ability to become humbler. As Martin Luther proclaimed, the Christian (and only the Christian) is able to do good works in this life, but he never does them perfectly and he only does them by divine grace. Therefore, the Christian who seeks to obey God and practice humility must look to God to grant what He has commanded. We look to God by believing what His Word tells us is the means by which He will sanctify us and then by making a proper use of those means. The Westminster Confession of Faith identifies these means as all of Christ’s ordinances, which means everything that the Bible tells us to do, but especially the Word, the sacraments, and prayer. In other words, it is especially as we read and study Scripture, as we become more fully assured of Christ’s saving work signified and sealed in baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and as we spend time

with God in regular and ongoing prayer that we can expect God to sanctify us. In fact, looking exclusively to those means that God has given for sanctification while denying we can invent our own is itself an expression of humility. For by doing so, I am admitting that the only way I can hope for God to work in me and make me more like Christ is to trust in what He says. Such an attitude is humbling to me and exalting to God at the same time.

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Throughout Scripture, several other words are used to convey this godly attribute of humility or humbleness, such as lowliness, gentleness, and meekness. This last virtue is often viewed negatively outside the Scriptures, but biblical meekness does not mean weakness; nor does it refer to a kind of craven timidity produced by a selfish desire for self-preservation or promotion. Contrarily, it does not mean falsely denying or downplaying one's abilities or accomplishments as if one had not achieved them. Someone once asked me how a famous athlete can be humble if he truly is the best in the world? I answered, "By recognizing how far he is from perfection and by admitting that any skill he has—even the ability and resolve to work hard and increase that skill—comes entirely by the grace of God." To be humble or meek is to rightly evaluate our limitations, finitude, and dependence in everything. Moreover, for the Christian to practice meekness means to be so bold for the cause of God that we are willing to tolerate great offenses to our own honor and dignity just so long as it will bring glory and honor to Jesus Christ.

Accordingly, Scripture gives us several wonderful examples of Christian humility. The Bible says of Moses: "Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all men that were on the face of the earth" ([Num. 12:3](#)). Have you ever wondered about this verse? I'm sure when most people think of Moses, they do not think of meekness. Moses was the man who boldly went before Pharaoh and demanded, "Let my people go!" ([Ex. 5:1](#)). Moses went up on the mountain that quaked violently and was covered in smoke with lightning and fire, when all the rest of the people were afraid to look or even to hear the voice of God from a distance ([Ex. 19:16–20](#)). When Moses came down and saw the sin they had

committed, he angrily smashed the stone tablets on which God Himself had written the Ten Commandments ([Ex. 32:19](#)). Moses was anything but cowardly, timid, or weak. Yet here we have Scripture itself declare that Moses was the meekest man on the face of the earth. For while Moses was bold and fearless for God, we do not see him seeking any honor, status, or reward for himself. In fact, for the glory of God he patiently endured blame, complaints, and accusations. This is how we practice biblical meekness.

Likewise, the Bible indicates that Jesus was a Man of meekness: “Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!” ([2 Cor. 10:1](#)). Here Paul refers not only to his own meekness, but to that of Christ’s. **In two different places of Scripture, Jesus declares His own meekness** ([Matt. 11:29; 21:5](#)). **Interestingly, the Greek word used in both of these passages is the same word used when God commands wives to have “a gentle and quiet spirit” toward their husbands in [1 Peter 3:4](#) (NKJV).** **Today the concept of wives being submissive to their husbands is often rejected as something only applicable to a misogynistic culture. Yet when we rightly understand this passage, we see that the command to wives to put on a gentle and quiet spirit is really an exhortation to be like Christ, who is lowly and humble.**

If we had difficulty comprehending Moses’ meekness, how can we understand Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords, being meek? Jesus was supremely meek in that, like Moses, while God had exalted Him to a unique position over the people, He did not seek His own honor and glory, but the honor and glory of the One who sent Him. Moses’ humility was great when we consider what a powerful prophet God had made him and how he refused to use that position to exalt himself. Yet Moses’ exaltation and subsequent humility pale in comparison to Jesus’. Jesus, in His incarnation, was not just a powerful prophet and king but the sinless Son of God. Still, He sought to do not His own will but the will of His Father who sent Him ([John 5:30](#)). He made Himself not only low but the lowest possible. He became a sin offering for sinners who deserved only His eternal disdain, rejection, and wrath. If Jesus could so humble Himself for you, considering what He deserved, can we not find it in our hearts to humble ourselves for Him, considering what we *truly* deserve? Let us take some time today to consider our sinfulness and how Christ so humbled Himself to deliver us from it, so that we may be moved to humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord, seeking His glory alone, and allowing Him to lift us up ([James 4:10](#)).