

Teachings on Humility

From the Buddhist

and

Christian Traditions

Jason Espada, editor

May I always delight in humility.

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Preface - On Buddhism and Christianity, and The Way of No-Conflict

To be a spiritual seeker in the 21st century is really something. I mean this in both possible ways - that there are great advantages, as well as real challenges that have to be navigated successfully, if we're going to benefit from all we are natural heirs to.

In most cases, someone who is not deeply connected to one tradition skips along, choosing just what appeals to him; and perhaps they are isolated, and without feedback that can be so helpful throughout our lives.

Sometimes though, in a few cases perhaps, it can be freeing when a person is not bound by any one way of thinking, or of expressing what has come down to us as previous generations' verified truth. I think it's been this way in my own case.

Along with all that is useful I have also seen, unfortunately, how so much of what has made its way into religious teachings across cultures and throughout time has been arrogantly dogmatic. It's often emphasizes refuting what others are thinking and believing, and how they are practicing. Sadly, this attitude is especially prevalent here in the most common, superficial form of Christianity. Buddhists shouldn't be too proud either. There is much we can learn from other lineages besides our own, and from other spiritual traditions.

Most of the time, I'm glad to say, I have no interest in arguing about religion. This is because it feels more and more to me like Don Quixote, *tilting at windmills*- it is meaningless, and it accomplishing nothing. And who is the fool then? What's worse, arrogantly arguing that we alone are right fosters division, and often leads to self-righteousness.

Truth is one, but people call it by different names, says the Gita.

There are these riches in traditions we are heirs to, if we are willing, and audacious enough to claim them. I'm speaking here specifically of the

treasures of both Buddhism and Christianity. Each of these traditions has *so much* to offer, and wherever we begin, there is a great deal we can learn from each of these profound legacies we hold. If we are not interested in debate, or in just being right and proving that others are wrong, at that point these treasures really can benefit our lives.

Taking a universalist, or mystical approach to spiritual study, and then taking a step back, and appreciating the unique qualities and contributions of these each of these precious traditions brings a depth of gratitude and wonder that only increases over time.

Of course, the main difference between Buddhism and Theistic religions is that Buddhism does not posit a creator God, whereas in Christianity this is central. This is not an irreconcilable difference for me, and I would hope for other seekers as well. We should be able to learn wherever we can, especially from contemplative traditions, which are the inherited wisdom of past generations of sincere and dedicated people, just like ourselves.

We can keep what the Zen folk call a *Way Seeking Mind*, and this implies humility, and being able to learn throughout our lives. This is a good aim to have.

Appreciation

Out of their compassion, the Buddha and his realized followers, and Jesus and his realized, devout followers have shared their wisdom with us, so we can make our way to peace and fulfillment. This compassionate motivation that has continued to this very day is what has made all the books, and the hospitals, and all the altruistic lives of teachers available. I celebrate *all* this blessed activity, and long may it flourish.

When it comes to the subject of humility, it seems that the Christian Tradition has more extensively developed teachings, compared to most other traditions. I've not referenced here Islam (which means *submission*), or

Judaism, Indian Spirituality, or Indigenous traditions in this collection, but this is mostly because I'm closer to Buddhism, and to a lesser extent to Christianity. I'm sure those other traditions all have many wonderful teachings on the subject as well.

Humility is talked about in Buddhism, especially in the Mahayana, and cultivating this quality even a little is sure to bring good results. This is in line with the principle that each one of the teachings should be verifiable for us. We can see their value for ourselves.

In Christianity, by contrast, humility is considered to be *a cardinal virtue*, and there are many, many teachings on this subject. Without humility, they say, we may be learned, or an elder, or even in a position of influence, but nothing much of value comes through.

There are blessings in each of the worlds spiritual traditions, but for these to be known, the qualities of love and wanting to be of service has to be central. This is why the quality of humility is so often commented on, and encouraged for people of all ages. It is truly rewarding virtue to have and to honor in others, and in ourselves.

They say in the Lam Rim, or Stages of the Path teachings that before we take up a practice, we need to know its advantages. Then we will have the motivation to practice. It's for this reason that I've gathered together my favorite teachings on this subject, of humility. There is so much to be gained from it.

May we all receive encouragement to practice our spiritual path well,
May we care for others in the best ways, with respect,
and May there be peace and the flourishing of health and happiness in the world, and in all of our lives!

About a few of these selections

Even though there are more teachings in what follows from the Christian Tradition than from the Buddhist, I have placed the Buddhist teachings in the first part of this collection. To me, this highlights the the universal nature of these teachings on humility.

A few items:

I have two sets of notes on this subject, written 30 years apart. The newer thoughts were my summary of what I've remembered, and tried to put into practice. They were written out at the onset of putting this collection together.

It's interesting compare these with the notes from the 1990's, to see what has long been familiar, and what by comparison is new, or especially significant for me.

Two themes related to humility have come to mind recently: the teachings on 'beginner's mind', and those on humility as *a beatitude*,

Blessed are the humble...

I've done what I could to represent each of these themes well.

In the section of Christian teachings, the teachings by Gary Thomas, from his book from the 1990's, titled *The Glorious Pursuit*, have a special place in my heart. The whole book is excellent, and in it he dedicates two long chapters to the virtue of humility.

I'd like to highlight two more selections: those by Joyce Meyer, and the interview with Thomas Keating.

Joyce Meyer is a modern teacher who is often on television, and I noticed that whenever I put her program on, she speaks to something I feel like I need on that particular day. Connections on a spiritual level are one of those mysterious things that I recognize, and try to honor. In Christian language, we can say that she is *an anointed teacher*. She is blessed with a gift, manifesting the holy spirit.

The Father Thomas Keating piece is the longest in this collection. I was tempted to edit it down, but the whole interview here is so rich and insightful. The more I read it and reflect on it, the more I learn.

As with other anthologies I've put together, I've edited these selections to make them clear to my own understanding. I fully accept whatever faults there may be. May I be patiently forgiven for each of these.

As with the other collections, these are teachings to be read more than once, and reflected on; worked with, questioned, practiced, and gradually brought into our lives.

May we all receive their benefit.

A few notes on humility

When I think of humility, the first thing that comes to mind is receptivity, the ability to learn. When someone approaches a teacher, there is more or less of this quality, of attentiveness and respectful listening, placing oneself under their guidance and care.

The proud person, by contrast, may think they already know something. They have less receptivity, and less learning happens as a result.

I think of how in Eastern Traditions, teachers are deeply respected, and how out of reverence, they are visualized on the crown of one's head. This allows for a flow of grace and blessings, and communication that is deeper than book learning.

With arrogance, one is easily offended, boasting directly or less directly, and putting others down, so as to proclaim one's own superiority.

It's not easy to be around an arrogant person. In contrast, no matter how accomplished they are, a humble person puts one at ease.

I remember having a couple of lessons with the great guitarist, George Sakellariou. I was a little intimidated, but he was so warm and encouraging, and this helped me feel comfortable. This was on account of his humility and self worth. A humble and dignified person has no need to be thought of as higher than another.

If only more teachers had this quality, oh what a different world this would be!

I think of humility as a part of patience, and perseverance as well. For example, when I have more of this quality, there is an acceptance of myself, wherever I am in life or in a spiritual practice.

I won't resist beginning to meditate, or beginning again, and continuing. With humility, I am able to meet myself wherever I am with patience, and gentleness, and go from there.

Humility moves on a spectrum. A person with less of this quality would not even start a task, if they think they would not easily succeed.

Humility is necessary for learning. I recall how Thich Nhat Hanh taught non-attachment to views, saying:

Do not think the knowledge you presently possess is changeless, absolute truth... be ready to learn your whole life...

He also said that if a person feels like they are at the top of a ladder, they won't take the next step.

There is always more to learn. There is always someone who knows more than I do. This is essential for me to keep in mind.

Humility is also a protection against falling back, once we've made some progress.

Saint Augustine said:

If there be holiness in you, fear lest you may lose it. How? Through pride.

and John Climacus taught:

Rebuff the vanity that follows obedience.

It's with good reason that the Tao Te Ching says

Conduct your victory like a funeral.

We may think we've accomplished something, or have overcome some negative emotion, only to have it return, on account of our carelessness, or lack of thoroughness.

Humility brings safety.

There's a story about Ajahn Buddhadasa that I like, and try to keep in mind. In Buddhism, it is against tradition to speak of one's accomplishments, and once an interviewer asked Ajahn if he suffered. This may have been a sly way of asking if he had attained the goal of Arhatship, complete liberation from suffering. Ajahn Buddhadasa knew what he was up to, and with a twinkle in his eye, said, 'No, but you can never be too sure' - i.e., keep practicing.

Humility was there, and it secured his attainment.

It's much easier to see pride in others than to see it in oneself!, but once we turn around and start to examine our own attitude about ourselves, we'll almost certainly find that with some we hold ourselves as higher, or better than them. Check out how often we go against the Zen precept, of 'Praising oneself and belittling others'...

Humility quiets the mind and emotions, and it brings clarity. It is grounding.

Some things take time, and with more humility, instead of assuming we should be able to go this far in this amount of time, we have more of a more realistic attitude, with an interest that says, *Well... let's see how long this will take...*

Then, if something is worthwhile, we'll give ourselves to it comfortably.

II.

When I think of my teachers, their humility is one of the qualities that always stands out. I'm thinking first of Thich Nhat Hanh. He was so soft spoken, lucid, gentle and patient with everyone - all of which I feel came from his sense of self worth, dignity, and humility.

It was some time before I realized how many languages he knew. He didn't come out and say it, but I remember he was speaking *English*, with a *French* - *Vietnamese* accent, comparing *Chinese* and *Pali* texts. I got a sense of his great learning, that was supported by this wonderful quality.

Matthieu Ricard is another teacher who has this beautiful quality, as did Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche. When I had the chance to meet him in 1996, I had no idea at the time of the great depth and breadth of his knowledge, only that he was warm, present, and so very generous. Later I came to know something of his profound learning and experience.

What to make of this? What is the difference between a scholar like him who is both deeply learned, and still humble, and one who has a lot of knowledge, but is proud of it?

I know it is harder to learn from a proud person. There is something offensive about them from the get go, but the modest teacher is easy to be around and to listen to. They are not aggressive; they are undemanding, and the respect that naturally comes to them is entirely due to these fine qualities.

Interestingly enough, the word *humility* is related to *earth*, and to *lowliness*; and even *humiliation*, painful though it may be, can have this one good quality - if it brings us back down to earth when we've overestimated ourselves.

Often we think too much of ourselves.

Being able to be humbled means a person has some self worth, or dignity as a basis. This is in contrast to an insecure person who can't stand to be second to anyone. Such a person needs to heal that wound, and have their genuine self worth shored up and supported. Only then can they accept a lower place, and gradual growth, in its own time.

What more can I wish for myself and others?

With humility, there is space within, quietness, attentiveness, clarity, and gratitude; gentleness, and joy.

The humble person learns from this whole world, from the trees and the grasses and the wind, from children, from animals, from the educated and the less book-learned. We can see the precious qualities others have, and be inspired by them. We can afford to be generous, caring, supportive and encouraging.

Buddhist teachings

On Humility, by Ringu Tulku

Going for refuge to the Sangha is saying that 'I would like to make myself open, with humility, in order to learn'. That is one way of going for refuge to the Sangha. I allow myself to be influenced positively.

This humility is very important. It is said that if you have pride you cannot learn anything. You are closed. It's as if you think: 'I know everything, I don't need anything.' If you look at everybody like they are useless, then you cannot learn anything from anybody.

The more I see the positive qualities in others, the more I myself can learn.

If I can see even little positive qualities in others, some good side of them, some small good quality, the more I see this, the more I learn, and the more I acquire good qualities and the more I improve.

If you don't see any positive qualities in anybody, it doesn't mean that you are the best- it means that you are closed. You cannot learn anything while you are like that, and you will remain like that always if you keep that attitude. That is what we are saying when we talk about humility and humbleness: not to be coated with pride, but to allow ourselves to soak up positive qualities and positive things from outside, from everybody and everything.

The more we can be aware of the positive things, and positive qualities that others have, the more we can also feel good about these. We can learn and we can respect others. This respect is very important because it is the beginning of learning. It is the beginning of our improvement also, and it is the beginning of the Sangha, of togetherness - having respect for each other and showing appreciation for each other. That is what leads to togetherness and Sangha.

Humility as Love, by Thich Nhat Hanh

I have often said that there is no place for pride in true love. True love is a process of humility, of letting go of our individual ideas and notions to embrace and become one with another person or our entire community.

When we are proud we can be easily wounded. We are like the tall, dry grasses that do not bend down low in the face of the winds. Instead, they try to remain standing tall and in the process are broken to pieces. Our pride is an obstacle to developing our understanding, compassion, and boundless love.

When we are humble we have nothing to fear, nothing to lose. We easily flow with the circumstances that we find ourselves in and are endlessly open to learn, to practice, and to transform ourselves...

The Virtues of Humility, by Matthieu Ricard

Part One

Humility is sometimes scorned, regarded as a weakness... Pride, however, the narcissistic exaggeration of the self, closes the door to all personal progress, since in order to learn, you must first think that you don't know.

Humility is a forgotten quality of the contemporary world, the theater of *seeming*. Magazines are constantly giving advice about how to "affirm" yourself, "make an impression," "be beautiful"- to seem instead of be. This obsession with the favorable image one wants to present is such that we no longer even ask ourselves anymore the question of the groundlessness of seeming, but only how we can appear most positively. However, as La Rochefoucauld wrote, *We should gain more by letting the world see what we are than by trying to seem what we are not.*

Most people associate humility with a lack of self-esteem and a lack of confidence in one's own abilities, when they don't associate it with an inferiority complex. They don't recognize the benefits of humility.

Humility is the virtue of one who has taken the measure of all that's left for him to learn and the path he still has to travel.

Humble people are not beautiful, intelligent people who take pride in convincing themselves they're ugly and stupid; they are people who don't make much of their ego. *Not thinking of themselves as the center of the universe, they open up more easily to others and are especially aware of the interconnection between all beings.*

Part Two

A humble person has nothing to lose or to gain. If he is praised, he thinks it's for what he has been able to accomplish, not for himself as an individual. *If he is criticized, he thinks that bringing his faults out into the open is the best service anyone could do him.

Few are sufficiently wise to prefer censure, which is useful, to praise, which is treacherous, wrote La Rochefoucauld, as if echoing Tibetan sages who remind us that *the best teaching is one that reveals our hidden faults.*

Free from hope and fear, the humble person remains carefree and *without affectation.*

Paradoxically, humility also favors strength of character: the humble person makes decisions according to what he thinks is fair and holds to them, without worrying either about his image or about what people will say about him.

Humility is a quality that is invariably found in the wise person who has acquired many qualities, for, they say, it's when the tree is loaded with fruit that the branches bend to the ground, whereas the proud person is like the tree whose bare branches point up to the sky.

While traveling with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, I often noted the great humility laden with kindness of such a venerable man. He is always attentive to people of modest means and never poses as an important person. One day, after greeting François Mitterrand, who had just accompanied him to the front steps of the Élysée palace, the Dalai Lama, before getting into his car, went over to shake the hand of one of the guards standing at the side, beneath the stunned gaze of the President of the Republic.

Humility is a component of altruism, since the humble person is naturally concerned about others and attentive to their well-being.

Social psychology studies, on the other hand, have shown that those who overestimate themselves show a tendency to aggression that is greater than average. A link has also been highlighted between humility and the ability to forgive...

On Humility and Beginner's Mind

From various sources

The Japanese Zen term *shoshin* translates as 'beginner's mind' and refers to a paradox: the more you know about a subject, the more likely you are to close your mind to further learning. As the Zen monk Shunryu Suzuki put it in his book *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* (1970):

In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few...

Many historical examples demonstrate how the expert mind (or feeling like an expert) can lead to closed-mindedness and the obstruction of scientific progress.

Intellectual hubris doesn't afflict only established scientific experts. Merely having a university degree in a subject can lead people to grossly overestimate their knowledge.

and,

even *feeling* like an expert also breeds closed-mindedness.

The consequences of intellectual overconfidence can be seen in the debates surrounding {a whole range of} controversial contemporary issues.

Approaching issues with a beginner's mind or a healthy dose of intellectual humility can help to counter the disadvantages of intellectual hubris. People who are more intellectually humble actually know more, presumably because they are more receptive to new information.

Similarly, being intellectually humble is associated with open-mindedness and a greater willingness to be receptive to other people's perspectives – arguably just the tonic that our politically antagonistic world needs today.

Therefore, fostering your own beginner's mind will help you to become more knowledgeable, less overconfident and more willing to engage with others...

By practising being flexible rather than dogmatic, more humble and less brazen, you will be sensitive to other people's perspectives and needs, making you a better sister, brother, father, mother, partner and friend. With eyes and mind wide open, it's so much easier to enjoy the wonders of the world, to grow, to learn and to listen...

An important first step towards having a more open mind is to establish a realistic sense of your own knowledge...

(Then) To combat our own confirmation bias, we need to be aware of it. Constantly remind yourself that this is something that exists, and take active steps to work against it by seeking out information and perspectives that are different than your current position.

The way you think about intelligence and expertise is also relevant to being more open-minded...

If we see aptitudes as malleable rather than fixed we are able to learn better (or to continue learning throughout our whole life)

Another, more pleasurable step you can take to increase your intellectual humility comes in the form of deliberately invoking in oneself the emotion of awe...

- From How to foster 'shoshin', by Christian Jarrett

The Japanese word, *shoshin* (初心) means beginner's mind and refers to the practice of keeping an open mind, having an attitude of eagerness, and approaching a subject with a lack of preconceptions – even when it is an area where we have extensive knowledge or experience. The world of Academia is filled with experts...

When we cultivate a beginner's mind, we foster *intellectual humility*, which enables us to take in new information and be more receptive to other people's ideas.

A beginner's mind is flexible; not dogmatic. It enables us to really listen to others, even when they hold opposing views to our own. The effect is that people feel seen and heard and respected. We create supportive environments where we feel safe. And a whole cascade of benefits accrue, including enhanced self-esteem, self-respect, and prosocial behaviors that strengthen communities – all good for our mental health.

Generations of scholars have tirelessly applied their expertise to solving the mysteries of our minds and the complex puzzles of mental health and illness. The paradox is that our greatest discoveries depend on subjugating that deep knowledge to a beginner's mindset where curiosity, possibility, and new ideas are embraced despite what we know...

- From Begin Again, by Kathleen M. Pike

The classic Zen story of Nan-in and the professor is an example of the necessity of humility. Of cultivating the beginner's mind.

A professor of Buddhist studies went to meet with the Zen master Nan-in. After bowing, the professor asked the master to teach him about Zen, but quickly started rambling on about his own extensive studies while the master patiently listened. Nan-in suggested they continue talking over some tea and poured himself a cup.

He then started pouring tea into the professor's cup and continued to pour, even after the cup began to overflow. Eventually the professor cried out, "Stop, you are spilling tea everywhere! Can't you see the cup is full!" The Zen master smiled and said, "You are like this cup, so full that nothing more can be added. Come back when your mind is empty."

Now, this doesn't mean that common sense and intuition are to be thrown out. They are, in fact, constituents (along with curiosity) of beginner's mind...

There is a middle way. Past knowledge needn't be tossed out. Simply questioned; looked at through a new lens. Make use of hard-earned experience. Don't negate it, but keep an open mind on how to apply it to each new circumstance...

- Keith Norris, From Humility is Greater Than Dogma

One of the keys to beginner's mind is humility- a characteristic not highly regarded in this society. We are mostly about pumping ourselves up (there's ego again). Humility requires us to acknowledge and honor what others know that we do not...

Beginner's mind is all about being willing to learn, which can (and should) happen at any age...

- From Why You Need to Embrace "Beginner's Mind" to Live a Life of Adventure, by Amaya Pryce

With an attitude of openness, eagerness, and humility, we can embody what many Zen Buddhist practitioners call “Beginner’s Mind.”

For many mindfulness practitioners, the key to spiritual evolution is simple. Instead of focusing on having the “right” answer to every question, the task is witnessing and accepting that which is unknown. Through detachment, surrender and grace, we can expand beyond current habitual patterns, feelings and beliefs into a broader experience of who and what we truly are.

- Bianca Alexander

Having a ‘beginner’s mind’ means training yourself to view your current, past and future experiences with greater openness and flexibility.

Approaching things with a beginner’s mind helps you to cultivate humility... and over time, this makes you more capable of learning and growth, and more positive, creative, and resilient.

Where did beginner’s mind come from?

Beginner’s mind, or *Shoshin*, is from Zen Buddhism. Originally it referred to having an attitude of openness, eagerness, and lack of preconceptions when studying a subject, even when studying at an advanced level.

The concept was extended beyond studying scenarios into the wider perspective of meaning dropping expectations and preconceived ideas about something, and seeing things with an open mind and fresh eyes...

- Rezzan Huseyin

The Bamboo Forest Zen Master once said:

Everything I touch becomes new...

- From Transformation and Healing, by Thich Nhat Hanh

From The Value of Beginner's Mind, by Luke, Exploring Kodawari

Aging, like many things in life, is a double-edged sword. No, I do not mean the physical aspects of aging, as frustrating as that can be. Instead, I mean that the psychology of aging- how the brain's pattern recognition systems evolve- comes with pros and cons.

These are the categories and heuristics that we form and continually update in order to understand reality. We need these, and the positive thing is that we can sharpen them up as we age- we can make them more encompassing, consistent, and reliable.

It is as if we create a conceptual map of reality- a map of categories, personality types, expectations, intuitions about danger, etc.- which we use to offload our thinking and quickly analyze the world.

But there is a downside to this process. As we gain life experience and wisdom, we also lose something else: novelty.

In the presence of novelty, we are open to many possibilities. We have humility and awe at the uniqueness of what's in front of us, and we don't assume that it will fit into an already formed category. Novelty captures our attention to be fully in the present moment.

It gives us what the Zen master Shunryu Suzuki calls *beginner's mind*.

Finding freedom is a recurring theme in meditation. This freedom can be expressed in many ways, but I think the most encompassing framing is a freedom from attachment.

It is our clinging to things- to views, desires, states of emotion, etc.- that begins the feedback loops of suffering. We wish for the external world to be a certain way, and we suffer when it is not. Or when we actually get what we want, we quickly realize that we are still clinging to yet more desire.

But as we let go of attachments, we find more freedom and less suffering. We see and accept reality as it is...

And beginner's mind is {in a way} such freedom- freedom from the past. It is the quality of seeing something as if for the first time. It means we no longer cling to our knowledge, experiences, opinions, or expectations. We have fresh awe and appreciation at the miracle of what's in front of us...

As we age we learn and adapt. We form heuristics- rules of thumb- in order to more quickly analyze reality. We notice various causes and effects, and we expect the same patterns to continue. We also learn about different personality types and what to expect from them. And perhaps most important to our evolutionary past, we learn what assumptions will keep us out of danger.

This knowledge is not necessarily wrong, but it is also not free. In our clinging to mental models and assumptions, we often overlook the genuine uniqueness of the present moment. The mind wanders because it assumes that the present is probably more of the same old stuff.

But by definition, the present moment is always novel. It of course resembles patterns from the past, but every moment is still a brand new coming together of matter, energy, and consciousness. Beginner's mind- and the meditation practices that cultivate it- help us to truly connect to this fact. We don't allow the past to cloud the present. All of our past

knowledge could be wrong, so we choose to see things as they are in the right now, with fresh eyes.

And when we see the present moment as novel, we give it our full attention. We cultivate a state of open-mindedness and appreciation towards reality.

Solving Problems

In the spaciousness of walking and loosening my grip on the problem, the novel solution often comes to me. The wandering of the mind brought about a beginner's mind that didn't get stuck in the same ways. A lot of our past rules and knowledge are probably useful, but just one wrong assumption could be what keeps you stuck.

When we are free from views, we are willing to learn...

- Jack Kornfeld

This type of beginner's mind is very similar to first-principles thinking, and it's also why it can be so useful to ask someone else for help. They aren't clouded and biased from spending hours on the problem, and as such solutions often come very quickly. {We need to} get rid of these biases in order to properly solve a problem.

To practice beginner's mind is to practice seeing a problem like your friend would. View the problem as if for the first time, because maybe you missed something the first time... When you aren't boxed in, there will be many more possible solutions, and one of them might just be the right one.

Gratitude

Gratitude is another recurring theme in meditation, and it also comes together perfectly with beginner's mind. This is because beginner's mind

cultivates a fresh and unique outlook on things, instead of taking them for granted.

Whether we are looking at our significant other or out in nature looking at a tree, beginner's mind reminds us to slow down and see the details. We bring freshness to how we see, and that freshness invokes gratitude for the delicate intricacies of all things...

And with mindfulness, this is a practice that we can get better at- to breathe in the present moment and cultivate gratitude for where we are.

In a sense, beginner's mind is learning to forget so that you can appreciate. Even if something is around you all of the time, you can always slow down and appreciate how special and how temporary it is.

None of this is to say we should have {a complete} beginner's mind all of the time. We couldn't survive if we always saw the world with such child-like innocence- often we should trust both our knowledge and our instincts.

Beginner's mind encourages us to see the world with fresh eyes- to be present and in awe and appreciation of this present moment...

The wild horse of pride, commentary by Venerable Thubten Chodron

Part of a series of talks on Gems of Wisdom, a poem by the Seventh Dalai Lama.

Pride can be a great hindrance on the spiritual path, keeping us from our goals

Humility is important to cultivate in our practice

Verse five of Gems of Wisdom by the Seventh Dalai Lama.

He asks the question: *What is the wild horse that throws one from the mountain one is ascending?*

What do you say? When you're progressing on the path, what is the uncontrolled mind that makes you fall down? Pride.

Arrogance. Conceit. Puffing ourselves up.

He says: "Pride...." I prefer "arrogance" to translate it- "arrogance that thinks oneself superior and dwells on one's own good qualities." You know? That mind.

What is the wild horse that throws one from the mountain one is ascending?
Arrogance that thinks oneself superior and dwells on one's own good qualities.

Pride along the path

They always say that at the beginning of the path we aren't arrogant because we don't know anything, but as we learn a little bit of Dharma then it's very easy for us to get puffed up... New people come and we can explain this and we can explain that, and because we know this much more than they do, they look at up at us like this. [Looks up...]

Thinking we know more than we do

There are two reasons we're arrogant here:

One is that when you know a little bit, you think that you know more than you actually know. You may know the words but you don't really know the meaning.

Or you may even know the meaning intellectually but you haven't realized it.

Lots of times you may in fact know the words, and you think you know the meaning, but actually you have a totally wrong conception and that's what you teach to other people, which does far more damage than good. So what's there to be arrogant about that?

Who taught us what we do know?

In any case, when we're teaching the Dharma, what's there to be arrogant about at all?- because we didn't invent the Dharma. We learned it from other people. So getting puffed up, thinking, "I'm a great practitioner, I'm a great teacher, I've realized this, I've realized that... look there's all these students around who think I'm so wonderful...."

You know, who do we think we are? The Buddha? I mean none of the Dharma came from us. So, there is no reason to ever get arrogant over knowing something.

And, similarly, even if we have realizations- there is no reason to get arrogant over that. In fact, if you have genuine realizations you become even more humble.

Pride: A hindrance along the path

You can see that if your mind gets puffed up with pride as you're ascending the mountain, that's when the wild horse throws you. You're trying to practice the Dharma and create some virtue and generate realizations, but your own arrogance becomes a huge interference, and throws you down the mountain of realizations.

This is because when you think you know everything then what can you learn from anybody? And then of course all interior growth stops, and it becomes a real problem.

I mean we see many times in the West people who were nobody in Tibet come to the West and become somebody. Or Westerners thinking they're somebody when they aren't. And then really, lots of things happen. So we have to be quite aware of that, because it not only damages us, but it damages other people.

Antidotes to pride

Thinking about the disadvantages of pride are part of the antidote {as is thinking about interdependence}

... (I consider how) I came into this world not knowing anything and everything I know, even how to speak, even how to wash my hands, everything came from mothers. So there's nothing to be arrogant about myself. I should be incredibly grateful to the kindness of others, because without their kindness I wouldn't know anything.

You know, sometimes we write a book and we think, "Oh, these are all *my* ideas. I'm putting *my* ideas in a book." Do we really think that we've thought something that nobody has ever thought before? Do we really think, "Oh I'm the first one who's ever had that thought?" Well, we think

that, but what's the likelihood that nobody in all beginningless time- including the Buddha- has ever had that kind of knowledge?

I mean I always tell people *Working with Anger* is plagiarized from Shantideva, because that one is really obviously plagiarized. With the other books, they're also plagiarized. I mean none of it comes from me. People come up and say, "Oh I really like your talk." It has nothing to do with me. They like the Dharma. and that's what's important. I didn't invent it. There's nothing *me* about it.

I find thinking that way to be very very helpful, and to remember that until we ourselves become Buddhas we're always students.

[Response to audience] {Pride is not just} "I know what's best for me," but with it is a very stubborn arrogance says, "I know what's best for me, so don't tell me what to do." There's nothing much you can say to that kind of a person. There's no space for them to take in anything. You just have to.... What can you say? You have to wait, and life has a way of making us crash. If we're smart, then we learn, and if we're not smart, then we keep doing the same thing.

I remember recently I was discussing something with somebody- this is when I was in Australia- and I said something and that person said, "Well, blah blah blah." And I just said, "Well, okay. If that's how you feel, that's it." There was nothing to engage in any further. Not open.

I mean, what can you do? Bang them on the head, and say, "You're being stubborn and arrogant?" I think the easiest thing to help understand this is to look at when we're stubborn and arrogant, and how we dig our heels in, and how we don't want to hear anything from anybody else. Then even if somebody with a kind attitude comes, how do we act?

A good relationship with a spiritual teacher benefits us

It's very true. If you don't have a teacher, you don't know. Or if you don't have a close relationship with your teacher- you may have one, but it's not a close relationship- then your teacher will not point things out to you directly because they know that- I mean, even a teacher, if the person isn't open, they won't say anything because it's useless. But if you have a good relationship and you're sincere then your teacher can say something.

The kindness of our "enemies"

The nice thing is that even sometimes if our teacher doesn't say anything, our friends- or our enemies- will. And this is the 'kindness of the enemies', because our enemy- "enemy" I'm saying here is someone we don't like- the people we don't like, they won't put up with our junk, and they'll say it straight out to us. This is why we don't like them, but this is also why they're actually sometimes the only ones who can get through to us.

Reducing arrogance, cultivating humility, by Venerable Thubten Chodron

Becoming arrogant in the Dharma can become a hindrance to learning...

The benefit of practicing humility

Okay, so we're still talking about arrogance, pride, conceit...

So there are many different things that we can get arrogant about:

Our physical appearance...

Our physical strength...

Our athletic ability...

Our intelligence...

The amount of knowledge we have...

Particular talents we have, musical or artistic...

Particular skills: working with computers or machinery or cooking...

You name it, we can get proud of it. Okay?

This doesn't just happen in our regular careers or regular life, but also in the Dharma. When people first come to the Dharma they're usually fairly humble because they don't know very much. But then when they've been around a bit, they get a little bit- kind of- "Oh, I'll show you the way. You don't know how to do that? Well let me tell you because this is the way we do it." You know? And we can get really kind of arrogant in the

Dharma, thinking that we know a lot, we've accomplished a lot, we're very knowledgeable and so therefore other people should look up to us, they should respect us, they should put us in the front row.

This happens with monastics. "Oh, I've been ordained longer than you, get out of my way." [laughter] Actually, it's really sweet. Usually at big teachings you always know the new monastics because they go sit in the very front. They don't know they're supposed to sit in the back. [laughter]

We can get arrogant about everything- you name it. It's something to really be on guard against, because arrogance is a big hindrance to learning. If you think you know it all then your mind is never open to learning anything more. So the Tibetans have a saying that "no grass grows on the top of the mountain, it only grows in the valley." So a person who considers himself (or herself) very high can't learn anything, he's just the rocky crag at the top of the mountain and not the lush, fertile valley where things can actually grow.

That's why we do the practice of prostrations a lot. It's to make us humble. I mean, it shows respect for the Buddha. It purifies, but it's also a practice of humility, to remember that we are the servants of other sentient beings, and that as long as our minds are filled with ignorance, anger, and attachment there is absolutely nothing to get arrogant about.

Even if we have a good rebirth now, if we create a lot of negative karma then we will have a bad rebirth in the future, so what's there to be arrogant about? The little bit of status or whatever we have right now doesn't mean much. It's just a temporary condition that's produced by causes and conditions.

The same thing goes for having a precious human life. It's nothing to get proud about. It's something to use wisely because we won't have it for very long.

When in doubt, it's good to be humble, as antithetical as that is to the American system, where we are taught here to sing our own glories. Aren't we? You know, you go in for a job interview, you never say you can't do anything. Even if you can't. It's, "Well I have some experience in that." But you see, we have such a hard time- and the system expects us to just know everything, or to *pretend* we know everything.

I remember once I was with a young person who was applying for college and she had to write an essay about herself, and I encouraged her to write not only her good qualities and what she liked, but also her weaknesses, and this person was very upset with me, and so were the parents. It's like, "How dare you say that?" And I was thinking, you know, if I get an application from somebody who is talking honestly about themselves, then I'm going to notice that and be more inclined to select that person than somebody who is trying to pull the wool over my eyes, or somebody who is totally out of touch with themselves and thinks they're excellent and everything. But I saw very quickly that not everybody shares that opinion about who they would select.

But if you're in the Dharma a lot- and this is something you really see in Tibetan culture- kind of you're taught to be humble, you're taught not to brag, and so on, and so that's an advantage to be in a place where that kind of attitude is encouraged, rather than the attitude: "*Here I am!*"

This doesn't mean losing our confidence. It doesn't mean hiding our qualities. If we know something, if we have some ability, we should say so, but that's quite different than exaggerating our qualities and making ourselves out to be more than we are. Of course, we should say what abilities we have, because we want to help sentient beings, and if we don't tell them what we're good at doing, they can't ask us for that particular kind of help...

A Monastic's Mind, by Venerable Thubten Chodron

Excerpted from a talk given at a group of newly ordained monks and nuns at Tushita Meditation Center in Dharamsala, 2001.

In a discussion with Amchok Rinpoche several years ago, he said to me, "The most important thing as a monastic is to have a monastic's mind." I've thought about this over the years and have concluded that when we have a "monastic's mind," things will naturally flow. Our whole way of being is as a monastic. We can think about what a "monastic's mind" means for years. Here are some of my reflections.

One of the first qualities of a monastic's mind is humility. Humility has to do with transparency, which is related to self-acceptance.

With humility, our mind relaxes. "I don't have to be the best. I don't have to prove myself. I'm open to learning from others. It makes me feel good to see others' good qualities."

Humility can be difficult for us Westerners because we were raised in cultures where humility is seen as weakness. People in the West pull out their business cards: *"Here I am! This is what I've accomplished! This is what I do! This is how great I am! You should notice me!, think I'm wonderful!, and respect me!"* We were raised to make others notice us and praise us, but this is not a monastic's mind.

As monastics, our goal is internal transformation. We're not trying to create a magnificent image that we're going to sell to everyone. We have to let that seep into our mind and not worry so much about what other people think. Instead, we should be concerned with how our behavior influences other people. Do you see the difference between the two? If I'm worried about what you think of me, that's the eight worldly concerns. I want to look good so that you'll say nice things to me and will praise me to others so that I'll have a good reputation. That's the eight worldly concerns.

On the other hand, as monastics, we represent the Dharma. Other people will be inspired or discouraged by the way we act. We're trying to develop bodhicitta, so if we care about others, we don't want to do things that will make them lose faith in the Dharma. *We do this not because we're trying to create a good image and have a good reputation but because we genuinely care about others.*

If I hang out in chai shops all day or if I shout from one end of the courtyard to the other, other people will think poorly of the Dharma and the Sangha. If I jostle people when I go into teachings or get up in the middle and stomp out, they're going to think, "I'm new to the Dharma, but I don't want to become like that!" Thus, in order to prevent this, we become concerned about the way our behavior affects other people because we genuinely care about others, not because we're attached to our reputation. We must be clear about the difference between the two.

A monastic's mind has humility. It also is concerned for the Dharma and others' faith in the Dharma.

Generally, when we are first ordained, we don't feel this concern for the Dharma and for others' faith. New monastics generally think, "What can the Dharma give to me? Here I am. I'm so confused. What can Buddhism do for me?" Or, we think, "I'm so sincere in wanting to attain enlightenment. I really want to practice. Therefore others should help me to do this."

As we remain ordained longer and longer, we come to understand how our behavior affects other people, and we begin to feel some responsibility for the continuity of the teachings. These precious teachings, which have helped us so much, began with the Buddha. They were passed down through a lineage of practitioners over the centuries. Because those people practiced well and remained together in communities, we are fortunate

enough to sit on the crest of this wave. We feel so much positive energy coming from the past.

When we receive ordination, it's like sitting on the crest of this wave, floating along on the virtue that all the Sangha before us have created for over 2,500 years.

After some time, we begin to think,

"I've got to contribute some virtue so that future generations can meet the Dharma and other people around me can benefit."

We begin to feel more responsible for the existence and spread of the teachings.

I'm sharing my experience. I don't expect you to feel this way now. It took me many years to recognize that I was no longer a child in the Dharma, to feel that I am an adult and so need to be responsible and give to others. Often we come into Dharma circles or into the Sangha thinking, "What can I get out of the Sangha? How is being with these monks and nuns going to benefit me?"

We think, "We're going to have a monastery? How will it help me?" Hopefully after some time our attitude changes and we begin to say,

"What can I give to the community? How can I help the Sangha? What can I give to the individuals in the community? What can I give to the lay people?"

Our focus begins to change from "What can I get?" to "What can I give?"

We talk so much about bodhicitta and being of benefit to everybody, but actually putting this into practice in our daily life takes time.

Slowly, our attitude begins to change. If we look at our ordination as a consumer and think, “What can I get out of this?” we’re going to be unhappy because we’ll never get enough. People will never treat us well enough or give us enough respect.

We’ll be much more satisfied as monastics if we start to ask ourselves,

“What can I give to this 2,500 year-old community? How can I help it and the individuals in it so that they can continue to benefit society in the future? What can I give to the laypeople?”

Not only will we feel more content inside ourselves when we change our attitude, but we’ll also be able to make a positive contribution to the welfare of sentient beings.

To make a positive contribution we don’t need to be important or famous. We don’t need to be Mother Theresa or the Dalai Lama. We just do what we do with mindfulness, conscientiousness, and a kind heart. We shouldn’t make a big deal, “I’m a bodhisattva! Here I am. I’m going to serve everybody! Look at me, what a great bodhisattva I am!” That’s trying to create an image. Whereas if we just try to work on our own mind, be kind to other people, support them in their practice, listen to them because we care about them, then slowly a transformation will occur within ourselves. Who we are as a person will change.

A Commentary on Verse Two of the Eight Verses for Training the Mind,
from Prison Mindfulness

Whenever I am with others may I think of myself as the lowest of all and from the very depths of my heart may I respectfully hold others as supreme.

Verse 2 - This verse calls us to train the mind in proper humility, eliminating our habitual arrogance and pride by 'thinking of ourselves as the lowest of all.'

This is certainly not suggesting we belittle ourselves; we should have self-esteem and self-confidence. Rather, a practice is being offered for taming our exaggerated sense of self-importance and for cultivating true humility and respect for others.

The afflictions of arrogance, superiority, pride, and competitiveness create disharmony among people and prevent us from learning and evolving. Therefore, by respectfully holding others as supreme, we become more patient, humble, gentle, and open. This naturally brings harmony and compassion into our relationships and helps us to achieve great qualities, virtues, and spiritual realizations.

From A Commentary on the Eight Verses of Thought Transformation, by
His Holiness the Dalai Lama

2. When in the company of others, I shall always consider myself the lowest of all, and from the depths of my heart hold others dear and supreme.

No matter who we are with, we often think things like, “I am stronger than him,” “I am more beautiful than her,” “I am more intelligent,” “I am wealthier,” “I am much better qualified” and so forth—we generate much pride. This is not good. Instead, we should always remain humble. Even when we are helping others and are engaged in charity work we should not regard ourselves in a haughty way as great protectors benefiting the weak. This, too, is pride. Rather, we should engage in such activities very humbly and think that we are offering our services up to the people.

When we compare ourselves with animals, for instance, we might think, “I have a human body” or “I’m an ordained person” and feel much higher than them. From one point of view we can say that we have human bodies and are practicing the Buddha’s teachings and are thus much better than insects. But from another, we can say that insects are very innocent and free from guile, whereas we often lie and misrepresent ourselves in devious ways in order to achieve our ends or better ourselves. From this point of view we have to say that we are much worse than insects, which just go about their business without pretending to be anything. This is one method of training in humility.

From the Commentary on the Eight Verses for Training the Mind, by
Khenpo Sodargye

Verse 2: Consider Myself as the Lowest Among All

*Whenever I'm in the company of others,
I will regard myself as the lowest among all,
And from the depths of my heart
Cherish others as supreme.*

Wherever I am and whomever I interact with, I will view myself as the lowest of all and humble myself before them. From the depths of my heart, I will think constantly of benefiting others. By constantly holding others as superior to me, and treating them with reverence and respect, I will tame my pride and arrogance, and hold others above me.

a. The perfect examples of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

In Lama Tsongkhapa's A Commentary on the Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion, there is such a line in the homage verse that says,

Constantly residing above all, but also as a servant to sentient beings.

This is meant as a praise for Manjushri: although he is the teacher of all Buddhas, and is supreme among all sentient beings, Manjushri still attends to all sentient beings like a servant. And this is also the conduct of all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and great spiritual masters, who, although filled with transmundane merits and virtues, still serve the world as servants.

Just as Venerable Longchenpa said in his Finding Comfort and Ease in the Nature of Mind on the Great Perfection,

The guru's enlightenment is far beyond that of secular beings. In spite of this, he still attends to the world and carries out compassionate activities for the benefit of

sentient beings. As Dharma practitioners, we need to follow this marvelous example.

b. Observe our mind and tame arrogance

This verse mainly teaches us that we need to observe our mind, and to make sure that it will not give in to feelings of arrogance or pride towards any other sentient being. There is a Tibetan adage that goes like this: *The peak of arrogance cannot hold the spring water of merits.*

Therefore, all people, even those who are already full of sublime merits, must be free of arrogance or pride, and constantly hold, in their mind, the aspiration to respect and benefit others. Only when we think of benefiting others single-mindedly, are we able to regard sentient beings as wish-fulfilling gems and revere them as supremely precious, in the way that we do towards Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and our supremely kind gurus.

For instance, Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha's great vow is:

If hells are not completely emptied of suffering beings, I vow never to attain Buddhahood; and furthermore, only when every last sentient being has been converted and saved, shall I achieve Bodhi.

If Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha had not seen sentient beings as superior and nobler than himself, he would never have made such a great vow. If he had set himself high above the others and acted like an emperor, how could he realize the perfect accomplishment of such a deep aspiration?

In our everyday conduct and in our interactions with others, we need to, on the one hand, generate great Bodhicitta towards sentient beings, and on the other hand, to see ourselves as the lowest among all, and to truly think of benefiting others from the depths of our heart.

Lord Atisha, throughout his life, gave three great pith instructions for training the mind.

First, examine the mind constantly; second, tame the mind with mindfulness and alertness; third, by constantly doing so, generate Bodhicitta in the mind stream.

It is also recounted in Thogme Zangpo's The Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva, that:

*In short, wherever I am, whatever I do,
To be continually mindful and alert,
Asking, What is the state of my mind?
And accomplishing the good of others is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

From this we can see, the intention of Lord Atisha and Thogme Zangpo is exactly the same.

From The Heart of a Bodhisattva - A Commentary on the Eight Verses for Training the Mind by Langri Tangpa (1054–1123)

The order of loving care is of human making. It varies as it must from place to place, time to time, worker to worker, never definitive or final. It is measurable by the health, the happiness too, of the association of land and people. It is partly an ideal (remembering divine or natural order), partly a quest, always and inescapably a practice.

- Wendell Berry

*With diamond-clear intention, instill faith everywhere
With mirrorlike wisdom, stabilize all chaotic minds*

- Je Tsong Khapa

The Mahayana Thought Training Teachings go back almost a thousand years, and remarkably, they remain fresh, and inviting. Their purpose is to show us how we can engage every aspect of our life - both the suffering and our positive conditions - in a way that brings the most benefit to ourselves and to others. Especially when things are difficult, and when suffering conditions threaten to overwhelm us, these teachings can restore harmony, and empower us. They point out just what is essential for us to know and to do as human beings.

To speak of these teachings as well as I can, I need to refer to them as both universal, and Buddhist in nature. They point to some truths that are found in other religions, and other paths, and they are at the same time very much grounded in a Buddhist Tradition that aims to free all beings from suffering and its causes.

The Mahayana grew organically out of the Historical Buddha's teachings on the Four Noble Truths, and the liberation that practicing these teachings

accomplishes for men and women. When compassion is central to a person's path, then the whole way is illuminated with that virtue, and with its light and strength. Seeing our lives in relation to others, our family and friends, and all others in past and future generations, we find the greatest meaning in supporting their well being and peace. What Buddhism then adds to this general motivation is the way to fully achieve our purpose.

The Mahayana attitude is based on a radical inclusiveness, and the non-abandonment of beings; on *an encompassing, and enduring love*.

The Thought Training Teachings comes from this tradition of working for the sake of others. A verse from Shantideva expresses the profound dedication of one who loves fully:

*As long as space endures,
and as long as suffering living beings remain,
until then, may I too abide,
to dispel the misery of the world*

Such a mind is very different from the average egocentric person, with common aims of wealth, pleasure and acclaim. In some ways, in fact, we'll find that the thought training instructions aim in exactly the opposite direction from what the ego wants. This is the best possible news.

* * *

Verse Two - On Humility

*When among others, I will think of myself as lowest among all,
and will respectfully hold all others to be supreme, from the very depths of my heart*

Reflecting of what it means to be a servant and benefactor of others, we can see how the very idea opposes our what ego wants - which is to be praised,

respected, and lifted up in the eyes of others. In worldly terms, it doesn't make much sense, but spiritually, it is something precious.

It's said that Jesus' disciples were arguing about who was his chief student. He stepped in and taught them:

The greatest among you will be the servant of all

This love that offers itself to the all the world is the highest of spiritual values, and, looked at from the outside, it involves no ego, and taking the lowest place.

Humility is a beautiful quality, one that is down to earth, and that makes a person relatable. This one quality makes so much possible, that wouldn't otherwise make its way into our lives and into the world. Think about it.

It's important here that we have good teachers to show us the way. When I think of Thich Nhat Hanh, Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche, Bokar Rinpoche, or Indigenous teachers, they each have great dignity that is one with their deep humility. They would never think to praise themselves, and there's something really beautiful about that. It's instructive as well.

I remember seeing with some wonder over the years how Thay continued to learn and deepen his practice and teaching. One of the Precepts of his Order in fact says,

Do not think the knowledge you presently possess is changeless, absolute truth. Avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. Learn and practice nonattachment from views in order to be open to receive others' viewpoints. Truth is found in life and not merely in conceptual knowledge. Be ready to learn throughout your entire life and to observe reality in yourself and in the world at all times.

This is something he himself embodies.

It's said that we can think of the mind of arrogant person as being like a high point on a hill - nothing gathers there. On the other hand, the valley lowlands can receive the rain, and beautiful things can grow. Humility makes us very quiet within, and receptive. Someone who is listening, and watching for what is good in others with an appreciative heart learns from them, and begins to cultivate some of these same good qualities themselves. A humble person in any area of life is open and welcoming what others offer. They celebrate and support others, and is able to learn from them, and continue to grow.

A Verse from Gems of Wisdom, by the Seventh Dalai Lama

With a commentary by Glenn Mullin

*What is the wild horse that throws one from the mountain one is ascending?
It is the pride which thinks oneself superior and dwells on one's own good qualities.*

The fourth of the five root klesha is pride. The Seventh Dalai Lama likens it to “a wild horse that throws one from the mountain one is ascending,” for it undermines one by transforming one’s blessings into weaknesses. One ascends the mountains of life by means of one’s strengths and talents, but pride causes these very qualities to become negative.

Of all forms of pride, that arising from spiritual accomplishments is the worst. The first three of the five root klesha are known as “the three psychic poisons,” for they poison one’s life in a very direct and immediate way. Pride is slightly more subtle. *It is a negative quality arising from positive ones.

For example, one may be intelligent, but if one takes pride in this fact one’s intelligence becomes vain; One may be physically strong, but pride in one’s strength will only arouse ridicule; And one may be proud of one’s spiritual learning and endeavors, but pride causes the benefits to go to the wrong place. It strips the good quality of its full force and distorts the manner in which that quality ripens.

Lama Tsongkhapa, the guru of the First Dalai Lama, likened good qualities to stilts that lift one up above ordinariness. Pride makes one’s movements on the stilts wobbly and dangerous to self and others.

From The Sacred Heart-Essence of the Pith Instructions, by Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche

Lacking such profound and supreme Bodhicitta,
Like powerful Ram, who dwelt twelve years in the forest
But was driven by the goad of attachment to fight his enemies;

Or like Gelong Thangpa, who, although he could fly freely in the sky
Through having mastered energy and mind, started a battle ...
The fault was the absence of unsurpassing Bodhicitta.

Brahma himself, even after attaining desireless bliss,
Will become blazing firewood in Avici Hell;

And Indra, although venerated by the entire world,
By the power of karma will fall back to the ground -
Lacking the kingly mountain of Bodhicitta is the fault.

In this world, so many of those glorified by the highest rank,
like great kings, generals, prime ministers and presidents,
Finally destroyed themselves and others;
The fault lay with the rotten root of Bodhicitta...

From the Seven Verses on Training the Mind, commentaries by Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, Alan Wallace, and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche

Don't Reduce a God to a Demon

If, as you meditate on mind training, your personality becomes stiff with pride and arrogance, it's as though you have reduced a god to a demon; dharma has become nondharma. The more you meditate on mind training and dharma, the more supple your personality should become. Act as the lowest servant to everyone.

- From The Great Path of Awakening, by Jamgon Kongtrul,

Do Not Let the Gods Descend to the Devil

The commentary speaks first of Devas, gods like those of the Hindu or Greek pantheons. Many accounts suggest that these non-human beings can be rather fickle. If you honor and worship them, they may help you. If you don't, they may turn around and injure you, in which case the god descends to a devil, an inflictor of harm.

What does it really mean for the divine to descend to the diabolical? The point of the Mind Training is to subdue our own mind: to gradually vanquish self-grasping and the mental afflictions that arise from it. No matter how intensely, earnestly, and diligently we practice, we may still inflate ourselves with a sense of superiority, using our spiritual practice as an unfortunate source of conceit. This distortion of the practice is the descent from a Deva to a demon, from a god to a devil.

Why do we engage in any spiritual practice? The answer that Buddhism emphasizes is our own vulnerability to suffering, whether blatant or as an undercurrent of anxiety. If we are deeply aware that we need help and

recognize that without dharma our minds are dysfunctionally creating misery, it becomes ridiculous to hold a haughty attitude.

It is hard to be pompous when the reason for practicing is a desire to be free of our own mental distortions. The Four Noble Truths- the existence of suffering, the source of suffering, freedom from suffering and its source, and the means of achieving such freedom- are very sobering in this regard.

- Excerpted from: The Seven-Point Mind Training, by Alan Wallace

Do Not Bring a God Down to the Level of a Demon

Worldly people use their religion, in order to have success in business, to acquire power and situations of prosperity; but if they fall sick, lose their possessions and so on, they think their gods are displeased and begin to think of them as demons.

If through the Mind Training we become proud and boastful, it will be as Gampopa once said: Dharma not practiced properly will bring us down to the lower realms. If we become pretentious and conceited, we will certainly not be practicing Dharma. Because of our pride, the Mind Training, instead of taming us as it should, will make us all the more hard and obstinate.

If the medicine we take is unsuited to the illness we have, our condition will be all the worse. In the same way, we should apply the teachings so that they act as an antidote to our ego-clinging. Towards everyone we should consider ourselves as the humblest of servants, taking the lowest place. We should try really very hard to be modest and self forgetting.

- From Enlightened Courage, by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.

From the Christian Tradition

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Dr. King and Humility - from 'The Drum Major Instinct'

If any of you are around when I have to meet my day, I don't want a long funeral. And if you get somebody to deliver the eulogy, tell them not to talk too long. And every now and then I wonder what I want them to say...

Tell them not to mention that I have a Nobel Peace Prize- that isn't important.

Tell them not to mention that I have three or four hundred other awards- that's not important.

Tell them not to mention where I went to school...

I'd like somebody to mention that day that Martin Luther King, Jr. tried to give his life serving others.

I'd like for somebody to say that day that Martin Luther King, Jr. tried to love somebody.

I want you to say that day that I tried to be right on the war question.

I want you to be able to say that day that I did try to feed the hungry.

And I want you to be able to say that day that I did try in my life to clothe those who were naked.

I want you to say on that day that I did try in my life to visit those who were in prison.

I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity.

Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for justice.

Say that I was a drum major for peace.

I was a drum major for righteousness-

And all of the other shallow things will not matter.

I won't have any money to leave behind.

I won't have the fine and luxurious things of life to leave behind.

But I just want to leave a committed life behind.

And that's all I want to say.

Blessed are the humble, for they shall inherit the earth, by Steve Frey

Humility is a character trait that is sometimes forgotten in the age of "I'm the best."

You know... "I've got the best ideas," "Only I can solve the problem," "I've got a bigger nuclear button than you do," and so on. Some people like to brag and boast, and others actually admire the feeling of power the person seems to convey.

They forget that sometimes the people with the most power and influence are the most humble, and that quality is respected much more than showing off, bragging and boasting about oneself.

In the Christian church, this is Holy Week leading up to Easter, the most important day in the church year, since it is the commemoration of the Risen Christ.

Of course, most people know all about Good Friday and Easter, but sometimes lost in the shuffle is tomorrow, Holy Thursday or Maundy Thursday. That day should be remembered also because it is associated with a great illustration of the importance of humility.

On Maundy Thursday, Jesus had the Last Supper with his apostles, observing Passover. At some point during the evening, he got down on his knees and humbly washed their feet. He then commanded them to do the same for each other.

According to John's gospel, he said,

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

That's where *Maundy* came from, "Maundy" being an abbreviated form of *mandatum*, which in Latin means, "*command*."

In many churches, as part of the Holy Thursday service, the minister will reenact Christ's actions by washing the feet of people in the congregation. Sometimes they will do it elsewhere, for the poor or sick.

The lesson is that we are reminded to humble ourselves and to serve others, "to love one another."

It is often those who are the most humble who change the world, no matter what field or occupation.

We see that in the business world all the time. If you are in a leadership role, you have certainly heard of Servant Leadership. It is the philosophy that the best leaders go out of their way to facilitate the work of, or to serve, their employees.

Yes, they still make hard decisions, but they see their role as one of support and assistance putting the "team" ahead of their own authoritarian power.

By doing this, the employees feel more a part of the organization and are committed to its goals. The leader is respected for her willingness to listen and help the employees by being less rigid and controlling—to be humble—and the employees feel empowered and valued. In this way, the organization excels, and this kind of leader develops respect and loyalty not by demanding it, but by earning it through words and actions.

Another attribute of humility is being able to admit mistakes. For example, I have a bad habit of calling Riverview Park, Riverside Park. I don't know why, since I go by it on the way to 81 and visit it all the time! Sorry friends of Riverview, it must be some kind of mental block!

The point is, it is good to be able to admit when you are wrong, and though it may be humbling, it is honest and most people appreciate it.

We all make mistakes. Remember that quote by Alexander Pope, "To err is human, to forgive divine."

A familiar example of a person who lived a humble life of hard work and service was Mother Teresa. As a nun from Albania, she took a vow of poverty and service, but she went farther.

She devoted her life to working with the poorest of the poor in the slums of Calcutta, India. In many cases, she and her Missionaries of Charity were the only ones willing to sit with the dying leper, the starving child and many thousands who were destitute and had no one else.

She took the model of Jesus washing the feet of the apostles and applied it to her own life, literally.

Father Damien, who worked with lepers in the colony in Hawaii; Gandhi, who gave up material wealth to better lead the people of India; Mary Slessor, who became a missionary in Nigeria; there are so many people who chose humility and a life of service to others.

You don't have to look hard though, to find people who help others without the need for recognition. They are right in our community.

They are hospice workers who hold the hands of those near death late into the lonely night. It's the nurse who stays a little longer with a frightened patient who doesn't have visitors.

It's a teacher who spends hours of extra time to find a way to reach a child. They are police officers that automatically go to a scene to help, not knowing what they will face. It could be a school employee who reassures an abused child and calls social services to protect him.

Some of our most heroic, decorated soldiers are reluctant to talk about their exploits except in the most solemn and brief manner possible.

There are the firefighters who go into a burning building to save a child and quietly walk away. There is the coach who stops a killer and the next school day simply goes on with his work. In every case, these humble heroes will often say, "I was only doing my job."

They volunteer at lunch programs for the poor, the backpack program that provides children with food on weekends or the hospital. All of these people have humbly accepted the command to "love each other."

They aren't looking for praise. They aren't bragging about how helpful they are. They just see a need and want to do something to help others.

We should not forget the mom who works two jobs to put food on the table or the dad who labors long, extra hours to provide a home for his family.

Then there are the grandparents who sometimes step in and accept the added job of raising their grandchildren in the absence of parents.

These moms, dads, and grandparents humbly do their best, day after day, not for monetary gain or recognition, but because of love.

We need more humility and less bragging; more helping and less threatening; more service and less focus on material gain.

Our children need to see people who are examples of modesty, who have a strong work ethic and who exhibit compassion. These are the types of role models who are most respected in the long run.

Fortunately, we have those people out there in our community, but we also need to teach our children about others in sports, government, on television, in movies, and elsewhere who would lead them to believe that

greatness is found in how loud you can boast, or how well you can put others down. That is not greatness, and the person's influence does not endure.

On Maundy Thursday, Jesus modeled for the apostles the importance of serving each other and loving one another.

We don't have to go to India or Africa to selflessly serve others; we can do that right here in this community in our own homes, businesses, churches, hospitals, civic organizations, and schools.

Just imagine how wonderful our world would be if everyone heard that simple command to "love one another," and did.

Thomas Merton on Humility

It is almost impossible to overestimate the value of true humility and its power in the spiritual life. For the beginning of humility is the beginning of blessedness and the consummation of humility is the perfection of all joy.

Humility contains in itself the answer to all the great problems of the life of the soul. It is the only key to faith, with which the spiritual life begins: for faith and humility are inseparable.

In perfect humility all selfishness disappears and your soul no longer lives for itself or in itself for God: and it is lost and submerged in Him and transformed into Him.

- from New Seeds of Contemplation

{Humility is related to depth in the spiritual life. See how it is- with humility, there is space, and receptivity; listening, and an attentiveness that is cool, and quiet; it is wanting to learn, or to know more fully...}

On being able to learn

From The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook, by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

Jesus constantly looked for teachable people- people who would look beyond appearances and not make snap judgments. He warmed to those who asked honest questions. And he was grieved and dumbfounded by the educated who were hardhearted, unteachable and dense. He said to them,

You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

- John 5:39

Jesus was passionate about those with ears to hear. He was attracted to those who willingly admitted how much they didn't know. People who could lay aside their prejudices and entertain something new were often the recipients of Jesus' transforming world.

Jesus is still looking for teachable disciples.

How teachable are we?

Do we hide behind our knowledge and feel uncomfortable being the learner?

Will we be the student again and again and again?"

The Hidden Virtue of Humility, by Helena Romano

Contemporary Western culture seems to promote nothing but pride these days; it insists that only those who are proud, selfish, and disobedient can effect change or succeed in life. But salvation history and the lives of the saints tell us a different story- namely, that pride is the downfall of mankind, and that humility is what ultimately exalts us.

Humility is a difficult virtue to embrace because it is such a quiet one and is often mistaken for what it is not.

In his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, St. Thomas Aquinas describes humility thus:

Truly, the virtue of humility consists in this, that one keep himself within his own limits; he does not stretch himself to what is above him, but he subjects himself to his superior {to that which is superior}

Being humble does not mean debasing yourself and refusing to acknowledge that you have any gifts or talents whatsoever- and some would argue that in fact, such an attitude is actually hidden pride!

The truly humble man understands that he is not the greatest at anything, and that while he is better at something than others might be, his gift ultimately comes from God and is to be used for the glory of God, not for personal accolades.

The prime example of this is the Blessed Virgin Mary. She was a young woman without wealth or powerful connections, and yet her submission to the will of God altered the course of human history and opened the door for the divine Messiah to enter the world He would one day redeem. She did not attempt to argue that she was utterly unworthy of the grace bestowed on her, but rather submitted with her humble fiat, *May it be done unto me according to your word*.

The truly humble man knows his own limitations- he submits to the authority not only of God and of the Church, but also to the legitimate authority of the government and the workplace.

A humble man does not go looking for opportunities to gain power and prestige. He dies to himself for the sake of others- he harbors no resentment when others' work is extolled while his goes unnoticed, and he uses those moments of humiliation to draw closer to Christ.

The humble man continues to use his gifts even if no one but God is going to see or acknowledge them. And when his gifts and accomplishments are acknowledged by the world, the humble man turns that praise back to God instead of focusing it on himself.

The humble man does not need to project an Instagram-perfect image of his life to the rest of the world: he accepts that he is a work in progress, can admit when he is wrong, and can accept criticism with grace.

Sometimes true humility seems impossible to achieve. Because we are fallen creatures wrapped up in ourselves, we have to constantly work toward selflessness. One method of doing this is by praying The Litany of Humility. This prayer asks Jesus to deliver us from desires and fears fueled by pride- from the desire of praise, to the fear of being wronged. But the beauty of this litany is that it not only asks that we be freed from our pride, but it also asks for the grace to desire that others may be better than we are, loved more than we are, holier than we are.

True humility is not downplaying our own roles, but is setting aside our own desires so that others can rise higher and do more for Christ than we ever could. It's being the Andrew to someone else's Peter and the Barnabas to someone else's Paul- calling forth someone to the good or encouraging their potential, even if means that person becomes greater than ourselves.

Matt Maher has his own take on the Litany of Humility in his song 'Every Little Prison.' What I like about Maher's version is that he adapts the prayer to be more recognizable for the modern Christian.

Pride takes many forms in this era of Instagram followers, Facebook 'likes,' and the 24-hour news cycle- we spend time 'wondering if I am relevant and liked' and 'wanting to be seen.'

Ultimately, humility requires us to turn to God instead of other things and to trust in him, in his mercy and his wisdom, rather than becoming slaves to our fears of being judged, or of not being loved, or of having to let go. By praying for freedom from the prisons created by pride, may we live more confidently in the love of God and in doing his will.

Blessed are the Humble, based on a sermon on humility and devotion by Jeff Manning

Jesus puts this beatitude first because humility is the foundation of all other graces...

The first sermon ever preached and recorded by Jesus is the Sermon on the Mount. Its initial theme? Happiness and fulfillment. R. Kent Hughes, in his excellent commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, says this is the greatest sermon ever preached:

The Sermon on the Mount is the compacted, congealed theology of Christ and as such is perhaps the most profound section of the entire New Testament and the whole Bible. Every phrase can bare exhaustive exposition and yet never be completely plumbed....

It shows us exactly where we stand in relation to the kingdom and eternal life. As we expose ourselves to the X-rays of Christ's words, we see whether we truly are believers; and if believers, the degree of the authenticity of our lives. No other section of Scripture makes us face ourselves like the Sermon on the Mount.

"Blessed" means happy, fortunate, blissful; "happy," just because of the meaning we give to it today, is probably not the best word; after all, those who mourn are not really happy.

{From Pastor Alan Froggatt:

What is a *blessing*? In Latin, the word is *beat*, where we get the word beauty and, yes, beatitude. Beatitudes are blessings, but I like the Greek word better, because it is closer to the language Jesus actually spoke. The Greek word is *makarios* which is variously translated happy, fortunate, to be congratulated, and privileged. *Happy* are the poor in spirit; *fortunate* are the merciful; *blessed* are the peacemakers for they are doing God's work; *blessed* are the pure in heart...}

{The Eight Beatitudes:

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit {the humble}, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
2. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
3. Blessed are the meek {the humble} , for they will inherit the earth.
4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
5. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
6. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
7. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.
8. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.}

These are those who should be recognized and approved of, lifted up and praised... These are those upon which God has expressed His approval.

Homer used the word (blessed) to describe a wealthy man, and Plato used it of one who is successful in business.

The fullest meaning of the term, therefore, had to do with *an inward contentedness that is not affected by circumstances*. That is the kind of happiness God desires for His children, a state of joy and well-being that does not depend on physical, temporary circumstances (Phil. 4:11–13).

Blessedness is a characteristic of God, and it can be a characteristic of men as they share in the nature of God {of what is True, of the Divine Reality}.

To be blessed is not a superficial feeling of well-being based on circumstance, but a deep supernatural experience of contentedness based on the fact that one's life is right with God.

The Beatitudes seem paradoxical. The conditions and their corresponding blessings do not seem to match. By normal human standards such things as humility, mourning, and persecution are not the stuff of which happiness is made.

The world says, "Happy are the rich, the noble, the successful, the macho, the glamorous, the popular, the famous, the aggressive", but the message from the King does not fit the world's standards, because His kingdom is not of this world but of heaven. His way to happiness, the way to true happiness, is by a much different route.

The philosophy of the world: things satisfy. Acquiring things brings happiness, achieving things brings meaning, doing things brings satisfaction. But Jesus said:

What does it profit a man, if he gains the whole world, but loses his soul? - Mark, 8:36}

and,

Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.

- Luke 12:15

Acquiring the things of the world can in fact become fuel for pride, increasing lust, and self-satisfaction- and these are the enemies not only of righteousness but of happiness...

The beatitudes, we can see, are not requirements, but realities; they are not pre-requisites, but straightforward pronouncements of truth.

Martin-Lloyd Jones:

All Christians are to be like this. These verses describe what every believer is supposed to be like.

None of these descriptions describes a natural tendency. *Each of these, when properly understood, is a disposition that is produced by grace and the operation of the Holy Spirit.*

Blessed are the Poor in Spirit - the Humble

The word commonly used for ordinary poverty was *penichros*, and is used of the widow Jesus saw giving an offering in the Temple. She had very little, but she did have “two small copper coins” (Luke 21:2). She was poor, but not a beggar. One who is *penichros* poor has at least some meager resources. One who is *ptochos* poor, however, is completely dependent on others for sustenance {they are destitute}...Jesus here is speaking of a spiritual poverty...material possessions have no necessary relationship to spiritual blessings.

Matthew makes clear that Jesus is here talking about *the condition of the spirit...* of someone who knows their need, and this is the point of the first beatitude- humility.

The humble are those who are without pride before God {before their teachers}...

Blessed are the humble, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Those who have come to this realization are those who've passed from living death to life; this attitude is always present when someone repents {who turns away from their mistaken ways} and who comes to faith.

Those who come to the Lord with broken hearts do not leave with broken hearts.

*For thus says the High and Lofty One
Who inhabits eternity,
whose name is Holy:*

*I dwell in the high and holy place,
With him who has a contrite and humble spirit,
To revive the spirit of the humble,
And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*

- Isaiah 57:15

God wants us to recognize our need so that He can enrich our lives. {This is like water seeking the lowest places.} He wants us to recognize our condition so that He can raise us up.

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up...

- James 4:10

Teresa of Avila: Living a Life of Humility, by Linda Frasier, O.C.D.S

When St Teresa of Avila established her foundations of the Carmelite reform, there were three virtues which she insisted be faithfully lived as part of her communities: love of neighbor, detachment from created things and humility.

While Teresa considered each of these virtues essential, for Teresa the virtue of humility took “pride of place” and was seen as the linchpin underlying the others. In fact, Teresa even saw such a deep relationship between the virtues of detachment and humility that she referred to them as the “two inseparable sisters” which are always seen together[1].

She goes on to say, “ These are not the relatives I advise you to withdraw from; rather, you should embrace them and love them and never be seen without them (WP 10.3).” Humility, according to Teresa, is the main practice which embraces all the others (WP 4.4).

Alluding to Israel’s exodus from Egypt and time in the wilderness, Teresa says, “This is the work (obtaining the sister virtues) that must be done in order to escape from the land of Egypt, for in finding these you will find the manna. All things will taste good to you (WP 10.4).”

These sister virtues are loved by Christ and by them souls are equipped “to fight against the devil, hell and all occasions of sin (WP 10.4).” Christ was never seen without the sister virtues and neither should we be. They are the virtues of victory.

How important was the virtue of humility in Teresa’s spirituality? Just a cursory review of *The Way of Perfection* and *The Book of Her Life* (not even counting references in *The Interior Castle* and her other works), reveals that Teresa mentioned humility over one hundred times! It would be easier to enumerate Teresa’s writings which do not mention humility—for you would find none. Pick any page in Teresa’s writings and you will find

humility mentioned either implicitly or explicitly. Humility thoroughly permeates everything Teresa writes.

Teresa notes the humility of humility and detachment, for they hide themselves from the souls who possess them. If one believes they possess the sisters, they are likely deceiving themselves. However diligently fervent souls strive to obtain these virtues, true humility within causes them to believe that they have never obtained them (WP 10.4).

“These two virtues, humility and detachment from self, it is true, have the property of hiding themselves from the one who possesses them; he never sees them nor can believe that he has any of them, even if he be told so. But he has them, for he is forever trying to keep them, and perfecting them in himself more and more (WP10.4).” The eyes of devout souls are covered with an invisible veil. They cannot see the virtues of humility and detachment in themselves which are so evident to others. Humility flourishes in hiddenness.

In considering humility, it would be helpful to discuss what is meant by the word itself. A look in any dictionary will reveal that the word humility comes from the Latin, *humus*, meaning dirt, soil, earth or dust. In Genesis 3:19, we are reminded that we are dust and shall return to dust. Every garden requires good soil in order to be productive; in the garden of the soul, that soil is humility.

True humility must not be confused with denial of one’s gifts and talents nor with mediocrity or passivity. True humility is seeing ourselves as God sees us, recognizing all the good in our lives as gift and realizing that we do not deserve that good.

“Avoid being bashful with God, as some people are, in the belief they are humble. Yes, it would not be humility on your part if the King were to grant you a favor and you refused to accept it; humility is taking the favor

and being pleased with it, and yet realizing how far you are from deserving it (WP28.3).”

As Jesus taught in Luke 17:10[2], no matter how devotedly we have served, we are still unworthy servants who have only done our duty and undeserving of praise from God or others.

Teresa mentioned two important components of humility: walking in truth and self-knowledge. Teresa described an experience in *The Book of Her Life*[3] when she saw the truth of her own sinfulness in light of the perfections of God. The more a soul realizes their littleness and frailty, the greater their self-knowledge becomes, leading to humility. In other words, the more we see God, the more we see ourselves; the closer we approach to God, the more his light illumines our self-knowledge.

Humility could also be considered from the perspective of dimensionality for it extends both vertically to our relationship with God and horizontally to our relationships with others. In other words, humility has both moral/horizontal and religious/vertical dimensions.

Where does humility come from and how does one obtain it? Is it acquired through the efforts of the soul or is it infused by God as a gift? In *The Book of Her Life* (L 11:7), Teresa brings us to a garden of the soul to assist our understanding. This garden illustrates the soul of beginners in prayer at the time when God begins his work and the soul is barren and full of abominable weeds.

God, “His Majesty” as Teresa calls him, assists and prepares for life in the soul by pulling weeds and planting good seed. Then the soul is entrusted with the responsibility of cultivating the garden with the help of God so the plants of virtue will grow. The soul must make the effort to supply the water for the garden so it will grow, bud, and flower into fragrance. When this happens, God will come and take delight in the garden and find joy among the virtues there.

Thus, the virtue of humility, like fruit in the garden, is the result of both the efforts of the soul (and thus acquired) as well as an infused gift through the grace of God. As humility deepens in the soul, perhaps it even becomes more of an infused grace given as the soul gives more of itself to God.

Teresa gives her nuns advice on how one may recognize the effects of humility.

“Humility, however deep it may be, neither disquiets nor troubles nor disturbs the soul; it is accompanied by peace, joy and tranquility. On realizing how wicked we are, we may sense that we deserve hell, and may be distressed by this; we may rightly think that everyone should hate us; we may not even dare to ask for mercy. Yet, if our humility is true, this distress is accompanied by an interior peace and joy of which we would not like to be deprived.

Far from disturbing or depressing the soul, true humility enlarges it and makes it fit to serve God better (WP 39.2).

“Humility is liberating. We are free from the burden of our littleness because we enter into the greatness of God.

In the Constitutions[4] of her order, Teresa gives evidence of some of the essential ways that her nuns are to live humility within the community. Of note, not only does Teresa not exempt the prioress from lowly manual labor such as sweeping the floor, she makes the prioress the first on the list to do so (C 22).

In the same section of the Constitutions, the prioress is charged with the responsibility of making sure that the physical, material and spiritual needs of the community are met in a just manner, including those who are ill or elderly. The prioress does not reign over the community but rather becomes its humble servant. In her Constitutions, Teresa follows Jesus’ Gospel

imperative that the greatest among them would be their servant (Matthew 20:26).

In Constitutions 30, Teresa addresses how observed faults are to be dealt with. It may happen that an older nun commits a fault which must be addressed by a younger nun. To be required to both give and to receive correction requires humility. Additionally, Teresa requires that the one being accused not answer back even if the accusation was mistaken and the sister was without fault. Teresa had experience with this in her own life and knew the difficulties of having to endure criticism or false accusation. “For I see that not making excuses for oneself is a habit characteristic of high perfection, and very meritorious; it gives great edification...

Indeed, it calls for great humility to be silent at seeing oneself condemned without fault. This is a wonderful way to imitate the Lord who took away all our faults (WP 13.1).”

When accused, Jesus remained silent. Not an easy example to follow but one which will quickly deepen one’s humility.

Each month, according to Constitutions 41, every nun must appear before the prioress to report how they are progressing in prayer and how the Lord has been leading them. To open one’s soul before another is a practice of humility and to open one’s soul to a soul as advanced as Teresa’s could be especially so.

Humility does not let one deny the truth about themselves or their journey. Humility is truth and prevents us from deceiving ourselves or trying to deceive others or even the folly of trying to deceive God.

But what of those who do not live in an enclosed community? Does humility matter for them? Oh yes, for in every stage of the spiritual journey, humility must abide if one desires to be in relationship with God. As

examples of humility, Teresa shows us Jesus who not only humbled himself to become man but also gave his life in sinless perfection.

We have Jesus' mother, Mary, whose humility is the banner of Carmel and who always said "yes" to God. Jesus and Mary were able to always say yes to God because their hearts were filled with humility and love. "Humility drew the King from heaven to the womb of the Virgin, and with it, by one hair, we will draw him to our souls. And realize that the one who has more humility will be the one who possesses him more; and the one who has less will possess him less. For I cannot understand how there could be be humility without love or love without humility; nor are these two virtues possible without detachment from all creatures (WP 16.2)."

The King of Glory will not unite himself to a soul who is without humility and the love which fosters it. Humility creates space within us for God to fill.

"Let us, at least, imitate his humility in some way. I say 'in some way,' for however much we might lower and humble ourselves, someone like myself does nothing; for...seldom is there anyone who hasn't done something by which he has merited hell (WP13.3)."

Teresa asks each one to examen themselves to consider how much humility one has and to see what progress has been made. "Clearly, the humble will reflect on their lives and consider how they have served the Lord in comparison with how the Lord ought to be served and the wonders the Lord performed in lowering himself so as to give us an example of humility; and they will consider their sins and where they merited to be on account of them (WP 12.6)."

"Let us, my daughters, imitate in some way the great humility of the Blessed Virgin, whose habit we wear, for it is embarrassing to call ourselves her nuns. However much it seems to us that we humble ourselves, we fall far short of being the daughters of such a Mother and the brides of such a Spouse (WP 13.3)."

When one sees how far short they are in humility, that truth brings about deeper self-knowledge and lets humility blossom in fruition.

What are some other ways one lives humility in the midst of daily experiences? Whether it is experiences of aridity in prayer or in receiving infused gifts in contemplation or in misunderstanding and accusation, humility enables one to wait in gratitude and trust upon the Lord. "In regard to the mystical graces one's whole task consists in accepting the cross of dryness with courage and humility and the freedom of spirit that comes from detachment from consolations[5]."

In gifts and consolations, it is essential to remember that they are gifts from God and understand the fact that "God gives them to us without any merit on our part and let us thank His Majesty for them (L 10.4)."

Humility is a great and costly virtue which lets one see all things, themselves, and God as they are in truth.

With Teresa's many references to humility, it is not possible in the span of a few short words to do justice to her wisdom. For now, we must be content to only scratch the surface and to know that to reap a harvest from her teachings on humility will be the journey of a lifetime. Perhaps for the purposes of this paper, it will suffice if we have come to appreciate a little more about Teresa's understanding of humility and grown in our own desire to persevere with determination the beautiful virtue of humility.

[1] Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, *The Way of Perfection* (henceforth abbreviated as WP); (Institute of Carmelite Studies, Washington, DC, 2000). Chapter 10.3.

[2] RSVCE Bible

[3] Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez. *The Collected Works of St Teresa of Avila: Volume 1: The Book of Her Life* (henceforth abbreviated as L). (Institute of Carmelite Studies, Washington, D.C., 1987).

[4] Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez. *The Collected Works of St Teresa of Avila: Volume 3: Constitutions* (henceforth abbreviated as C) (Institute of Carmelite Studies, Washington D.C., 1985).

[5] Kavanaugh and Rodriguez. *Volume 2: Life, introduction*, page 46.

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Linda Frasier, O.C.D.S. is a member of the O.C.D.S. Denver Community of the Holy Spirit. She is a retired Registered Nurse and completed graduate work in Spiritual Formation and Soul Care (Spiritual Direction). She is currently a student at the Carmelite Institute of Britain and Ireland.

From The Glorious Pursuit I, by Gary Thomas

Living Where You Are - Humility, Part One

Saints agree they are sinners; only sinners think they are saints

- Peter Kreeft

The Truth is this: Pride must die in you, or nothing of Heaven can live in you.

- William Law

"So, How'd your morning work go?" my wife, Lisa, asked me.

"I lost a good bit of it. My computer crashed."

She looked at me with astonishment. "I can't believe you're taking it so well."

I shrugged. "I've written by hand, and I've written on computers. Over the long run, computers have saved me a lot of time. I can't complain if they take a little time back now and then."

"But your attitude," Lisa said. "I think I'd be furious."

As Lisa left the room, I thought, She's right. I do have a really good attitude. I like that. Instead of ranting and raving, I just accept it and move on. That's good. That's mature. That's how Christ would respond.

Later that same day, my kids didn't do what they were supposed to do. Lisa became... upset. A little later, I forgot to do something I was supposed to do. Lisa became upset again.

I began to judge her. *I have this great attitude*, I told myself, but Lisa's is awful. *Why can't she roll with the punches, like I do?* Being the one with the mature attitude, I felt it was my duty to lecture her on how rotten hers had become.

Later that evening, God zeroed in on my pride. *I saw how I had let Lisa's compliment go to my head. As soon as pride was conceived, I became a judge.* In the morning, I might have had a Christlike (altruistic) attitude; by the evening, I'd become a Pharisee.

Pride is that potent, that destructive, that abusive, and that offensive. Relationally, there are few things so obnoxious as self-righteousness.

Spiritually, there are few things so injurious or even lethal as pride. The irony is, the more we experience the character of Christ, the more natural reason we'll have to become prideful. John Climacus warns us to *rebuff the vanity that follows obedience.*

If we're not careful, spiritual growth can sabotage itself. Maybe that's why you cannot read far in the Christian classics without having people testify to the absolute necessity and foundation of humility.

John Calvin calls humility *the sovereign virtue...the mother and root of all virtue.*" Edwards agrees, calling humility *the most essential thing in true religion.*"

Andrew Murray calls humility *the root of our spiritual life.* If we lack this root, he insists, we lack the vibrancy of the Christian life as God intends it.

To experience the life of Christ, we need the inner discipline of humility.

{How do we do this?}

The truth is this: We don't become humble as much as we learn to practice humility. The virtues aren't a state of being as much as they are inner disciplines after which we aspire. We enter into the virtues by degrees, and perhaps nowhere is this as true as it is with the virtue of humility.

Teaching and modeling the outer disciplines without the inner disciplines inevitably creates gifted but empty and proud Christians. Let's begin to recapture the ancient and fundamental discipline of humility by examining how Scripture and the Christian classics define it.

Radical God-Dependence

Have you ever met a Christian who seems to do everything right, who always knows the right things to say, who has admirable levels of discipline, but who seems to lack the spirit of Christ? Maybe you couldn't put your finger on it, but you sensed that while everything was right on the outside, something profoundly important was missing on the inside. Most often, this something is the spirit of Christ, the spirit of humility. The most carefully groomed outer life can't completely mask the ugliness of pride that lurks within.

From a spiritual perspective, humility is entering into the life of Christ through a radical God-dependence. It's an inner orientation of acknowledging our need, and actively receiving from God.

The humble Christian is the Christian who takes literally Christ's words: "Apart from me you can do nothing." Andrew Murray nails humility exactly when he calls it "*the displacement of self by the enthronement of God.*"

Calvin goes so far as to voice his agreement with Augustine that

humility is not evidenced simply when a man, aware that he has some virtues, abstains from pride and arrogance; but when man feels that he has no refuge except in humility.

What do Calvin and Augustine mean, that a Christian can find absolutely no refuge except in humility? They mean that the Christian has shifted from a human-centered faith to a God-centered faith, that the root, fruit, and maintenance of his or her walk is dependent on God's work, God's favor, and God's strength.

The Christian not only knows this; he or she acknowledges this and lives by this in a practical way.

Humility is the disposition that makes us available to be blessed by God.

The Psalms seem obsessed with God's eagerness to reach out to the humble: God

"saves the humble,"

"guides the humble,"

"sustains the humble,"

and even crowns the humble."

Notice that everything flows *from* God *to* the humble servant.

Pride seeks to reverse this. Pride is self-reliance and self-dependence. Arrogance seeks to obligate God instead of receive from Him.

In college, I asked a nonbeliever to come with me to a John Fischer concert. John's thoughtful and informed lyrics had made him one of my favorite contemporary Christian musicians. I was confident that John would present the gospel in a mature way. He did. John gave a particularly challenging invitation after singing a song about being a beggar telling other beggars where he found bread.

I eagerly awaited my friend's response but was immediately disappointed "I'm not a beggar," he insisted. "When I come to God, I'm going to come bringing Him something, not asking for His help."

This pride kept him from entering the spiritual life. The same pride keeps many of us from growing in the spiritual life.

Some of us think that after we receive God's salvation, everything is up to us. This self-dependence cuts off our spiritual oxygen. We're virtually paralyzed until we learn to breathe the fresh air of God's empowerment, grace, and assistance.

Forgetting Self

We've been talking about what humility looks like between us and God, but humility toward our neighbor is just as important. Paul tells us to show true humility to everyone." What does this humility look like?

At the heart of "social" humility is self-forgetfulness. So often, we live as if the primary calling of the world and everyone around us is to make *us* happy, healthy, comfortable, and affluent. If anyone or anything dares to get in the way of this, we erupt into anger, resentment, and bitterness. Who cares if our waiter is having a bad day, we want our dinner!

A friend of mine from seminary faced this dilemma. He was cramming for an ethics final when he got a knock on the door. His inebriated neighbor needed to be taken to detox. His initial thought was, *I can't spend two hours taking some guy to detox, I have to study for my social-ethics class!* When he realized the irony of what he was thinking, he put on his coat, picked up his car keys, and placed another person first.

The world doesn't revolve around any one of us, and the demand that it should do so creates nothing but frustration. There's no good time to have a

family crisis; it's *never* convenient when a friend gets really sick or a married couple seeks counsel.

The inner discipline of humility acts like a filter, saving us from the tyranny of grossly unrealistic expectations that everyone and everything should bend *our* way.

Self-forgetfulness also means we are liberated to serve others at God's direction, rather than trying to impress them.

The ultimate picture of this is Jesus, washing the feet of His disciples.

The lust to be served, honored, and noticed is nothing less than the lust to be treated like God. This monumental arrogance can never be satisfied; we will never become God. That's why pride always leaves the aftertaste of frustration. Humility, on the other hand, can never be disappointed; if you want to serve someone, you can always find someone to serve- and in doing so, you'll experience the joy and fulfillment of Christ.

Which life would you rather have? One in which your expectations will never be met, and which leaves behind frustration and despair, or one that ushers in the very presence of Christ? Do you sense the churning of frustrated pride in your life? Do you need the inner discipline of humility?

It is important to be very clear in what we mean when we use the word humility. Some well-meaning but misguided Christians have tried artificially to manufacture the humble spirit and ended up creating a new form of pride.

The Self-Obsessed Bias

"John" was one of the most frustrating Christians I've ever worked with. He was passionately committed to following the Lord, but his conscience *tyrannized him*. He became obsessed with how sinful he was, and he

couldn't pray for ten minutes without falling into despair about his spiritual bankruptcy.

The irony is, contrary to popular opinion, John wasn't humble. Merely thinking ill of ourselves is not a healthy spiritual exercise.

As Kreeft points out, "Humility is thinking less *about* yourself, not thinking less *of* yourself."

John's obsession with his own weaknesses meant that he was still the center of his own attention. He focused on his sinfulness instead of his strength, but from a Christian perspective, any obsession with the self still is considered pride.

Other Christians think that humility means denying what we know to be true with falsely self-deprecating statements: "I'm not really a good businessman; my success is mostly due to luck"; "Actually, I'm a very poor student, even though I get straight As." Being humble doesn't mean pretending we don't have gifts: Jesus never pretended that He wasn't the Son of God.

Instead of leading us into denial, humility leads us into using our gifts to serve rather than to impress.

It changes the inner reality and attitude with which we view the talents that God has given us. "Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power," so He started to wash the disciples' feet."

When people try to prove themselves by their gifts instead of serving people with their gifts, they shrink their lives. They become incapable of taking equal enjoyment and delight in the accomplishments of others. They don't want to be a good or faithful singer, pastor, preacher, parent, entrepreneur, or Christian, they want to be *the best*. So they cringe when others do well. Life becomes a competition.

Humility is the inner attitude and discipline that sets us free from this self-obsessed bias.

In *The Screwtape Letters*, Screwtape explains,

God) wants (the Christian), in the end, to be so free from any bias in his own favor that he can rejoice in his own talents as frankly and gratefully as in his neighbor's talents or in a sunrise, an elephant, or a waterfall. He wants each man, in the long run, to be able to recognize all creatures (even himself) as glorious and excellent things. He wants to kill their animal self-love as soon as possible...

If I'm a humble parent, I can clap loudly, enthusiastically, and sincerely when my friend's kid wins a scholarship, even if my child barely managed to graduate. If I'm a humble neighbor, I can genuinely rejoice when someone from my street is finally able to afford a five-acre lot, even if my backyard is the size of a postage stamp.

The humble life is a life in which deep joy and profound appreciation become a daily occurrence because the wellspring of that joy isn't limited solely to our own good fortune.

We can appreciate others without feeling diminished because they have skills we don't; we can revel in the beauty of a landscape without feeling envious that we don't own it; we can be fed by a well-preached sermon rather than fretting over the fact that we're not behind the pulpit.

{This is sympathetic joy, or altruistic joy, one the Brahma Viharas, or Divine Abodes}

Selfless living is liberated living.

It recaptures the present, enabling us to live for today without letting our thirst for more destroy our present enjoyment.

Rather than lust for more money, more power, or more recognition, we can wait for God.

Peter wrote,

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."

When we become content to live in the present, God has given us our lives back in a vivid way; we no longer destroy the present by looking for a better future or a more celebrated now. We are set free to live the life that God created uniquely for us.

Living Your Life

Some years ago, the commercials sang, "I want to be like Mike." As playground kids danced to the jingle, Michael Jordan soared across a basketball court, flying into a brilliant leaping dunk. "I want to be like Mike," the kids sang over and over.

The tragedy is that commercials like these are pushing our children into *vicarious* living. Rather than seeking their own destinies, they settle for living in the shadow of someone else. Millions of kids wear shirts with athletes' names on the back.

God has given each one of us a life that He has given to no one else. We have our own character, skills, and body.

Humility helps us accept an honest assessment of who we are, while daydreams about being someone else or someone better do nothing but make us spiritually hungry.

Humility leads us to personal fulfillment rather than to fantasy and denial.

*You see, pride can lead us to reach higher than God enabled us to reach. And pride can sometimes lead us to set our sights *lower* than we should as well, simply because we're afraid to try and possibly fail. The same humility that cuts through the buzz of blind ambition also cuts through the paralyzing fear of failure.

Humility gives us unparalleled fulfillment in completing the task specifically ordained for us.

I have a good friend who, in college, would never have been labeled humble. If anything, he was seen as cocky and arrogant, but God called him to be an associate pastor, a position he filled for almost fifteen years, until his mid-thirties. I never would have imagined this man willingly working as the "number two guy" in a church for that long. I always thought he'd need to be the senior pastor, but he learned to practice humility, and found great joy in the place where God called him to be.

Another college friend of mine was working as an associate pastor, something most of his friends expected. Then the church he was with encouraged him to plant a sister church in a neighboring community. He became a senior pastor, something that surprised us all. We couldn't see him as the main leader of a church. He didn't seem to have the disposition or drive, but in humility, my friend accepted that calling, and in humility, he's living it out. He doesn't pretend to have it all together. He knows there are areas where he needs help, but he also realizes it would be arrogant for anyone to try to be a pastor on his own. His sense of need makes him a much stronger pastor.

In my early days as a writer, I took on side work as an unnamed coauthor to help pay the bills. I'd interview someone and tell his story for him. During this process, some great lines would pop into my head in the process of writing. Inevitably, I'd pause. *I should save that line for one of my own books!* I'd think. *That's a good one!*

But always God would remind me of my calling. He would let me know that the river of His Kingdom needs to flow freely without every individual Christian building a dam with his name on it to let everyone know, "This work of God passed through me first!"

If everything good has been birthed in God, what does it matter whose hands it has passed through? We are simply the mail carriers, not the writers. Would your mail carrier stand outside your door and shout, "I just want you to know, I delivered this Christmas card! You wouldn't have received it if I hadn't been faithful to put it in your box? Yet in Christian circles, too many of us cling tenaciously to each distinguishing mark of God's grace and favor. We erect dams every ten inches so we can control what God has given to us.

We do this because we have finite minds that haven't grasped the unlimited bounty of an infinite God. Am I to believe that God can only entrust me with so many "good lines"? Is God's Spirit which passionately desires to speak truth to God's people running out of powerful analogies?

When we slip from the foundation of a "giving life" to the cavern of a "notice-me life," we live in a state of high frustration. Ambition grinds up people.

To embrace humility is to be liberated from the insatiable search for self-significance.

Humility will become a passion for us when we realize that the more we put our own egos out of the way, the more the life and power and purpose of God can pass through us. When this happens, something glorious takes place: We get to experience the quality of eternal life without the taint of our own control and small ego demands.

Since humility is so important- the queen of the virtues- we need to give closer attention to it in the next chapter, to look at how we lay the foundation of Christ-like living by practicing this inner discipline.

From The Glorious Pursuit II, by Gary Thomas

The Beautiful Spirit - Humility, Part Two

Humility is the bloom and the beauty of holiness.

- Andrew Murray

Unless we make the increase of humility our study, we may find that we have been delighting in beautiful thoughts and feelings, in solemn acts of consecration and faith, while the only sure mark of the presence of God- the disappearance of self- was all the time wanting.

- Andrew Murray

*There is power in humility, power when we shun the arrogance of the world, and meet one another in an entirely new dimension.

Spiritual Clothing

Peter calls us *to dress ourselves* spiritually. He urges us,

Clothe yourselves with humility.

Taking on this character trait of Christ is how we become beautiful to God, and it is how God begins to become a beautiful presence in our lives.

Re-outfitting your inner man with humility is an ongoing process, but there are a few tried-and-true practices which Christians have used to train themselves in this attitude of Christ:

1. Change your focus

According to the Scriptures, humility is born in the soul that is overwhelmed by the experience and knowledge of God. This is the first step to practicing humility: switching our focus from ourselves to the grandeur of God's greatness.

Edwards distinguishes between what he calls 'legal humiliation' and 'evangelical humiliation'. Legal humiliation leads us to a sense of smallness and self-abasement- what my friend John suffered from- but evangelical humiliation leads us to become overwhelmed by God's holy beauty. Many of us have not escaped legalistic humiliation.

The scourge of legalistic humiliation is that it still focuses on the self; instead of bragging, the person caught in legalistic humility is obsessed with failure and shortcomings, but that's still a self-centered view, and it no more mirrors the spirit of Christ than does someone clothed in arrogance. Evangelical humiliation leads us to leave our strengths *and* our weaknesses in the hands of God.

Remember- humility is not a positive or negative view of self as much as it is a *forgetfulness* of self.

The surest road to humility is a constant remembrance of God.

Scripturally, pride is connected with God-forgetfulness. *They became proud, then they forgot me.* (Hosea 13:6) When we don't take time to dwell on the power, beauty, holiness, awesomeness, and majesty of God, humility becomes a stranger, and pride become a raging force.

If you want to practice humility, learn how to remember God. Memorize some verses that remind you of His beauty; sing a hymn instead of turning on the radio as you drive down the road. When you wake up in the middle of the night and can't get back to sleep, meditate on Christ washing the feet

of His disciples or submitting His body to the cross. Look up to the mountains or out to the heavens and think about the power of a Creator who could make such sights. Whatever it takes, create habits, rituals, and practices to intentionally remember God.

2. Adopt a posture of receiving

When I think of Christ, I think of Him as a pretty capable guy, but listen to His self-testimony:

The Son can do nothing by himself.

My teaching is not my own. It comes from Him who sent me.

I do nothing on my own, but speak just what the Father has taught me.

If *Jesus* had this attitude, how much more should we!

Adopting an attitude of receiving has been an incredibly liberating experience for me. Any number of times I've felt that I was in over my head, that I was being called to do something for which I had neither the ability nor the spirit. Instead of pretending otherwise, I simply confessed the truth to God: *'I don't know what to do; I'm not up to this, and I need Your help'*. Without fail, He stepped in and met my lack with His provision.

It's okay to say, 'God, I feel too weak and confused to be a good parent in this situation. I don't know what to do, and I need Your guidance.' 'Father, I've really blown this relationship. Can You help me set it right?' 'Lord, I'm afraid to pray. It's so difficult. Will you help me?'

When I feel I have to prove myself to God, I have stepped outside of my rest in Him. Practically, this means that sometimes I can't immediately discipline my children or try to immediately reconcile a relationship. I

might have to think about it, pray about it, maybe talk to others about it. I have to admit, 'I need a better sense of direction; I can't act right now.'

3. Expect growth through experience

The third element that builds humility is personal experience. James Ryle wrote,

**'The older you grow, and the more you see, the less reason you will find for being proud. Ignorance and inexperience are the pedestal of pride; once let the pedestal be removed, and pride will soon come tumbling down.'*

Humility comes as we grow in experience, not just head knowledge.

Not long ago, one of my commitments was at a conference that featured Dr. Jack Hayford as the keynote speaker. I listened as Dr. Hayford opened the talk with a couple of jokes. I've gained quite a bit of insight from this man's teaching and was surprised at what I considered a slow opening. Secretly, I had the audacity to compare it with my own opening earlier in the day. My talk fared better, of course.

Then Dr. Hayford delivered one of the most insightful, liberating, and powerful sermons I have ever heard. When he was done, I looked at the people sitting around me, and *all* our mouths were dropped open in astonishment. I'm not exaggerating this- he had touched our souls for God that deeply.

That evening, going back to my hotel room, I didn't have to work at humility. Above all, Dr. Hayford's wisdom, gained by a life of submission to God, reminded me I have a lot of growing to do.

*4. Adopt a self-emptying spirit

On the heels of this, I need to say that time alone doesn't *guarantee* maturity. Neither does raw experience. Both can lead to arrogance rather than humility. What nurtures a humble heart is time and experience with God *while adopting a self-emptying spirit*.

This spirit begins in prayer...

Pause for a moment and think about what characterized your most recent prayers. Did you approach God in humility? It is possible that there may have been some pride, a lack of awareness concerning the holy nature of God, and your own humble estate?...

Adopting a self-emptying spirit means admitting that there is no way, *absolutely none*, that we can ever display humility unless God takes pity on us and imparts His own Spirit to transform us from within.

5. Practice humility toward others

Next- here's the truly difficult part- we learn to practice humility by displaying it before others with selfless living. Murray writes,

**The insignificances of daily life are the... tests of eternity because they prove what spirit really possesses us. It is in our most unguarded moments that we really show and see what we are. To know... how the humble man behaves, you must follow him in the common course of daily life.*

Very recently, my family spent the night at a friend's house to celebrate New Year's Eve. I flew into town that day from the Midwest, so my 'body clock' was already two hours ahead of everyone else's. When midnight rolled around, I was exhausted.

In the middle of the night, our friend came into our room and whispered, 'Lisa!'

I was awake and guessing what was coming.

'Graham's feeling sick. He needs you.'

Lisa started stirring. And I had a decision to make. I could pretend I was asleep. After all, the woman was addressing my wife, not me. Besides, I had been up for almost twenty hours. It would be so easy just to close my eyes, but... was that the response of a servant?

'I'll take care of it', I said.

It was such an insignificant occurrence that I'm almost embarrassed to mention it. but humility is learned through such small decisions.

I know I will never *become* humble, but I need to learn to *practice* humility, and that can only be done through the routine, small acts of life in which I put others first.

6. Develop a healthy self-doubt

A healthy self-doubt is a wonderful thing. We should not set out to destroy a reasonable self-confidence, leading us to become insecure and indecisive. but practicing humility means we become open to considering the fact that there is almost always another angle we're missing.

In a dispute, for instance, humility can teach us not to assume that the other person is wrong just because he disagrees with us, and in fact, whether he is right or wrong is only one issue. Do we value him enough to listen to him, his doubts, questions, and misinformation, so we can gently correct his view? Do we slow down, let passions subside, and then try to see the situation from his perspective? Or do we demolish his opinion?

A healthy self-doubt redirects our judgements. We stop labeling, start listening, and take others into account.

What if a mother started evaluating her own life as meticulously as she has fallen into evaluating her daughter's? What if a dissatisfied man focused on how he was failing as a husband instead of how his spouse was failing as a wife? What if a teenager quit complaining about how his parents have messed him up and started asking himself how he has neglected the command to honor them? What if a pastor focused on how he could serve his small church instead of how his church could fulfill his ambitions?

These are prophetic calls of humility. They disarm our pride, redirect our focus, and lean us into selfless service to others.

Since practicing humility in relationships is such a crucial yet difficult discipline, let's take some time to look at this more closely.

The Mother of Love

Shortly after seminary, I was hired into a Christian ministry and soon came to verbal blows with an old college acquaintance who was then my immediate superior. I saw all his faults and resented his success. I didn't *covet* his success- I had no interest in doing what he was doing- but it bothered me that someone with such faults should be allowed such a platform. I became obsessed with his failings, and he understandably became wary of me. When somebody is judging you, it's difficult not to see him as a threat.

I thought it was my duty to bring my observations to the overall leader. My judgements weren't without some basis, and eventually the leader had to make a choice. In the end, he kept me on and my former superior was let go.

The relationship was almost irretrievably broken. Because many of my observations were correct and were backed up by others, I was smug in my self-righteousness and blinded to my pride for many years. Instead of stepping back and letting things more more at their own pace, I proudly took everything into my own hands and destroyed a relationship.

While pride is the father of hate and dissension, humility is the mother of love and unity.

Without humility, we become thoroughly disagreeable and demanding characters. John of the Cross tell us,

From this humility stems love of neighbor for [we] will esteem them and not judge them.

Estrangement, hate, anger, bitterness, and resentment, the killers of human relationships, are born in judgement. That's why John says humility is essential for us to love our neighbor.

Where I've failed in humility, I've also failed in love.

My most meaningful relationships are ones with mutual respect. Think about somebody with whom you just cannot get along. If you're honest, somewhere down the line you've judged him. You haven't esteemed him very highly; in fact, you've elevated yourself over him. Maybe he *was* wrong, but were you *absolutely* right? *You may have *different* faults, but you have faults nonetheless.

If ever there was proof of declining humanity within the church and society, it's seen in the nature of our relationships and how we approach them. Years ago, I finally realized that marriage is for holiness more than happiness. For me, marriage creates the best environment in which I can serve God and grow in the character of Christ, and that's the greatest thing I should expect from it.

Once I understood this, the nature of marriage underwent a distinctly radical shift in my mind. When I was married for happiness, and I went through the inevitable seasons of unhappiness (or just the routines of life), I assumed my lack of happiness meant Lisa wasn't measuring up. I judged her failings, and she judged mine.

When I realized I was married for holiness, *I* never measured up, and I became more than satisfied with my wife as I focused on what *I* needed to change. My growth was not dependent on Lisa changing, but on my change in attitude and perspective.

What is divorce but millions of spouses saying, 'You're not good enough for me'? This lack of humility is destroying our families and lives.

The beauty of humility is that we become empowered to respect others.

Relationships are based on entering into other people's lives, but when we're so focused on ourselves, it is impossible to empty ourselves enough to care about someone else.

The humble man looks upon every child of God- even the feeblest and unworthiness- and honors him and prefers him in honor as the son of a King.

God wants to give us our lives, families, and relationships back, and He wants to do it through planting humility in our hearts. In place of an ugly, controlling spirit, God can give us a generous and humble heart- a beautiful spirit.

The Joy of Being Truly Humble, by Joyce Meyer

Jesus says in Matthew 5:3 (AMPC),

Blessed ... are the poor in spirit (the humble, who rate themselves insignificant), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!

"Humility" isn't a very popular word, yet throughout the Bible, the Lord instructs us about the benefits of being "humble-minded." I love James 4:6 (NIV). It says,

God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.

In other words, the humble get the help!

I believe humility is often misunderstood and viewed as a weakness, but it's the *exact opposite*. Humility places us in a position to receive God's grace and become everything He's called us to be.

A humble person is also a happy person. They can take joy in their life and what God has called them to do, regardless of what the world thinks about it.

For instance, maybe your current circumstances and responsibilities from God may be mundane by the world's standards. A prideful person would rather do something they think the world admires ... something others see as "important", but the truth is it's not what we do that makes us important.

We are important because God created us and He loves and values us. As we receive His love and find our true worth in Him, then we can truly enjoy our purpose in life and be genuinely content.

My husband, Dave, is a perfect example. Years ago, the Lord instructed him to leave his job in the engineering field to help establish Joyce Meyer Ministries.

At that time, God spoke to his heart and said, "If you do what I am calling you to do and support Joyce so she can do what I've called her to do, then you will have real peace and happiness."

Dave is an extremely vital part of this ministry. We are a team, and he oversees all of the business and financial aspects of the organization. He is a truly humble man- a man who is secure and knows that God approves of him - and he's OK with his wife being the one "out front."

I can honestly say that Dave is one of the happiest people I know. He knows what God has asked him to do, and he is doing it with joy.

Here are some other character traits of a humble person:

1. The humble can always ask for help, and they don't insist on everything being done their way.
2. They are quick to forgive others, difficult to offend and content to wait on God for vindication when they have been wronged.
3. They are patient and don't get frustrated with the weaknesses of others.
4. The humble person is a peacemaker. In fact, we need humility to maintain peace in our lives.

Romans 12:16 is one of my favorite scriptures. It says,

Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty...but readily adapt yourself to [people, things, and circumstances] and give yourselves to humble tasks. Never overestimate yourself.

Wow! Just imagine if we all decided to adopt just this one command from the Bible. If you're like me, so many times you feel like saying, "My way or no way at all!" But there's a better way...a way that leads to peace with ourselves and others.

5. A humble person knows when to be quiet. It's certainly not wrong to talk, but a humble person is comfortable allowing others to have center stage and doesn't feel the need to speak their mind in every situation.

6. A humble person sees their own weaknesses and can readily admit them. When we open up to others about ourselves, it can actually encourage and help them realize they're not the only ones who deal with things.

Dave is very easy going and has what I call "quiet faults," meaning most people don't immediately see them. I, on the other hand, have "loud faults" – some of my greatest struggles have been with my mouth! Now, I certainly don't take joy in Dave's weaknesses, but it does help on occasion for someone like me to know that he's working on things too.

7. A humble person happily serves other people, and they don't do it to be seen. They do it unto God, knowing their reward will come from God.

8. A humble person is very thankful. This is one reason why they're usually so happy. When we live with an attitude of gratitude, it releases joy and power into our lives.

9. A humble person has a tender conscience and is quick to repent.

10. A leader who is truly humble treats everyone with respect. How a leader treats people is the quickest way to find out their level of humility.

First Peter 5:6 says,

Therefore humble yourselves [demote, lower yourselves in your own estimation] under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you.

And Jesus says in John 15:5b,

... Apart from me you can do nothing.

The older I get, the more I realize the importance of humility. Now I pray things like, "Lord, I can do absolutely nothing without you today. Please help me – I need your grace in every situation."

I encourage you to pray and ask for God's help. Nobody changes overnight, but by His grace, you can begin to develop an attitude of humility...and discover the life you really want.

The Benefits of a Humble Heart, by Joyce Meyer

In Matthew 12:33, Jesus says,

A tree is recognized by its fruit

(NIV). The point He is making here is that you and I are known by the fruit in our lives. And if we develop the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), God will be honored and others will be drawn to Him through us.

Humility is a major fruit we need to develop to represent God well in this world and to be truly happy.

*A humble person has the freedom to be wholly and completely who they are. They don't have to impress *anybody*. They don't feel pressured to be perfect or see themselves in competition with other people. They {are secure in themselves}, and they simply want to be the best version of themselves they can be.

And that's what God wants for you and me. He doesn't see one person as more important than another. He gives us each the gifts and talents that we possess, as well as our privileges and position in life. It all comes from Him! So whether we are highly gifted in some area or we have an impressive job title, we are no more valuable to God than someone who seems to have fewer talents or whose work seems insignificant based on a worldly viewpoint.

It's so important for us to understand that our true worth and value is not found in what we do, but in doing what God asks us to do. God is looking on our hearts, our motives and attitudes...

Out of all the Christian virtues, humility is probably the most difficult to develop. It's something that has to be worked into us, just like a seed needs to be watered and nurtured in order to grow. We need to study humility in

the Bible, spend time with God, and go through tests where we have to apply it. But it's so worth it!

Matthew 11:28-29 tells us that *through humility, we find rest for our souls*.

When God asks you to humble yourself time and time again and you feel like there's absolutely no way you can continue to do it, then lean on Him to receive the strength you need...

From Do You Need to Get over Yourself?, by Joyce Meyer

I want to love God and help people. That's my goal in life each day. And when people ask me, "What's your dream? What's your vision?" I have one answer...

I just want to help people.

If helping someone means teaching them the Word of God, then I want to teach the Word. If someone needs a hug, I want to give them a hug.

If I can help someone by paying their rent for a month, I want to do that. Or if I can help people in India by going there and sharing the love of God, I want to go to India.

That's what it means to walk in love- the God-kind of love. It's about letting God use us however He wants to use us and knowing it's all about Him. It's about getting over ourselves, and getting on with what God is calling us to do.

Walking in love should be the number one goal of every Christian.

Deception That Can Trip You Up

There's a deceptive sin that can keep us from walking in love- pride.

It's deceptive because when you have pride, you're usually too proud to admit it. I know this because I used to have teachings on pride and they didn't sell well.

We need to take this issue of pride seriously. Proverbs 16:5 (AMPC) says, Everyone proud and arrogant in heart is disgusting, hateful, and exceedingly offensive to the Lord...

Pride is an independent, me-oriented spirit. It makes people arrogant, rude and hard to get along with.

When our heart is prideful, we don't give God {or our teachers, or parents, or this whole magnificent world} the credit. We mistreat people, looking down on them and thinking we deserve what we have.

It's Not about Us

Sadly, the truth is, there aren't many people who can be put in high positions who won't start thinking highly of themselves.

God wants us to be dependent on Him rather than thinking we can do things ourselves and then take the credit when good things happen. It's foolish for us to do this because the reality is our gifts, talents and abilities come from God (see John 3:27). We can't take credit for them.

My ability to communicate is a gift from God. I thank Him for it and want to use it for His service. Whatever you do well, realize that it's not because of you – it's because God has enabled you to do it well.

It's all about Him, not us!...

Choose godly humility. With every success you have, tell the Lord, "I know I'm nothing without You. I can do nothing without You and I'm successful because of You."

When people compliment you, thank them and give it to God. That's where the glory really belongs. It's all about Him.

Pride often hard to see in ourselves

by Steve Greene

I would like for you to read one of the most self-righteous prayers you have ever heard.

Unfortunately, it was prayed by a religious leader in a parable Jesus told in Luke 18:11:

The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men — robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector.

Can you imagine hearing someone pray a prayer like that?

God, thank you I am not like these people. Thank you I am not like him/her.

Do you know what is so ironic about this? As we condemn this Pharisee, in so many ways, we become just like him.

*It is so easy to adopt a self-righteous attitude if we are not careful.

Pride is sin. Nobody would argue with that. There is plenty of scripture to back up that assertion.

But there are certain subtle expressions of pride that can creep into the life of a believer, and if we are not careful, this sinful behavior somehow becomes acceptable.

The truth is, none of us are free from pride. Some forms of pride may be more obvious than others, and like so many sins, pride is often easier to see in others than it is to see in ourselves.

Pride can be difficult to see in the mirror. That is why we need God's help, and that is why we pray for wisdom and clarity when it comes to identifying these subtle sins.

Various forms of pride can take root in our life. For instance, the pride of the Pharisee is what we might call *moral self-righteousness*. *It is that feeling of moral superiority.*

This is an extreme hazard in the church, but it is not limited to believers.

Moral self-righteousness has political and cultural implications, too. I have most certainly seen moral self-righteousness rear its ugly with the liberals, ... and conservatives, ... and independents.

Anyone who believes he/she holds a higher moral standard in any area of life can be guilty of the pride of moral superiority or moral self-righteousness.

Sadly, this kind of pride is very common among conservative Christians, and it is so easy to fall into.

Whenever society is openly committing, condoning and even glamorizing certain sins, our tendency is to feel morally superior, because we don't commit "those" sins.

So we look down our spiritual noses with a certain amount of disdain or contempt for those who do.

We need the holy spirit to reveal the truth about the subtle sins we allow to creep into our lives.

The advantages of humility, the disadvantages of pride

(from sometime in the 1990's)

Humility allows for learning, and wonder; it promotes receptivity to virtues, to what is wholesome;

Humility makes for inoffensiveness, for peacefulness; it encourages carefulness and gentleness;

it helps to have things in proportion; it supports gratitude;

Humility allows for rejoicing in others' virtues; it makes one easy to talk to, easy to correct;

Humility makes one 'a common man', down to earth, someone people can relate to;

Humility puts others first; it allows for love; it brings joy;

With humility we can remember and know our weakness, our faults, our past mistakes, and so we can have compassion;

(this is how contemplation, touching the truth about something, precedes prayer)

Humility lessens self-centeredness, the point of view caught up in the little self;

Humility is not tyrannical, or oppressive, or demanding;

Humility is not jealous, or judgmental;

it is not competitive;

Humility brings contentment, and gratitude, overflowing to joy.

Whereas pride, on the other hand, by its nature is ignorant, and insulting;

it is closed, presumptuous, self-centered, and selfish;

it takes more for itself than is appropriate, both in its own mind, and literally;

it inflates itself, and takes up too much room;

it overestimates itself, and underestimates others;

A proud person is 'full of himself', whereas someone with humility has what is called 'a self-emptying spirit';

Every problem, every evil stems from selfishness; and Ajahn Buddhadasa taught that *if you practice selflessness, you practice all the precepts*;

All the virtues have this one factor in common - that of selflessness;

Pride makes a person blind to their needs, and their limitations;

a proud person also won't take a chance that might be unsuccessful (our of ego)

Humility, conversely, brings realistic expectations, and with it, we'll not go faster than we should, or slower, out of the ego's fear of failure;

Pride is of divisiveness, humility, of love;

Humility is respect-full;

Humility is not presumptuous; it is beautiful; it fully allows others to be; and with it, we can see them more clearly;

With humility, the emphasis is on God's greatness (and a forgetfulness of self)

Humility, with faith, allows for the flow of grace...

The virtue of humility

By Renae Kranz

Pride is a sneaky sin. It's the sin of the Fall in the Garden of Eden...

It seems like pride would be easy to recognize since it's considered by many to be the root of sin, but it's surprisingly stealthy in its manifestations...

It's an easy trap to fall into- we want to be our own god. This was the sin of Adam and Eve, and it continues to be our biggest downfall.

God didn't leave us without an antidote, however. There is one virtue that is a powerful weapon against the sin of pride: the virtue of humility.

Recognizing pride

Father Jeff Norfolk, pastor at Risen Savior Parish in Brandon, has seen the devastation of prideful thinking firsthand during his time as a priest, as a chaplain in South Dakota prisons, and as a person who has lived in the culture for 40 years.

He sees the problem starting from a young age when children are taught they have to make themselves successful, that it all depends on them. After five years of working on college campuses in his priesthood, he saw kids work really hard, but they couldn't be what they wanted to be.

'That's really devastating when you teach someone that and then it doesn't come to fruition,' Father Norfolk says. 'I think that's really detrimental to how we live as human beings. And it's so contrary to who God made us to be.'

Father Norfolk sees how pride {or self-importance} can act as a root of each of the other seven deadly sins:

greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and sloth.

When we try to make ourselves happy or successful without God, it's easy to fall into gluttony or lust or greed because we begin to grasp after these things rather than reaching out for God;

Or when an obstacle pops up in life and suffering follows it, we allow anger and rage to consume us because things didn't turn out how we wanted;

Even sloth or laziness begins with pride. When we feel like we can do whatever we want with our time with no consequences, we might decide to be lazy. Because it's *our* time, we will determine how to use it. God {truth, Dharma, or caring for others} doesn't come into play at all.

When you start to really consider all the ways pride rears its head, it can become overwhelming to try to overcome it. Lois Heron, parishioner at the Cathedral of Saint Joseph, has actively struggled with pride almost her whole life. She calls it 'her besetting sin', meaning something that troubles her persistently.

At one point in her life when she and her family were facing a deep struggle, she found herself turning inward to handle the problems on her own. She created thick and high boundaries around herself because of her pride, but she came to realize she needed to pray about it. That was the beginning of recognizing the pride she was holding onto. {self-importance, putting ourselves before others, ultimately}

'I was already acquainted with the saints and the Scriptures and praying with the Lord about it, but I didn't have the tools to work through it,' Lois said. 'This is where God's grace came in through our journey.'

It was at this time that she and her husband were making their way into the Catholic Church from Protestantism. Hope came back slowly as she prayed, and she longed for the Eucharist and confession to help her through her trials. Once she was able to receive both of those sacraments, her struggle broke open and she began to gain traction in her fight against pride. She says she felt a bit like Jacob after wrestling with God in Genesis.

‘Those were very difficult years, but I wouldn’t trade them for anything because what they’ve done for me, what they’ve done for my husband, what we’ve seen unfold in our family and the miraculous healing in the trauma that we were experiencing. I had to go through those. The Lord had to allow it,’ Lois says. ‘That seemed to be a big catalyst for really helping me to gain traction in humbling myself.’

Father Norfolk suggests some very concrete ways to recognize pride in our own lives. The best way is to be attentive to our thoughts as we go through our day and notice any patterns of pride, self-reliance or a false self-security that develop.

Ask yourself *why* you were anxious or angry in a specific situation. Those thoughts usually arise because we feel a loss of control and we don’t like that feeling.

He says we should also be attentive to our feelings and desires. If the things you desire don’t materialize the way you want, are you upset? Or can you accept your new situation?

Another way to spot pride is to pay special attention to your own self-talk.

In recalling the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14), the Pharisee’s pride had him extolling his own supposed virtues and comparing himself (a righteous man in his own eyes) to the tax collector who prayed nearby. The tax collector, who knew he was a sinner and needed God’s mercy, beat his breast and wouldn’t even look up to heaven

as he prayed. This is a stark picture of the difference between pride and humility.

With this in mind, Father Norfolk says to be aware of times we might be affirming ourselves and ask this question, 'Why am I not receiving that affirmation from God? Why does it have to come from myself?'

'This is part of the reason I think silence is so important is so I can receive the Father's affirmation,' Father Norfolk says, 'and I don't get caught in myself trying to affirm and trying to make myself feel good about myself, because that's self-focused, that's self-centered.'

In Father Norfolk's experience, we as Americans have an especially hard time with pride because of everything we have available to us. Since we can get pretty much anything we want, it's hard to feel a need for God, but the need is real. He has a plan for us that is better than any of our own plans. It may not be a plan with a smooth path, but it will lead us to the joy of a deep relationship with our Creator.

'When it comes to a relationship with Jesus, it's not about working harder, it's about giving yourselves over more to him,' Father Norfolk says, 'and so it's this contrast of how we've been taught and formed for so long, and now Christ comes and says, 'Actually, I don't want you to do more. I want you to let ME do more.'"

It requires surrender.

Freedom through humility

In Matthew 18:3 Jesus says,

Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

{this is about a radical reliance, or dependence}

‘As human beings,...we have limitations, but we don’t accept that well,’ Father Norfolk says. ‘So for me, part of the key of becoming childlike is just to accept that I’m limited and that I have weaknesses and instead of getting frustrated or angry, I just turn to Jesus and say,

{Teacher} ‘Here I am again...Thank you for your grace. Thank you for your love. Please help me to become strong. Please help me to recognize how much I need you.’

Both Father Norfolk and Lois often turn to prayers like the Litany of Humility and the Litany of Trust to help them pray through their struggles with pride and ask Jesus for help. They also both turn to our Blessed Mother Mary and her Magnificat as a beautiful example of humility. From the beginning of her Immaculate Conception, God gave Mary graces she could not accomplish on her own.

Father Norfolk points out that Mary begins her Magnificat in the Gospel of Luke by rejoicing in God’s goodness to her.

Then she makes a bold statement:

All generations will call me blessed.

Father Norfolk says that sounds very prideful, but that is not what Mary is expressing.

‘She understands what God has done in her life, and she’s claiming that,’ Father Norfolk says. ‘Mary accepts who she is. In my littleness he’s reached out to me, he’s provided for me, and then this is who he’s made me to be. I think the Magnificat is a powerful place to look to.’

Lois also sees the value of Mary’s rejoicing and prays it every morning.

'Those first few words,

My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my savior-

there's the attitude I should have,' Lois says, 'and then the next line is,

for he has regarded the lowly state of his handmaiden-

and when I'm praying that, I think the lowest state, my pride, and he's looked on that, but my job is to magnify the Lord and keep my eyes fixed on Him, and then *that fiat* comes little by little.'

Humility puts our focus back on God and helps us be honest with ourselves about who we really are: not our own god, but children of God the Most High.

Eve couldn't accept her identity and grasped for something that wasn't hers. Mary accepts and humbly makes her fiat to God at the annunciation.

Father Norfolk works daily toward this acceptance and humility rather than grasping and falling back into pride. He says he has to be honest with himself about falling short on loving well, being patient or having it all together.

'So I have the willingness and the honesty to accept who I'm not, and yet also the truth, that by your grace and *by your transforming power* of being in relationship with you, *I can become*, in union with you, *who you made me to be.*' Father Norfolk says in his own fiat.

He says the greatest tool we have to grow in humility is gratitude.
{recognizing what we have received}

Being grateful every day turns our hearts back to God and holds our gaze on *Him* instead of ourselves.

The tools Lois turns to most in her struggle with pride are sacrifice, uniting her suffering and her joys with Christ, and living the sacramental life. The same tools can help shore up our own struggles. All throughout the fight against pride, God never leaves us alone.

Let loose the bonds

Lois has noticed during her long struggle with the sin of pride that just when she gets one facet of it taken care of, anew facet will pop up for attention. 'We can't handle Him cleaning out every closet all at once, and so in fits and starts in life, I've been humbled and I've submitted to the humbling.' she says.

As a visual person, Lois compares working through the many manifestations of pride to the raising of Lazarus by Jesus. When Lazarus stood in front of the crowd, he was bound with strips of burial cloth, and Jesus told them,

Unbind him, and let him go.

- John 11:44

Lois sees that as a picture of transformation.

'Sometimes when I'm going through a lesson on pride, it's like I feel some of the bandages or the death chords being unwrapped by the Lord as I cooperate.' Lois says. 'Slowly over time, it loosens, but He only leads us as much as we can be led at any given point.'

It's taken many years to learn humility for Lois, and God has only given her what she was ready for at the time. She says it's been like teaching a baby to walk as He holds her hand to help her learn.

‘He’s going to release his grip little by little to see if I’m learning that humility thing yet, and maybe, maybe not, and then I fall,’ Lois says, ‘and it seems like all of life’s been like that, but each time I’m learning to walk. So each time I’m learning humility.’

Thankfully Lois has seen that the Lord is patient, not only with her, but with all of us. Confession has been a key component in learning humility for her, along with the Eucharist and good spiritual direction.

‘The Lord is faithful to bring just little moments, words from people I trust, sacred Scripture, a homily, just a moment in nature, and it’s like he’s giving me nuggets,’ she says, ‘but I have to stay in tune and open, and there’s the rub, but that’s where confession helps, I think because the more you confess it, the more open you become.’

The Litany of Humility

O Jesus! Meek and humble of heart, Hear me.

From the desire of being esteemed Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire of being loved Deliver me Jesus.

From the desire of being extolled Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire of being honored Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire of being praised Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire of being preferred to others Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire of being consulted Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire of being approved Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being humiliated Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being despised Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of suffering rebukes Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being calumniated Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being forgotten Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being ridiculed Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being wronged Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being suspected Deliver me, Jesus.

That others may be loved more than I, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be esteemed more than I Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That, in the opinion of the world, others may increase and I may decrease, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be chosen and I set aside, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be praised and I unnoticed, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be preferred to me in everything, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may become holier than I, provided that I may become as holy as I should, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

Amen.

Pride, Dignity, and Humility, by Dwight Mason

We live in a world of seven billion people... As different as we all are, we have this in common. We all have imperfections in one way or another. Another thing we have in common is the way we handle our imperfections. Mostly, instead of addressing them directly, we try to hide them and instead exude an air of arrogance and defensiveness that helps no one. It creates distance between us and others. If we can't be vulnerable, honest, and humble, our relationships can only go so far.

If we accepted ourselves and others as human; *as works in progress*, we could see arrogance and pride as an obstacle to building strong relationships, and become both more accepting of others and more accepting of ourselves.

But isn't it good to have some pride?

Of course, with the right definition. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary says a positive definition is 'a feeling that you respect yourself and deserve to be respected by others.'

But then there's '*a feeling that you are more important or better than other people*' and '*inordinate self-esteem*.' This is a common, not-so-healthy pride, reflected in statements like, '*He had too much pride to ask for help*', or '*her pride prevented her from admitting she was wrong*.'

Since 'pride' has conflicting definitions, Psychologist John Amodeo suggests a different word to affirm our worth and value: *dignity*.

We might believe that healthy self-worth means taking pride in our achievements, but if our value is tied to our accomplishments or self-image, if our accomplishments define who we are, we set ourselves and others up for misery. Things that pass, or things we cannot control, {or base our self-worth upon} are too fragile to handle our needs.

Amodeo says a more genuine and stable self-worth is based on validating, affirming, and valuing ourselves *as we truly are*. Self-worth is part of living with dignity, which exists apart from any accomplishments.

Achievements are an external source of gratification, which can lead to pride and arrogance, and {having depended on them} when they are gone, lead to humiliation.

In contrast, dignity can live inside us regardless of our successes and failures. We don't have to prove anything to anybody- or even to ourselves. If an enterprise fails, this doesn't mean that we're a failure. If an attempt to communicate our feelings to our partner falls flat, we might feel sad, but we can feel good knowing we did our best. We can experience the dignity of having reached out to connect or to repair an injury to the relationship. **We can experience the dignity of living with integrity.*

Pride is listed in the Bible as one of the seven deadly sins. We know how that works. Over-confidence and pride make us feel small. Interestingly, though, pride is often driven by poor self-worth and shame. We feel so badly about ourselves that we over-compensate by feeling superior, and then look for others' flaws as a way to conceal our own.

We criticize others as a defense against recognizing our own shortcomings.

It is pride that will keep us from acknowledging our human vulnerabilities- this pride that makes us too uncomfortable to say, 'I'm sorry, I was wrong, I made a mistake.'

When pride rules, we need to believe we're always right. Relationships also suffer because no one likes being with a know-it-all.

On the other hand, when we believe in our dignity and worth as children of God {our intrinsic worth, our natural wealth}, we realize that we don't have to be perfect to be wonderful and worthwhile.

Humility welcomes people to us.

We become *approachable* rather than intimidating.

We don't see ourselves as better or worse than anyone else.

We are all in this together.

Whereas pride is suffocating, having dignity and humility are freeing. We have worth because we are all humans created by God. Whereas pride is a burden and a barrier we don't need, letting go of it gives us freedom to live light and move with joy through life.

Exploring Pride, Strength, and Humility

An Interview with Thomas Keating By Mary Nurrie Stearns

Thomas Keating, a wise 76-year-old Trappist monk, is known for making contemplative practice accessible to spiritual seekers outside of monastic walls. Father Keating refers to this contemplative practice, which is rooted in Christian tradition, as divine psychotherapy. He promises that this gentle practice can bring about profound spiritual and psychological growth, and his personal presence is evidence that it is so.

I was first introduced to Thomas Keating through a tape series on contemplative prayer. Hearing the clarity and love in his voice was as impactful as learning about centering prayer. His voice, coupled with his understanding of not only how the personality forms programs for happiness, but how centering prayer releases us from their grip and grounds us in the true source of happiness, drew me toward centering prayer as a practice.

In brief, centering prayer takes its practitioners beyond thoughts and feelings and into the presence of divine spirit, or God. Over time this growing relationship with the Divine draws up out of the unconscious and into awareness the components of our personalities. It shows us the core attitudes and behavioral patterns we unknowingly developed in childhood in order to get along in our families and communities, and to define ourselves. These patterns are what Keating refers to as our emotional programs for happiness. As we grow spiritually and reside more in relationship with God, we become more able to let the unconscious reveal its secrets to us. At the same time, as these secrets are released, we compensate less for them and make space for God to work in us and through us. Ultimately, and over time, this practice can lead to union with God.

Sensing that centering prayer is an alchemy for dissolving the pride associated with the false self as well as imbuing humility into our consciousness, we wanted to interview him on pride, strength, and humility. I spoke with him at his residence in Saint Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado, by telephone. I was deeply moved by the depth of humility from which he spoke.

Personal Transformation: Let's talk first about strength. How do you define psychological strength?

Thomas Keating: Psychological strength involves a strong ego (as ego is understood in psychology) and a defined self-identity. Above all, psychological strength is based on self-acceptance of our weaknesses as well as a healthy self-esteem, which is the firm conviction in our own basic goodness.

In the Christian perspective, strength is another word for virtue. Strength is the capacity to practice the fundamental human virtues- prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance which characterize a human being. Growing in this capacity translates into a healthy self-esteem and the ability to accept our own weaknesses without covering them up, at least to ourselves.

PT: Is will-power an aspect of psychological strength?

Keating: All of the virtues are rooted in the will. Prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance are all acts of the will. They are choices, in other words, and sometimes choices that are quite difficult.

Will-power has to be distinguished from an energy-neurosis in which one thinks that by practicing or exercising will-power one can control everything. Virtue, true strength, is not controlling or dominating other people. It is moderating our own excesses and respecting the basic goodness of other people and their needs.

PT: What is the effect of having great psychological strength?

Keating: Psychological strength means the integration of our human capacities and the balance of our emotional life with an intellectual life.

Psychological strength is the fruit of an integration of ourselves in which we accept the spiritual dimension of our being, without which psychological strength, to me, is not well-founded and is probably superficial.

PT: Does developing psychological strength lead to spiritual strength?

Keating: Yes, unless one has some bias against the spiritual dimension. Many psychologists, up until recent times, have denied the existence of a spiritual dimension and have considered psychological strength to be the capacity to live a more or less normal human life to be able to earn a living and to have normal relationships.

But the fullest psychological strength is to integrate those capacities, which are good, into the further development of which the spiritual part of our nature is capable. This openness to the transcendent element of human life, both within ourselves and beyond, is a significant part of psychological health.

Saint John of the Cross, a well-known Christian mystic of the 16th century, wrote, 'Human health consists of having a conscious relationship with God.'

PT: How do you define spiritual strength?

Keating: It is the capacity to act from the center of our being, rather than acting from our emotional reactions to events. Spiritual strength is the capacity to respond to events from the center of compassion and genuine concern, to relate to people where they are, and to accept ourselves and our

weaknesses in the confidence that God will help us to sift through our weaknesses and let go of behaviors that are obstacles to relating to truth, to other people, ourselves, and ultimate reality.

PT: Can we develop spiritual strength or is it something that's given by grace?

Keating: Everything, in a sense, is grace. Our natural gifts are designed to open us to grace. Spiritual strength comes through grace, but it also comes through our efforts to reduce in ourselves obstacles to grace that become obvious to us.

Letting go of obstacles is the negative side of what we defined as positive strength; namely, the practice of the virtues which moderate the excesses of our human nature, balance our individual good with social good, balance our esteem for ourselves with our esteem for the rights and needs of others, and heighten our accountability to God.

PT: How do you define pride?

Keating: In spiritual literature, pride is defined as the tendency to make oneself the center of the universe. In other words, pride is an inordinate, unreasonable love of one's excellence or talents. It's the attitude that has contempt for authority and doesn't want to be accountable to anyone. From a practical point of view, pride makes us consider ourselves our own beginning and end.

PT: If we were raised in ways and under circumstances that resulted in us feeling shame if we were the wrong sex or the wrong race or experienced child abuse or sexual trauma is developing pride important?

Keating: Let's make a few distinctions here. Pride as you use the term is the same as developing self-respect or a strong ego. It's not the rejection of

oneself or the despising of oneself, and it is certainly not self-hatred. These are mental illnesses.

Pride is not a positive attitude toward oneself and one's talents. A good disposition recognizes talents and gifts as God-given and is grateful. Pride as I describe above is the separate self-sense gone wild, you might say. It's an apotheosis of ourselves as the center of the universe, or as little gods, when it is unrestrained by humility.

PT: When people say, "I am proud of myself, I finally spoke up for myself and didn't make excuses," or, "I was so proud of my son," they're talking about a different quality.

Keating: Exactly. They're not talking about pride as a defect; they're talking about the proud feeling associated with doing a good deed or an appreciation for the rightness of our attitude. On the contrary, that's a healthy attitude.

Pride is used in different senses. On the other hand, pride as an expression of our separate self is unhealthy because it makes it hard for us to accept the truth about our own weaknesses and difficult to relate to other people, because they have to fit into our plans or minister to our ego.

Of course, ego is another term that has meanings that have to be distinguished. Psychologically, we speak of a healthy or strong ego, but the phrase "went on an ego trip" is a reference to a prideful attitude, which is the opposite of being proud of doing a good deed.

PT: Do you differentiate between pride and dignity?

Keating: Pride is separation from our deep self, other people, and God, whereas dignity is concerned with the truth about ourselves, our true relationship with others, and with God. Humility is often confused with

self-deprecation or a low self-esteem, which is a lack of having developed a genuine self-identity in the adolescent period.

Self-identity is an aspect of a strong ego, and a strong ego is extremely helpful for the spiritual life. To give oneself to God, one needs to have a self.

In our culture, a self-identity is often not fully developed until people are in their late twenties or early thirties. Sometimes a healthy ego doesn't emerge in people who were deeply wounded in early childhood, battered, as you mentioned earlier, by various forms of abuse which cause incredible emotional damage without prolonged psychotherapy. These people are not suffering from pride; they're suffering from emotional wounds that were inflicted on them. They need to be encouraged to have self-esteem and to develop their self-identities, to look upon themselves as good and to get rid of feelings of shame they might have brought with them from early childhood.

PT: Is there spiritual pride in the saying of Jesus, 'I and my Father are one?'

Keating: That's not spiritual pride, but a statement of fact. It would be pride if it weren't true, then it would be presumption. Pride leads to the presumption of a separate self-sense.

Humility is a delicate balance between presumption and despair. Thinking too much of our weakness or regarding ourselves as totally dependent upon others leads to depression and low self-esteem, which is not humility, but a mental illness, or at least a distortion of human development.

On the other hand, people who attempt to do things clearly beyond their strength or who treat themselves as if they can do anything, anytime, anyplace, are equally distorted by their presumption.

Humility is the balance between trust in God and the recognition of our need. When those two attitudes aren't present, there isn't true humility,

which is an authentic, honest attitude toward ourselves recognizing our weaknesses and our basic goodness and an honest, authentic attitude about reality, other people, and of course, God.

PT: Let's further explore pride. 'Pride goeth before the fall' is from one of the wisdom books of the Old Testament. What does this text mean?

Keating: Pride, as presumption, goes before a fall. In other words, assuming strength or virtues that you don't have or thinking that you're not subject to sin or to the weaknesses of other people is presumption. Not having a healthy recognition of one's limitations is asking for trouble. People with that attitude are likely to fall on their noses.

PT: 'For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted', Luke 18:14. What is the meaning of this scripture?

Keating: That's a beautiful text and it puts the issue into a nutshell. Anyone who exalts himself or herself puts too much confidence in his or her own power. They do the opposite of those who have a low self-esteem. They have such a high self-esteem that they think they can practice any virtue or do anything. Therefore, they think people owe them something.

When they make unjust demands on other people and manifest their own selfish programs for happiness, they are going to be humbled. Most of us have basically the same limitations, the same separate self-sense, the same tendency to pride.

If we exalt our own programs for happiness or place demands on society that disregard other people's rights and needs, the text is warning us that for our own true good, we'll get into trouble. At the very least, we'll be in competition with all of the other egos on the planet who are trying to follow the same mistaken path.

This happens unless people grasp the spiritual dimension within that calls us to move beyond the superficial purposes of ordinary life and to see ourselves in the light of our true goodness and capacity to share the divine life.

For those who humble themselves, those who acknowledge the truth about themselves, even painful truths they would prefer to cover up so that nobody knows, especially themselves; once they accept the truth, even if acknowledging the truth is painful, they experience the inner freedom that the truth always brings.

We had a classic example of this in the press recently. If we acknowledge the truth, most people will forgive us; if we do not, then people are not so sympathetic.

PT: How is humility different from shame or false modesty?

Keating: False modesty is not based on the truth and it can't be humility, because humility is the truth, basically.

****Another distinction might be helpful here. I'd like to juxtapose shame and guilt first because they are very different.*

Guilt is about a particular act that our conscience disapproves of, and hence, as soon as one regrets the behavior or tries to change it, guilt has no more effect on us.

**Guilt that doesn't last beyond the time it takes to recognize, be sorry and want to amend our particular misbehavior is healthy. It becomes unhealthy when it's protracted, say, beyond 30 seconds, in which case it really manifests our pride, because now what is hurt is that we haven't measured up to our idealized self-image, which is the fruit of pride.*

Shame, on the other hand, is a pervasive feeling, due, usually, to the deprivation of emotional needs during early childhood. It doesn't just say

that I *did* something wrong, but that I *am* a mistake. Shame is more serious and much more difficult than guilt.

The fruit of great damage in early childhood, shame causes us to identify with our limitations in such a way that we don't recognize our basic goodness or the possibilities we have to manifest the creative potential of the human spirit.

With that in mind, the relationship between shame and humility is that shame is a false attitude toward ourselves. Humility is the true acceptance of ourselves, with our faults, along with the firm confidence that with God's help we can not only correct them, but fulfill the transcendent potential within us to become sharers in the divine life in the fullest sense of that term.***

PT: What is the power and strength within humility?

Keating: Humility is the greatest strength there is. It's not blown away by praise or exaggerated by the approval others give us. It is not ambitious; it's content to be whatever we are.

Humility accepts all of the damage that has been done to us in early childhood, knowingly or unknowingly by others, and all of the means we took to protect ourselves from that woundedness.

At the same time, humility rests in the peace that comes from not being afraid of the truth. Humility is not afraid to acknowledge whatever has happened in our lives, including our own sins or faults.

Because of this great trust in God rather than in ourselves, it participates in the strength of God. It participates in God's power because there's no tendency in us to attribute it to ourselves. We know that God is helping us and this is the true security.

The programs for happiness that we had to hold ourselves together or to achieve a certain public esteem, at least acceptance in our community, is not the ultimate value anymore.

Acceptance is appreciated as a support, but it's not necessary to our happiness. If the approval of others is taken away, the confidence that we have in God remains and the sense of loss is moderated by trust in God's power to help us.

Humility taps into God's own strength that is the bottom line. It involves great sensitivity to our motivation in daily life.

Many of the world religions emphasize daily life as the battlefield in which we come to know ourselves and our spiritual potential for union with God.

PT: In the truest sense, is humility the basis of personal power?

Keating: It depends on the motivation. If personal power is an ego trip or comes from creative talents within us which we attribute to ourselves, the basis is pride and presumption. Then we're headed for a fall because the power is not real, not authentic.

Personal power that is authentic doesn't come from ourselves, but through the movement of the Holy Spirit in us, prompting us to work for God or for the needs of others, and out of love of others. We attribute any good that we do to Spirit.

Attributing spiritual power to ourselves is the most dangerous kind of pride. No one does more harm in the world than one with spiritual powers that are not rooted in a profound sense of humility. To reach that level of humility requires the purification of what psychology calls the unconscious.

Daily life shows us the dynamics of the unconscious as it appears in our emotional reactions to everyday activities, warning us of what we haven't quite faced. We're not humble until we face our emotional reactions and recognize their source in our unconscious.

PT: What do you mean by programs for happiness?

Keating: The instinctual needs that we have when we enter into the world are focused on survival and security, power and control, and affection and esteem. When any of these instinctual needs, which are basically good, are experienced by the child as unfulfilled or withdrawn through abuse and neglect, especially when it is habitual, the child, for survival purposes, may repress those painful, traumatic, emotional experiences in the unconscious.

The child may also develop compensatory systems in which he or she tries to find happiness in the gratification of one of those three instinctual needs. All of us grow up without the experience of true security, which is God's presence.

Programs for happiness are temperamentally greatly complexified by the socialization period from ages four to eight when we unquestionably absorb the values of the culture the environment, peer group, parents, religion and ethnic background. At that young age, there's no full human ability yet to evaluate some of those values, so we absorb them all.

Our emotional programs for happiness are also attracted to what is acceptable in the culture. The emotional programs for happiness can't possibly work. They're not moderated by the virtues.

Fantastic demands for power lead to terrible harm in society when egos are collectivized. National interests that know no bounds and which trample on the rights of others even to the point of war, violence, torture, and all of the other unspeakable barbaric activities, are, unfortunately, still with us, in spite of our supposed evolutionary progress.

PT: As adults, our ordinary lives are the battlefields for us to grow in humility. How do we do that?

Keating: First, we have to get to know and then moderate the demands we make on life. We have to stop acting as if the world owes us a living.

Sometimes the stages of human growth are normal, but become abnormal when we get stuck in our developmental phases. Teachings on the archetypes are interesting. For instance, the archetype of the orphan is normal at a certain age when you need to be dependent on parents or nurses. When you're an adult, the feeling that everyone should continue to take care of you becomes unreasonable and unattainable, and gives way to the afflictive emotions, such as grief and anger, that follow whenever our programs for happiness are frustrated.

Virtues, the fruit of humility, are the result of human development in the right direction. Pride is the result of human development in the wrong direction. Sometimes the human faculties develop, but the spiritual ones do not. Prideful people are suffering from infantile motivation that they need to grow out of to find true happiness.

PT: What practices would help us to grow in humility?

Keating: The first one is prayer. Ask God for humility. The second practice is to spend time every day in silence, to be with yourself at a deep level, without thinking. Allow yourself to feel what you feel, noticing what events upset you and cause the feelings of grief, anger, and discouragement to arise. Doing so helps bring to your awareness some emotional program, of which you're not fully conscious, that is trying to come to consciousness through events. Let go of the excesses of that program.

For example, although you may desperately want people to love you, does that mean that if one or two people dislike you, it's the end of the world? For someone who has pushed that program to such an extreme the least

criticism or look that's interpreted as a rejection sends them into a tizzy for hours.

Other people have to control everything to feel happy and may even insist on ordering your food in a restaurant. They are still under the influence of a childish need to compensate for some kind of deprivation in their early childhood. They need to grow out of the desire to control.

The practice of virtue and the growth of psychological strength lead to the moderation of those childish attitudes. We have great education in this country, but not in emotional development and in the practice of moderation, what used to be called the virtue of temperance.

Temperance means to moderate our appetites. When we do not moderate our emotional programs for happiness, they lead to all kinds of complications interior turmoil, emotional binges, broken relationships.

Humility enables us to relate to other people as people, rather than from our little universe of expectations and emotional programs for happiness.

PT: In a sense, those programs for happiness have to be humbled in order to access humility.

Keating: Exactly. We have to humble (quiet, calm down) our biases and prejudices contained in the unquestioned values that we absorbed in childhood, sometimes because they were the condition of our acceptance or approval from important others.

We need to let go of our over-identification with our group and family. It's not that we're not grateful for what we receive, but a naive loyalty leads to hiding the truth things that should be addressed because they are real problems or injustices.

Humility is freedom to say what should be said at the right time, or to keep quiet when it's not appropriate to speak. This inner freedom is the sign that our daily life is beginning to be penetrated by the transcendent potentialities of our spiritual center. It is grace that enables us to do that, and that's why prayer is so valuable.

Prayer reminds us that what we can't do, with God's help, we can do, if we ask and if we let go of those things in us that are obstacles to God's love.

There's also a distinction between humility and humiliation. Humiliation is when you're put down when you don't want to be, or you resist when pride is humbled. Humility is the willingness to accept criticism and the defects that people point out to us.

PT: Without having to defend against.

Keating: Yes. We take criticisms into account, to see if what others say is true, but at the same time, if we feel it's not true, we're at peace.

We want to recognize the gifts that God has given us, and recognize the gifts we don't have, which somebody else was given. We recognize those facts without falling into jealousy or envy.

Humility is humble in the sense of not being offended by the truth, but humiliation, according to Saint Bernard, is the path to humility. Saint Bernard means the humiliation that one uses well, that one accepts willingly insofar as it is true, but does not attribute to oneself if it is not true.

Humility is never a put-down, but the willingness to acknowledge the truth about ourselves. *Humility welcomes humiliation*. Although it's painful at times, it realizes that, precisely because I feel humiliated, I'm attached to my happiness seeking programs in some way that needs correction if I'm going to be really happy and at peace in daily life.

PT: Let's close the interview with a little more discussion about prayer.

Keating: I'd like to emphasize prayer as a seeking of a true relationship with God or the Ultimate Reality. Take time each day to be with yourself, out of respect for yourself. In this tumultuous, noisy and active world you need to keep in touch with your deeper self, beyond the ordinary psychological awareness that preoccupies you. In this way you can cultivate this awareness of the dynamics of your unconscious, of the quality of your relationships with others, and of the damage done to you in early childhood that you have to take into account in your activities.

Above all, prayer helps you to identify the affection and esteem, power and control, and security needs that seem to predominate.

PT: During prayer, or relationship with God time, how do you recommend that we relate to this information as it comes into our consciousness?

Keating: There are different ways of relating, all of them good. I suggest talking to God, friend to friend. Be open to God's inspirations; ask for God's help.

Then, prayer as *relationship*, hanging out with God every day, moves from a kind of clumsiness in the beginning to ever-increasing ease in conversing with God.

This moves toward friendship, which is a commitment to prayer and to being accountable to God in our daily lives. This is how love grows.

Love is the ultimate meaning of the universe and to possess love is to be truly happy.

This love can grow from friendship to the point of union, and even unity.

PT: Are you saying that prayer time is simply 'hanging out with', not petitioning something, but just being with?

Keating: You can ask, too, but like any acquaintanceship, sometimes you ask for a cup of coffee and sometimes you give one. Other times, you just sit and hold hands.

Some people might be turned off by that kind of personal relationship with God, because it's not in their tradition or upbringing. Contemplative prayer, which is the fullness of this relationship, opens us completely to the transcendent dimension, not unlike the way a human relationship deepens and grows. That means you have to get to know each other. Give some time to this relationship. What you do in that time is totally up to you.

To sit there and say nothing is fine, or to ask for God's help is fine. The relationship itself gradually suggests new ways of relating, such as just being with God, waiting on God.

Prayer becomes a face-to-face relationship, sitting and sharing the experience of being together, like a couple who are deeply in love and don't need to talk all the time. The total gift of their presence to each other is deeper than conversation; it might be called *communion*.

The movement of prayer is from conversation that is a little formal, into ease, and then into the capacity to be silent and just enjoy the gift of each other's presence. That requires some time to develop.

PT: No short paths.

Keating: It's a lifetime practice, one that can always grow deeper. Any effort to know God is success, even though we feel it is a flop, because God appreciates even the smallest consideration or thought much more than we can imagine.

If there be holiness in you, fear lest you may lose it. How? Through pride.

- Saint Augustine

Rebuff the vanity that follows obedience.

- John Climacus

Without humility, all is lost.

- Teresa of Avila

Conduct your victory like a funeral.

- The Tao Te Ching

What is the wild horse that throws one from the mountain one is ascending? It is arrogance, thinking oneself superior.

- The Seventh Dalai Lama

The Tao Te Ching - Chapter 8

The highest good is like water.
Water gives life to the ten thousand things and does not strive.
It flows in places men reject and so is like the Tao.

In dwelling, be close to the land.
In meditation, go deep in the heart.
In dealing with others, be gentle and kind.

In speech, be true.
In ruling, be just.
In business, be competent.

In action, watch the timing.
No fight: No blame.

* * *

The supreme good is like water,
which nourishes all things without trying to.
It is content with the low places that people disdain.
Thus it is like the Tao.

In dwelling, live close to the ground.
In thinking, keep to the simple.

In conflict, be fair and generous.
In governing, don't try to control.

In work, do what you enjoy.

In family life, be completely present.

When you are content to be simply yourself
and don't compare or compete,
everybody will respect you.

The Tao Te Ching was written by Lao-Tzu; translation by S. Mitchell

Humility - Native American Virtues

By Kat Glasgow Shiver

That is not our way, to set yourself apart and talk about who you are and what you've done. You let your life speak for you. With the Mohawk people, wisdom is how you live and how you interpret what your mother and father, what your grandmothers and grandfathers have told you about this world- and then how you interpret that into the fact of living every day.

- Tom Porter, Mohawk

Have you ever heard the saying, 'actions speak louder than words'? How we live will resonate with others. It is our actions, not our words, that will leave the greatest impression on people. It is easy to see people who talk the talk, but do not walk the walk.

Miriam Webster defines humility as: the quality or state of not thinking you are better than other people: the quality or state of being humble.

In the Bible, humility means being affably respectful towards others. It is the same in Native tradition. It is the opposite of aggressiveness, arrogance, boastfulness, and vanity.

Let someone else praise you, and not your own mouth; an outsider, and not your own lips

-Proverbs 27:2

The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity

- Proverbs 11:3

*You are the light of the world.
 A city on a hill cannot be hidden.
 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket.
 Instead, they set it on a lamp stand,
 and it gives light to everyone in the house.*

*In the same way, let your light shine before men,
 that they may see your good deeds,
 and glorify your Father in heaven.*

- Matthew 5: 14-16 14

Instead of saying ;Me', humility affords us an opportunity to give credit where credit is due, and to put others ahead of our own selfish interests.

Humility is represented by the wolf. The wolf's life is to work and live for its pack. To be outcast from the pack is the ultimate shame.

Humility is to know yourself as a sacred part of the creation.

Dbaadendziwin

Live life selflessly and not selfishly. *Every thing living is interconnected.*
 (jagenagenan)

Respect your place among the people, and the web of life. Acknowledge and praise the ideas and accomplishments of all. Do not grow bigger than the rest, and do not become self-important. *Find balance within yourself, and with all living things.

With humility comes wisdom.

*A false balance is an abomination to the Lord,
But a just weight is His delight.*

*When pride comes, then comes dishonor,
But with the humble is wisdom.*

*The integrity of the upright will guide them,
But the crookedness of the treacherous will destroy them.*

- Proverbs 11:1-3 1

Ahaw Mamogosnan.

Migwetch jak she gego ga gishtoyen.

Today please help me be humble. Give me the ability to listen and hear the things you want me to know. Help me to not do things to seek attention, and help me to not be boastful or proud. Let me learn from my Elders, and let me teach by the way that I live.

Igwien Iw