



Pause With Purpose

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...to refresh

...to grow

Humility

Last month, while exploring "excellence" and its availability to all of us, we identified "humility" as one key element of the excellence mix. This may seem strange in the context of our competitive society, where the "Survivor" mentality is promoted as both fun and necessary. So often, we are encouraged to "look out for #1", to advance ourselves on the backs of those around us, and to never miss an opportunity to stand out above others. Indeed, our society seems to have lost its connection with and appreciation for humility. And yet, without it, excellence is incomplete.

So what is humility? First, let's clear up some misperceptions about humility.

1) Humility is not "humiliation". Humiliation has to do with shame and pain. Humility has to do with peace and security. Where humility exists, humiliation is very rare.

2) Humility is not self-deprecation or the absence of self value or self respect. In fact, healthy humility grows best in a spiritual garden flush with vibrant significance and esteem.

3) Humility is not weakness. Quite the opposite! Humility grows from an inner strength and confidence that extends beyond our

gifts and achievements to the very core of who and whose we are.

At its heart, humility is the absence of the need for glory. This does not imply the denial of our gifts or the benefits achieved through them. It does not imply the need to withdraw and be uninvolved. Rather, as author and speaker Wayne Dyer puts it, it involves the ability to be "ever present but almost invisible." The glory that feeds the egos of others feels awkward and unnecessary to the humble, a distraction from what is really important.

Humility is closely connected with freedom. As Dyer says, "Once we stop needing glory, we experience a new kind of freedom." We are "free of the need to be noticed." With this freedom, we can choose and act guided not by our neediness, but by our beliefs, convictions, and wisdom. We can do what we do because we feel guided, because it is our purpose to do so. We are free of the burden to prove we are somebody, and free instead to use our gifts for the welfare and benefit of others.

The strength that allows this humility to exist flows from a heart

and mind rich with wisdom and beliefs that empower rather than restrict, that build up rather than burden down. A primary resource for these beliefs is a spiritual faith system that:

- recognizes and focuses on glorifying the Creator God, rather than our self.
- embraces His love, His Lordship, and His personal, active involvement in our life.
- accepts our value and significance as being established by divine declaration, rather than by human effort or acclaim.
- promotes service to others, rather than self-centeredness.

By incorporating and living out these beliefs, we grow in strength as we release the twin burdens of "it's all up to me" and "it's all about me". Our vision relaxes so we can see beyond our self to the larger goals that involve others. The pressure to speak is relieved and we can become better listeners. We get out of the way and create space for others to raise us up, if *they* so desire. And ultimately, we free our spirit so we can be and do our best ... not for our own glory, but to glorify our God, to serve others, and to make a positive impact on our world.

This is the attitude that underlies true excellence!



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CONTACT INFORMATION

Your thoughts and comments are warmly welcomed. I would also be happy to share with you more about life coaching and how it can assist you to be your best, personally and relationally, at home and at work.

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What About Pride?

We are often encouraged by well-meaning people to "take pride" in what we do, in how we look, or in what we have achieved. While at first this sounds positive and healthy, it soon reveals a natural friction with humility and the release of glory. It is difficult to imagine "humbly taking pride".

What, then, about telling our children that we are "proud" of them for who they are or what they have done?

Perhaps it would be helpful to pay close attention to what we mean to say and the precise words that can best express it. If we mean to draw glory to our self for our appearance, or our achievements, or our children's accomplishments, then "taking pride" fits. Otherwise, different words might more accurately convey what we want to do. Consider, for example, options such as being:

grateful for ... pleased with ...
happy about ... thankful for ...
honored by ... impressed by ...
delighted with ... etc.

Significance and humility can live together as long as we, the tools, need not claim the glory of the master craftsman.



"All streams flow to the ocean because it is lower than they are. Humility gives it its power."

- Lao-tzu