

The **Heart** *of a*
Servant

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THE HEART OF A SERVANT

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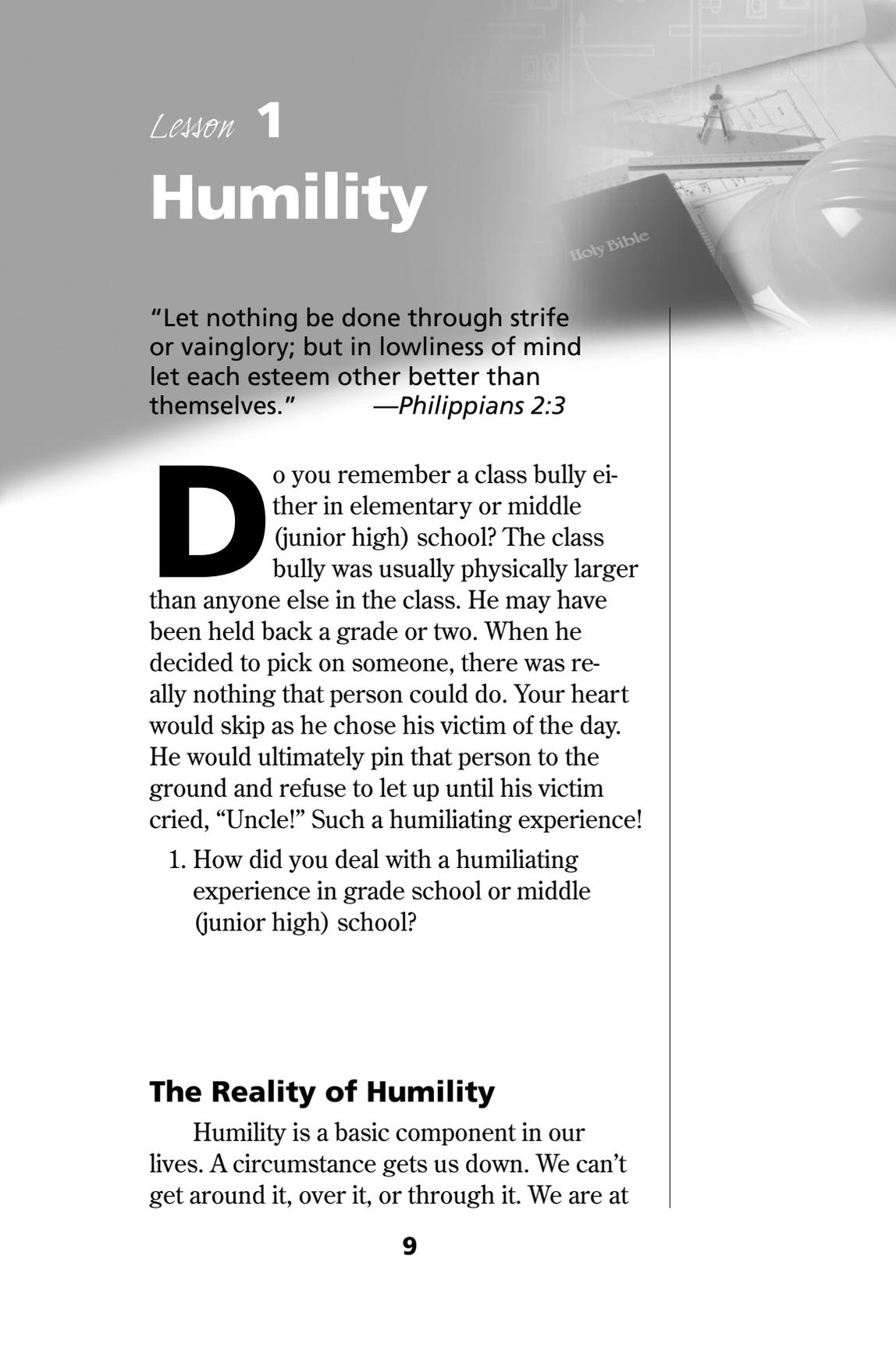
Introduction

In this study we will discuss the characteristics or qualities of servants of the Most High God. We do not work in order to be accepted into Heaven, but we work because we love God and seek to please Him. “Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart” (Ephesians 6:6). We work because we have His life in us and because we love Him and want to glorify Him. “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

James, the half brother of our Lord Jesus Christ, teaches us that works show that our faith is alive and healthy. “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:20).

We cannot work for our salvation. Salvation is a work of the Lord Jesus Christ through His death, burial, and resurrection. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

But Paul quickly added that we are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). So let us learn the characteristics of the heart of a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.



Lesson 1

Humility

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” —*Philippians 2:3*

Do you remember a class bully either in elementary or middle (junior high) school? The class bully was usually physically larger than anyone else in the class. He may have been held back a grade or two. When he decided to pick on someone, there was really nothing that person could do. Your heart would skip as he chose his victim of the day. He would ultimately pin that person to the ground and refuse to let up until his victim cried, “Uncle!” Such a humiliating experience!

1. How did you deal with a humiliating experience in grade school or middle (junior high) school?

The Reality of Humility

Humility is a basic component in our lives. A circumstance gets us down. We can't get around it, over it, or through it. We are at

a loss to know what to do. At times we would be willing to cry “Uncle,” but that would not help.

Humility comes in many forms and fashions. Sometimes we are humiliated by other people. It may be our children, our mate, a parent, or a friend. It may be a mentor, a teacher, or a boss. Sometimes health humbles us. Sometimes we go against the advice of a wiser person. We do something that we should not do; we fail, and we publicly face humility because we acted stupidly.

Sometimes we humiliate ourselves. We have no one to blame but ourselves. As my dad would say, “He just got too big for his britches.” We think too much of ourselves. We overvalue our own personal ability. We are proud.

2. Read Proverbs 16:18. What does this verse say about pride?

We must not forget that God humbles us. He is not a dirty bully. He is not humbling us for our detriment. He does it for our good. The Old Testament contains many accounts of how God had to humble His people for their good. Nowhere is this better shown than in the forty years that the Israelites wandered in the wilderness. The purpose of the wandering was twofold: (1) God was waiting for the old generation who refused to believe Joshua and Caleb’s report that they could enter Canaan to

die off (Numbers 14); (2) He was preparing a new generation to enter and conquer Canaan (Deuteronomy 8:1–3).

Humility is one of the key characteristics that God develops in us so that we can serve Him and others through the local church.

3. Read Proverbs 16:19. What contrast is presented in this verse?

4. Read Proverbs 16:18 again.
 - (a) What is the difference between “pride” and a “haughty spirit”?

 - (b) According to the writer of Proverbs, what is the eventual outcome of these two attitudes?

 - (c) Name some Bible characters who exemplified pride or a haughty spirit.

 - (d) Name a Bible character or two who refused to learn from humiliating events in his or her life. What was the result?

We never have the proper heart of a servant without learning how to serve in humility.

5. Describe a time in your Christian life when a humiliating event helped you grow spiritually and prepared you to better serve the Lord.

The Practical Purpose of Humility

Humility helps us appreciate what other people are experiencing, and it enables us to serve them without “lording” it over them. You can probably think of people who have gone through extremely humiliating experiences and then dedicated their lives to helping others who go through similar experiences.

One of the most influential writers of the twentieth century was C. S. Lewis. If you have read a biography of his life or have seen the movie *Shadowlands*, you know of his love affair with his wife, Joy Davidman Gresham. They married late in life and were married only a few years when she died of cancer. The agony that Lewis endured taught him more about love and faith than any book could ever have taught him. His book *A Grief Observed* increased his ministry beyond what he could ever have expected.

C. S. Lewis bared his heart as a servant who was hurting but who was continuing to serve God no matter the price. His writings in this period of life show that his heart was humbled even as he was seeking to serve the Lord.

If someone had approached C. S. Lewis before this humbling event and asked him, “How would you like to have the following happen to you so you can help others with their grief for the rest of your life and even after you have departed from this life?” what do you think he would have said? He may have replied, “No thank you. I am very happy just the way I am”; or, “No way would I ever want to experience that. Find someone else to do that.” But after the event, his answer would probably have been quite different.

The humble servants of God that we know in our circle of friends are but the tip of the iceberg of those who God prepares in every generation to serve Him.

6. Read Psalm 119:71. How does affliction help us learn God’s statutes?

7. Name a historical person whom God used greatly as a servant after humbling him or her.

*“The LORD
lifteth up
the meek: he
casteth the
wicked down
to the ground”
(Psalm 147:6).*

8. Name someone you know personally whom God has used greatly as a servant after humbling him or her.

9. What obstacles in your life keep you from letting go of pride?

The Spiritual Value of Humility

The most important reason we should seek humility as a part of our personal servanthood is because humility was a key element in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ on this earth.

Jesus described Himself as "meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29).

10. Read John 13:1–17.
 - (a) How did Jesus exemplify humility in this passage?

 - (b) When Jesus said we should follow His example (v. 15), did He mean we should wash people's feet? What did He mean?

- (c) What is the result when we obey the Lord's command (v. 17)?

Paul commanded us to be Christlike in our life and ministry. Without humility, we will not be Christlike in our service.

11. Read Philippians 2:5–8. What example of Christ's humility did Paul give?

12. Read Philippians 2:4. Is it possible to value another person as better than oneself without humility? Why?

13. Name an Old Testament character and a New Testament character who esteemed someone else better than themselves.

Humility is the opposite of self-interest and assertiveness. When self is first, we look after the needs of number one rather than the needs of others. As we humbly seek the help of the Holy Spirit, we will be able to serve others.

Humility is a foundational element of a Christlike servant.

Jesus summed up the spiritual value of humility when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).

When we choose to be Christlike servants, we choose humility rather than pride.

14. Read Colossians 3:12. How did Paul describe this choice?

15. Read Acts 20:19. How did Paul describe his own ministry?

16. James was the half brother of Jesus. Read James 4:6 and 10. What do these verses teach us about humility?

“Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off” (Psalm 138:6).

The proud person is headed for destruction. Exaltation and honor—in God’s timing—await the humble servant of the Lord (1 Peter 5:6; Proverbs 29:23).

Thoughts to Ponder

1. Why does God resist the works of the proud?
2. Why does God give grace to the humble?
3. Spend time in prayer. Ask God to show you areas of pride in your heart and attitude. After you have listed these, ask God to remove them so you can be the kind of servant He can use.
4. How could God use you to help others overcome pride in their lives and service?