

## God's Grace: Humility Brings a Greater Grace

Christians have conflicting ideas about what it means to be humble.  
We get our ideas about humility from Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5.

Why are the words, *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble* important?  
First, they tell us that God gives grace.  
Second, they tell us that God gives grace to certain kinds of people—humble people.  
Finally, they tell us that God can withhold grace from another kind of people—the proud.

A link exists between humility and grace. *Humility draws the blessing and favor of God.*

On four separate occasions Jesus employs this phrase, “the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

*Matthew 18:1–4: Lay aside dreams of greatness and embrace dreams of dependency.*

*Matthew 23:1–12: Lay aside the thrill of recognition and find the joy of serving.*

*Luke 14:7–14: Lay aside the thirst for honor from others and seek to honor others instead.*

*Luke 18:9–14: Lay aside self-assessment and depend on God's mercy.*

Old Testament example of God's grace

Buried deep in the Chronicles of Israel is the story of a despicable king, guilty of witchcraft and séances, fortune-telling, and necromancy. Picture him engaged in human sacrifice by burning his own children on altars of fire. Give him nationwide authority and influence, so that he not only practices these things, but encourages and trains others to do the same. Now, if there is room left in your imagination, envision this man finding a way to win God's affection.

Manasseh captured God's grace and mercy and humbled himself.

2 Chronicles 33 - King Manasseh was transformed from a man who provoked God to anger, to one who caught God's attention because of his humble heart. There is a lesson here for every student of Jesus. It's not that Manasseh simply experienced God's mercy; he *provoked* it.

Jesus share this pathway to God's heart: “the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Humility is an expression of truth and integrity.

What is it about humility that captures people's hearts? Their hearts are hungry to find the peace offered by humility.

In King Manasseh's story, we find hope for everyone who has wondered if they could possibly grab God's attention. Here are four sure lessons from Manasseh (2 Chron. 33) for those whose hearts are inclined:

*Even amid gross iniquity, God is still speaking (v. 10)*

*God knows how to humble us (v. 11)*

*Our hearts can move God's heart (v. 13)*

*Our humble example can influence the generations to come (v. 25)*

This and other Old Testament stories are more than interesting—they are postures of the heart.

Jesus embodied the life of humility before the Father. He demonstrated that the humble path leads to glory, a glory unimagined by the wisdom of men.

Philippians 2:6-11

What is whispered in the Old Testament is shouted in the New: humility is the doorway to God's kingdom.

We can bring the grace of God into our lives by humbling ourselves, but the opposite is also true. Our pride can block the grace of God.

This means that among the enemies of grace, human pride hides deepest in our souls. Because God's grace meets us in our weakness, we think grace will expose us as frauds, when all the while grace flows ever stronger toward the humble in heart.

It's easy to step across the border from truth and enter arrogance, to label those who cannot see the truth as fools. Before we know it, we have crossed into enemy territory, even while we congratulate ourselves on being right all along. Grace understands that merely *knowing* the truth is not enough. Along with our knowledge, we need to be a grace-filled people. The problem with knowing it all is the tendency to judgment. Even an intellectual like the apostle Paul recognized, "knowledge puffs up" (1 Cor. 8:1). Sometimes, the most insightful people appear uncaring and cold.

The line between insight and judgment is drawn by grace.

Pride wants to make more of ourselves and less of God. Grace exposes our desire to sit on the throne of our own vainglorious, private kingdom. Pride is an enemy of grace. You can't give grace to people you look down upon; you can only give them pity.

Pride's solution is false humility. False humility is our attempt to fool God, even though in the end, we are only fooling ourselves. We utter modest things about ourselves that we do not believe. The problem with false humility is that it's false. False humility is the self-abasement we want others to reject, thus affirming our talent and skill.

Pride is always a masquerade. Pride leads to the kind of hypocrisy in which we keenly discern the flaws of others because we are haunted by our own. It makes us seem bigger than we are and deflates those around us. Because we detest the lies we tell ourselves, we try to expose the same lies in others. We hide the very flaws He is willing to love.

The ancients reminded us that knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. In modern times, we believe "knowledge is power." It's not; it leads to pride.

Pride cannot see beyond itself. Pride whispers that if we must accept grace, then we should have it all. Pride is a miser that hoards the grace of God. Pride hoards the grace of God, as if our sin were so great, we could consume heaven's full supply of grace, when in fact our sins are common to all mankind. Pride causes us to see grace as a zero-sum game, as if God's kindness to others means less grace for us. But grace is not of this world. It is not scarce. Grace is the stuff of the age to come.

Pride harms us deeply; grace heals us utterly. Is it any wonder that "God resists the proud?" We should be the kind of people who humble ourselves. On the other hand, if we do not humble ourselves, we may just find out that God is opposing us.