

# Meet Mort & Viv

## Character Transformation Studies

NW Parenting Conf.  
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*"19 My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you," Ga 4:19.*

**How do we change? How do we become more like Christ?**

**Step #1 – hear from God about the condition of your soul**

**Step #2 – become an expert in what the Bible says about your area of character transformation**

**Step #3 – reflect on the condition of your soul and how these Scriptures MUST shape you**

**Step #4 - Sustain application and meditation for the foreseeable future**

**Tips:**

# Sample Study: Humility

Monday, March 23, 2009 6:42:05 AM

**Ex 10:3** So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, "This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: 'How long will you refuse to **humble** yourself before me? Let my people go, so that they may worship me. God requires of the greatest of kings that they humble themselves before Him. Humility is first before God and it befits us all.

"40 "But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers--their treachery against me and their hostility towards me, 41 which made me hostile towards them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies--then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, 42 I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land." Le 26:40-42. God is here disciplining his people by oppression and suffering so that they would be humbled before Him. God values our humility before Him so much that He would give us over to our enemies to produce it in us. Their humility is to marked by confession

**Nu 12:3** (Now Moses was a very **humble** man, more **humble** than anyone else on the face of the earth.)

Moses humility is exemplary. I wonder why that is? It is interesting that the word used here (wne anav) is nearly equally translated "afflicted". It makes me wonder about the connection between affliction and humility (cf. Ex. 10.3). It would seem that they are closely related with humility being the expected and hoped for outcome of our affliction. It is also interesting that wne is always used for someone God has favor on. How steady is God's favor on the humble!

I want to take some time to expand on Moses' exemplary humility. This accolade is stunning. The term used would imply that he had suffered greatly. The immediate context reveals this as Moses' trusted co-laborers and brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, turn against him and join the grumbling about his leadership. Just prior, in Ch. 11, Moses despaired of life itself because of the heavy burden of leading such a wayward people (11.10-15). This was not idle whining on his part, as God addressed his need with the anointing of 70 elders.

Other examples of Moses' suffering are the grumbling of the people (Num. 11.2), he watched his nephews die (Num. 3.4). In Exodus, he watched his people suffer under slavery (2.11), Pharaoh tried to kill him (2.14), he lived in exile from both the Egyptians and his own people (2.15), he was rejected by Pharaoh (10.11) and by his own people (6.9). He endured the peoples' ceaseless grumbling against his leadership (14.11; 16.2),

In addition to the humility brought about by his affliction, Moses was also humbled because he saw the exalted nature of God. He encountered God in the burning bush (Ex. 3.5, 6). This led to Moses' "who am I" statements (3.11), which reflect his humble self esteem. He encountered God's holy wrath and was nearly killed by Him (4.24), he saw God answer prayer (8.31), he saw God work amazing miracles (14.27; 18.8), he saw God on Mt. Sinai (19.3) and in the tent (33.11). He saw God!! (34.6-8) He felt God's wrath and judgment (Num. 20.12).

In addition, Moses accepted wise counsel (18.24). He had a full sense of dependence upon God (33.15). He slaughtered the ram for the sacrifice (Lev. 8.19). He passed on the radical holiness code for priests to approach the Lord (Lev. 10.3-7). He heard the death penalty pronounced for wrongful approach to God (Lev. 16.2)

**De 8:2** Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to **humble** you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. **3** He **humbled** you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

When we need God for daily needs, even desperately need Him, our prideful self-sufficiency seems to break and we are humbled. Again, God was willing, even to the point of causation, for His people to hunger in order to be humbled. Humility must be far more important than I thought.

**De 8:16** He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you.

*It seems that not only does God humble us by our need, but also by His provision. I wonder how many times I have become proud of the very thing that was intended to humble me? How often have I taken credit for the kindness of God?*

**1Sa 2:7** The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts.

*humility and poverty go hand in hand - poverty comes from the Lord as a means of humbling us. Need of any kind seems to do this. This should affect how I view needs that I have. They are the kindness of God to me, chasing out my damnable pride.*

**2Sa 22:28** You save the humble, but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them low.

*Oh, what an amazing promise! God watches over the humble to bless and to protect. And oh what a great threat, to fail to be humble is to be brought low by God. He will bring us down, one day. Humility will happen. How wise to welcome it now!*

**1Ki 11:39** I will humble David's descendants because of this, but not for ever."

*This sounds almost as though humility is a kind of judgment. It seems like it reflects God's needed intervention to bring his people low. To be humbled is to suffer. Once they are sufficiently humbled, there will be no more need for this humbling action against them.*

**1Ki 21:29** "Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son."

*Ahab was amongst the most evil of Israel's kings (cf. v. 25 - "there was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife."), yet when he humbled himself (v. 27 - "When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and went around meekly."), God was merciful to him. Oh how gracious is God, to spare a man like Ahab and a man like me! Oh how essential is this meekness, this humility before an Almighty Judge! It saves our lives and spares us horrendous judgment!*

*- see this link for a summary of Ahab's life*

*<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Ahab.html>*

*- see also my journal entry on Ahab*

**2Ki 22:19** Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people, that they would become accursed and laid waste, and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the LORD.

*King Josiah's humility brought God's mercy upon him in the midst of judgment upon God's people. His humility was in response to his awareness of the sins of the people in ignorant disregard for the Word. Upon recovering and hearing the Word read, he humbled himself as evidenced by tearing his robes and weeping. These were evidences similar to those of Ahab, yet Josiah was his polar opposite as a good king. Humility is needed by both evil and good kings and it finds expression in outward acts like torn garments, weeping, sackcloth, and fasting.*

*Josiah's humility comes about because of an awareness of sin and a fear of the Lord's anger in judgment upon the people.*

*My response to my sin should be so severe and immediate! Could it not also lead to the severe discipline of the Lord upon me? When did I last weep over my sins or the sins of my people?*

**2Ch 7:14** if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

*Humility is an essential element of acceptable repentance before God. It is the recurring theme in accounts of God's giving grace to sinners. Did they humble themselves? This seems to be the place where God loves to pour out His grace on humble sinners. Humility here manifests itself in prayer, seeking God, and turning from wickedness. Prayer and seeking God and turning from wickedness. For me to humble myself means to embrace these 3. I must pray more about what I do. To do tasks without prayer, as has been said, "...is a boast against God."*

**2Ch 12:6** The leaders of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, "The LORD is just." <sup>7</sup> When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, this word of the LORD came to Shemaiah: "Since they have humbled themselves, I will not destroy them but will soon give them deliverance. My wrath will not be poured out on Jerusalem through Shishak.

# Humility Summary

## Humility defined and displayed

- Confession of sin marks the humble (Lev. 26.40-42)
- Fasting and petitioning God expresses humility (Ezra 8.21; Ps. 35.13)
- Trusting in the Name of the LORD marks the humble (Zep. 3.11)
- Patience and loving forbearance are humility's companions (Eph. 4.2)
- Submission is the way humility is revealed in young men (1 Pet. 5.5)

## Exemplary Humility

- Moses (Num. 12.3) was the most humble man on earth – he was marked by suffering personally and amongst the people he led. He saw God. He was dependent upon God and others. These things seemed to fuel his humility.
- Ahab (1 Kings 21.29) was renowned for his wickedness, yet when he humbled himself, God showed him mercy. How God esteems humility! How gracious and merciful God is! Ahab would not stay in this humble state (as evidenced by his rejection of Elijah as a prophet of the LORD in 1 Kings 22). Knowing this full well, God honored his evident humility and showed him mercy. Ahab's humility was triggered by the threat of God's judgment. Once again, it is (imminent) suffering that brings about humility. Ahab is a stunning portrait of how much God values humility. If humility can bring Ahab to a place of receiving God's mercy, how eager should we all be to humble ourselves and find mercy instead of judgment.
- Josiah, the good king, (2 Kings 22, 23) was the polar opposite of Ahab, a king of extraordinary goodness and obedience. Yet he, too, humbled himself before the LORD with many of the same signs as Ahab – weeping and rending of garments. And it was because of this humility that he was heard by God and his prayers granted. His immediate response to an awareness of his sins and the sins of his people was to humble himself. In this God delighted.
- the leaders of Israel (2 Chron. 12.6). They had abandoned the law of the LORD and came under severe judgment as a result (overrun by the Egyptians). The LORD pronounced them abandoned and they acknowledged it with these words, "the LORD is just." Their humility was expressed in acknowledging their sin and submitting to the LORD's justice. In response, God showed them mercy and withheld his wrath, though he did discipline them.
- the men of Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun (2 Chron. 30.11). Their humility led them to embrace King Hezekiah's call to repent and return to the LORD. In a vivid contrast, the pride of many led them to scorn the invitation and mock the messengers.
- Manasseh, much like Ahab, was amongst the most wicked of kings. His legacy was one of blatant evil, even murderous idolatry (2 Chron. 33.6). And so, in an inexplicable kindness, God brought the greatest of sufferings upon him and he repented (33.12), humbling himself greatly. His humility manifested itself in prayer and led to his restoration and transformation of both him and the nation.
- Josiah (2 Chron. 34.27), though only 26 years old, Josiah already had a history of purging idols from the land. At the discovery of the scroll containing the law of the Lord, he humbled himself and tore his robes and wept before the Lord. He models a tender, repentant heart before the Word as he leads the people in restoring obedience to the Word of God.
- Nebuchadnezzar – (Dan. 4.37) deeply and involuntarily humbled by a kind of insanity, he now becomes a worshiper of God.
- Daniel – (Dan. 10.12) Daniel's great humility before God was evidenced by prayer, fasting and more outward symbols. His evident humility led to his prayers being eagerly and quickly heard and granted by God.
- Jesus – Matt. 11.29 contains his own self-declaration of meekness. Phil. 2 paints his whole life as one of humility, supremely evidenced in his love poured out on the cross.
- Paul – Acts 20.19 – Paul describes his service as being marked by great humility and suffering (tears). Again there is a connection between humility and suffering.

## Negative Examples

- Zedekiah (2 Chron. 36.12) who did evil and would not humble himself before the LORD.
- Jer. 44.10 - a tragic example of pride that leads to stubborn, unrepentant idolatry no matter what the cost
- Belshazzar – (Dan. 5.22) – he failed to humble himself and honor God and his reign and life came to an end in judgment.
- false humility – (Col. 2.18, 23) – there is a humility rooted in self abasement and self inflicted afflictions. This humility has no power against sexual indulgence. By implication, true humility does have such a power. Is. 58.3 also cites an unacceptable humility that fails to respect and care for others, though it bears the outward markings of true humility.

### The Fuel for Humility

- God uses suffering and oppression to humble the proud (Lev. 26.40-42; Ps. 44.9; 107.39). The Hebrew term for humble is often rendered afflicted (wne anav). In Deut. 8 God's use of great and prolonged suffering to produce humility is documented in their 40 years in the desert. Poverty is a comparable tool (1 Sam. 2.7). Financial need is a tool God uses to humble us and to slay our pride, provided we seek Him.
- In Deut. 8.3, 16 God is using not only suffering and deprivation as a tool to humble us, but also his gracious and mighty provision. The miraculous provision of manna was intended to humble them as well as was their need of it.
- an awareness of the consequences of pride, of a lack of humility, is presented as a major incentive to humble ourselves (2 Sam. 2.28). God watches over the proud to bring them low. He opposes them (1 Pet. 5.5). It is a crazy thing to choose to oppose God.
- Humility is a regular companion of the fear of the LORD (Prov. 15.33; 22.4). To see God rightly and hold Him in awe would surely humble us.
- Fasting is another regular companion, both evidencing and reinforcing humility in our lives (Is. 58-3-5)
- There is a kind of involuntary humility that the proud will face. It may not refer to heart as much as to place and position (Is. 2. 11, 12; 13.11). It is a kind of humbling to be avoided at all costs. It comes at the day of God's judgment. You can humble yourself (in response to what God is doing) or you can be humbled at that day. You definitely don't want to choose the latter. Nebuchadnezzar would surely testify to this! (Dan. 4.37)
- Humility can be chosen (Matt. 23.12). It must be pursued (Zeph. 2.3). We can humble ourselves (Prov. 6.3).
- references to "the humble" are often referring to humility of place as well as heart (cf. Lk. 1.52). Poverty and humble station seem conducive, but not automatic or necessary to humility of heart.
- Reflecting on the loving choice of God of the likes of me fuels humility (Col. 3.12)
- wisdom fuels humility (James 3.13)

### The Fruit of Humility

- Humility is the trigger that releases the favor of God upon a life. He saves the humble (2 Sam. 2. 28; Ps. 18.27), he gives grace to them (1 Pet. 5.5; Prov. 3.34; James 4.6). Humility fuels prayer and seeking God and makes the way for God to forgive and heal (2 Chron. 7.14). God guides the humble in His ways and teaches them what is right (Ps. 25.9). God sustains the humble (Ps. 147.6) and delights in them (Ps. 149.4). Humility yields wisdom (Prov. 11.2), honor (Prov. 15.33), wealth and life (Prov. 22.4). He esteems/hears the humble (Is. 66.2). It protects us from God's anger (Zeph. 2.3). It is the mark of the greatest in the kingdom (Matt. 18.4). If we humble ourselves, God will exalt us in turn (Matt. 23.12). Humility is a prerequisite to justification (Lk. 18.14). It restrains sexual indulgence (Col. 2.23). The humble will be exalted by God (James 4.10). It results in humble deeds that are the fruit of a good life (James 3.13). Humility enables us to respond to evil with blessing (1 Pet. 3.8). By their parents' humility children are blessed with the provision of God through their parent's intercession.

### The Expectation of Humility

None are exempt from humility. (Phil. 2.10) It is expected of the greatest of kings (Ex. 10.3) and it is the descriptor of the righteous poor (James 1.9). True humility is to be shown towards all men, no exceptions (Tit. 3.2).

The following are commands to humble ourselves:

Eph. 4.2 – be completely humble

Phil. 2.3 – allows for no exceptions to humble deference to others

1 Pet. 3.8 – fuelling the ability not to repay evil for evil

1 Pct. 5.5 – uniquely required of young men, but of all before the Lord as well.

### **On a lack of Humility**

- if we do not humble ourselves, God will humble us (Matt. 23.12). Self humility is a kind of blessing. To be humbled by God is a kind of judgment/discipline (1 Kings 11.39)

### **Personal Insights:**

- Concerning poverty, deprivation and suffering, generally – how do I view my lack? Can I see God's goodness in it
- turning my repeatedly wayward heart back towards Him – training it to trust and hope in Him above all things?
- Humility is the right response to hardship of all shapes. This is portrayed in Rom. 9.20-23 and in Job 1.21;
- I need to revisit fasting as an expression of humility before God (Ps. 35.13)
- I have been thinking about my need to be more "self-forgetful", especially in my preaching. It needs to not matter if I do well in the eyes of men or even my own eyes, but did I please the LORD? Was the Word faithfully proclaimed? Often, I fear that my discouragement in preaching or other matters is all about me. Once again, I have managed to become the most important person in my eyes.
- This would also be the case with my children, especially when they are contrary and in need of correction – perhaps even more when they disrespect or anger me somehow.
- upon my return from sabbatical I will be in a position of supporting Jeff's leadership in a number of new areas. I need to have learned humility so that I can do that eagerly.
- continuing my practice of daily confession is a good, humbling thing for me. I need to watch that this does continue.
- listening well, attentively and with a whole focus, means considering others more important than me. I need to grow in truly listening well.

### **Meditation Verses:**

Num. 12.3; Deut. 8.16; 1 Kings 21.29; 2 Chron. 7.14; Ps. 25.9; Prov. 3.34; 11.2; 18.12; Is. 2.11, 12; 66.2; Dan. 4.37; 10.12; Zeph. 2.3; 3.12; Matt. 11.29, 30; 18.4; Eph. 4.1,2; Phi. 2; Col. 3.12; James 3.13; 1 Pet. 3.8; 5.5, 6;

### **Specific Applications:**

- I must resist the temptation to judge others, especially other Christian leaders who do things differently or believe differently on lesser matters. They matter more.