

Humility: Positively the Greatest Virtue EVER
Leader: Ev Worthington
Fall Quarter: October through January

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests but to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:3-5)

God has done so much in my life, saving, redeeming the mistakes and sins I commit, empowering, and sanctifying me. But I so often fail to do my part to return a small fraction of the blessing by living a life worthy of my calling. What do I contribute to my ultimate satisfaction? Compared to what God has done and will do, very little. We have a part. But it is modest.

Besides that, what we do accomplish is utterly dependent on others. We are indebted to our parents and their parents, and back on into history, for our genetic make-up. We are indebted to our parents and other early caretakers for helping us live through childhood. We are indebted to parents, siblings, friends, and older children, not to mention mentors and teachers, to teach us and help us develop skills. We are indebted to our past experiences—in school, church, community, and family—for helping shape the character we have. If we understand how much we owe others, it is difficult to think of ourselves like Frank Sinatra sang: “I did it my way.”

In short, we are wise to develop a sense of humility before God and humility in our interaction with others. If we do, the Proverbs say, “... but with humility comes wisdom” (Prov 11:2) and “humility comes before honor” (Prov 15:33; 18:12). But, of course, being humble isn’t completely up to us. Would we expect anything else of humility. The Scripture says, “You save the humble” (Ps 18:27), “He guides the humble in what is right” (Ps 25:9), “He crowns the humble with salvation” (Ps 140:4), and “He gives grace to the humble” (Prov 3:34; Jas 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). Is it any wonder that Augustine concluded, “Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues hence, in the soul in which this virtue does not exist there cannot be any other virtue except in mere appearance.”

I want to be a more humble, to develop this important cardinal virtue. But I fail too often. But, if you, like me, really want to be more humble, then Scripture, the Christian community (including Christian community worldwide, city-wide, family-wide, and Christ Presbyterian-wide), and psychology can play a part in helping us. And God’s Holy Spirit can lead, guide, and empower us. If we know about what resources each can provide, and if we discern the Holy Spirit’s leading in employing those resources, God’s work of shaping and forming us into Christ-like humble people can be much easier.

In this 13-week adult Sunday School course, we look at what humility is and especially about how to become more humble. Here are some of the things I’d like for us to address. But I’d like to get people’s input on other topics you’d like to cover as well (and also which of these topics you don’t think are worthwhile). Together we can shape a course that we can each learn from and want to attend on Sunday mornings from 9:30 to 10:30 in the Manse.

Goals for the Course

- To understand what humility is—from Scripture, science, and general culture.
- With God’s help, to become more humble people.
- To live out, practically, in the hard parts and easy parts of our lives, humility moment by moment.

Potential Topics

- Is our developing humility all up to God? Or do we have a part to play? And if we have a part (which I clearly think we do), then what are our parts?
- Can we learn from psychology? Or is it just worldly knowledge? How do guidance and knowledge from Scripture, Christian community, non-Christian people, society, and academic disciplines like psychology fit together? Or do they?
- What is humility? What isn’t it?
- Is Christian humility different from what the world thinks of as humility? If so, then how?
- What do psychology, Scripture, and Christian community tell us about humility—not just in an academic sense, but what do they tell (practically) that helps us be more humble?
- Can we train our children to be more humble? At what age? How can we match our teaching to their different ages and stages of development?
- Does humility have physical, psychological, relational, and spiritual benefits? What might they be?
- How can we disagree with someone and maintain our humility? Many if not most virtues show up only when we are tested (for example, we don’t know whether we will be courageous until we face a test that

requires courage). In what kind of situations can we expect to have our humility tested? When those situations happen, how can we face life's tests of our humility and remain humble?

How the Course Would Be Conducted

Ev will prepare something each Sunday to stimulate discussion and application. The first part of the class would involve a mini-presentation/lecture. Then we would interact around the material.

Best Guess (for Now) at a Weekly Schedule

Here is my tentative weekly plan. This can (and having done three previous courses since 2014, I would say positively WILL) shift depending on the desires of the class and what we cover each week.

Date	Topic
October 25	Defining humility and themes of the course
November 1	(Ev in Taiwan; someone else teaches) What Scripture teaches about humility: Ev will provide (Oct 11) all the verses on humility and humble; you'll have a task—discern ten lessons we can draw from those verses about humility
November 8	Review the lessons; then What saints teach about humility: Being More Humble—Practical lessons that the Christian saints teach about being more humble
November 15	What science teaches about humility (Part 1)
November 22	What science teaches about humility (Part 2)
November 29	What society teaches about humility: Heroes of humility—Practical lessons that we learn about being more humble by studying fictional accounts of humble people (i.e., movies, plays, books)
December 6	What society teaches about humility: Heroes of humility—Practical lessons that we learn about being more humble by studying real heroes of humility
December 13	Summarizing the lessons: What Scripture, saints, science, and society teach about humility—We pause to consolidate our understanding before launching into trying consciously to change and be more humble
December 20	Paths to (Im)PROVE your humility—a set of practical exercises that has shown lasting changes in humility in seven hours of concentrated effort (and as a side benefit become more forgiving, patient, self-controlled and less negative in mood)
December 27	More (Im)PROVEment
January 3	More (Im)PROVEment
January 10	(Ev in Ghana) How'd you do at trying to be more humble? Discussion of change attempts
January 17	Drawing together what we have learned, revised themes of the course, and take away points

I have purposefully built in three weeks of practical exercises (and one to process your attempts to apply the exercises) because I know that we tend to go slower than the syllabus plan.