

APPS SERIES BY DAVID H. MCKINLEY

HUMBLE PIE

How would you define the word, *humility*? It is not an easy word to define, but *humility* is one of the key virtues and life values found in the book of Proverbs.

So how do we utilize this important “App”?

Let’s look at some key components.

>>Humility is the Opposite of Pride

Pride is a frequent predictor of failure and shame.

“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud” (Proverbs 16:18-19 ESV).

“When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom” (Proverbs 11:2 ESV).

“One’s pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor” (Proverbs 29:23 ESV).

You can’t read through Proverbs and avoid the “thorn” of pride. It is one of the most afflicting of all human diseases.

The Bible addresses the matter of human pride on many levels. “...Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble’” (1 Peter 5:5b ESV).

“The atmosphere we breathe is hostile to humility... Humility is not a popular human trait in the modern world. It is not touted in the talk shows or celebrated in valedictory speeches or commended in diversity seminars or listed with corporate core values. And if you go to the massive self-help section of your sprawling mall bookstore, you won’t find many titles celebrating humility.

“The basic reason for this is not hard to find: Humility can only survive in the presence of God. When God goes, humility goes. In fact, you might say that humility follows God like a shadow. We can expect to find humility applauded in our society about as often as we find God applauded.” —John Piper, *Battling Unbelief*.

The prophet, Jeremiah, identified the basis for boasting: “Thus says the LORD: ‘Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches...’” (Jeremiah 9:23 ESV).

What are common sources of pride? What are the big tripping points that lead many to an agnostic practice or atheistic approach to life? Knowledge.

Strength. Riches. These take us from God in the spirit of **autonomy**.

Our confidence is not found in who we are or what we have, but who God is and the knowledge of God.

“... but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:24 ESV).

Then there is **attention**. This is a little more subtle, but many need to have the acknowledgement, awareness and applause of others.

“The pleasure of pride is like the pleasure of scratching. If there is an itch, one does want to scratch... as long as we have the itch of self regard, we will want the pleasure of self approval.” —C.S. Lewis

In other words, the *itch* of self regard craves the *scratch* of self approval. Do you look to others to provide relief for you?

If some people do not get the approval they think they deserve, they will boast about their accomplishments to let others know of their success. Do you proclaim your worth through your achievements?

There is also the use of pity. It is a more subtle way of getting the attention of others. Pity says, “I have been overlooked and mistreated. I deserve recognition and affirmation because I have given and sacrificed much.”

“The desire of self pity is not for others to see us as helpless, but as heroes.” —John Piper

There is a difference between *unworthy* and *unrecognized worth*. There are some who also crave pity in ministry, but in the end, it is all the same game played out in the arena of pride.

Now let’s look at the **application**.

>>Humility Shapes an Outlook on Life

How does humility change the way you live and view life? Here are some “Action Items” in order to live a humble life.

Gratitude, Not Greed. When you are truly humble, you are overwhelmed with gratitude. Instead of having a “what I don’t have” outlook, you are overwhelmed with what you have received from God



Humble Pie
Proverbs 16:18-19

Humble Pie

Apps Series, Part Ten

David H. McKinley, Pastor
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Scripture: Proverbs 16:18-19



With the humble is wisdom
(Proverbs 11:2b ESV).



Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.



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HUMBLE PIE >>> CONTINUED

through grace. Greed says, “Life is not fair if others have something and I don’t.” Gratitude says, “God has been good to me.”

Involvement, Not Isolation. Pride creates an attitude of *exclusivity* instead of *community*. Pride prevents you from experiencing the love of God and sharing His love with others.

Simplicity, Not Excess. It is so easy to let excess drive your existence, especially in the world in which we live. When you embrace humility, you choose to live on less so that your life may be more than what you possess.

In the book, *Celebrate Discipline*, Richard Foster writes about this idea of *excess*:

- >Buy things that are useful, not for status.
- >Enjoy things without owning them.
- >Look for pockets of clutter and attack!
- >Give things away!
- >Refuse “buy now, pay later” schemes.
- >Deepen your appreciation for creation.
- >“Kingdom First!”

Honesty, Not Hypocrisy. When you are humble, you are willing to own up to your short comings and failures. You take responsibility for your mistakes and misjudgments. Pride is always afraid of being exposed, so when it makes a mistake it digs in and entrenches in resolve to defend its stand.

Serving, Not Demanding. When you are humble, you enjoy serving because it is a pleasure to be of service to others. Jesus is the ultimate example of humble service. “... even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28 ESV).

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:5-8 ESV).

>>>Humility is an Opportunity for Grace

You may resist humility, but God embraces it.

“But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, ‘God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble’” (James 4:6 ESV).

Humility is a quality that brings God’s grace near to your life. God restores and repairs the humble!

“I must realize that God’s ways are not my ways, and that is especially true in dealing with ruined things. My first inclination, when confronted with ruin, is to say, ‘It’s finished, it’s done, that’s all there is to it.’ But God never gives up on a ruin; in fact, He begins with ruins and works on them until He transforms them into things of beauty, ‘beauty for ashes’ (Isaiah 61:3, KJV). Ruined things are my defeat, but to God they are opportunity.

“When the earth was ‘without form, and void’ (Genesis 1:2, KJV), God sent His Spirit and His light to bring order out of chaos and beauty out of blackness. What He did physically for the original earth He does spiritually for people. It is a truth—there are no ruined people in God’s category, only opportunities for God to display His creative power. There are no hopeless aspects of my personality, only aspects that are waiting to be touched by the power-driven fingers of God.” —W. Glyn Evans, *Daily With the King*

As you read this, you may be thinking, “This pastor has a real grasp on this subject. He has overcome the issue of pride.” Let me assure you, pride is often a tripping point for me. I agree with J.M. Barrie who said, “Life is a long lesson in humility.”

When I was in graduate school, I had paper route. It was an easy way to earn extra money with little impact to my daytime class schedule. In *The Search for Satisfaction*, I included the following story about an issue with pride under the chapter titled, “Pride and Precipice.”

“One morning while I was waiting for the delivery truck to make a ‘drop’ with my papers, I noticed the headlights of a familiar car heading my way. I looked up to see my dad’s face behind the steering wheel. My first thought was that something was wrong, but he quickly assured me he had come to lend me a hand. He told me I might need a backup on occasion. If he learned the route, he could help me whenever needed.

“My dad was an insurance agent. He had a full-time job and a busy schedule. I quickly (and sharply) reminded him that I was grown, married, and capable of doing it by myself. But my protest did not deter him.

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HUMBLE PIE >>> CONTINUED

"Morning after morning, I remember seeing those headlights appear in that dark, cold parking lot during those years. Each time, I remember feeling my pride trapped in the headlights of his love and care. The only thing (apart from lack of sleep) that added to the stress of those days was my own attitude of aggravation fueled by my pride in the face of my father's love.

"I can still hear him say, 'I enjoy this. It makes my day go better.' I'd think, *Yeah, right! Sleep deprivation is anything but the way to add value to your day.* But my dad determined to help me, despite the wounds his efforts brought to my own pride.

"Today, I wouldn't trade anything for a father who was willing to wound my pride to show his love.

Today, I can think of only two words that I failed to repeat with frequency in those days: 'Thanks, Dad!'"

The cross is the shadow of God's love cast across your heart, life, dreams and plans.

"Fear not, for you will not be put to shame; and do not feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced; but you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more" (Isaiah 54:4 NASB).

Credit must be given and noted in the following way when excerpts are printed or used: David H. McKinley, Pastor; Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA.

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