

CSI Joshua

Humility

Joshua 8:30-35

August 15, 2010

Today is week six of our character study series from the book of Joshua. Today we hit a topic that is difficult for many of us because it can be so hard to get a true handle on this character trait, as you'll see. Humility is so subjective and one person's definition of humility can be completely different from another person's. A person who is just trying to do a good job can appear to be without humility. A positive thinker can be seen as prideful.

We live in a world where people struggle with humility right in front of all of us. Reality tv is a "out in front" junkie's paradise and the camera tends to focus on those who are less humble and instead on those who are more arrogant and cocky. We've watched the fall of leaders and celebrities who allowed fame or success to cloud their judgment. Take Whitney Houston, Lindsay Lohan, Mel Gibson, and Ted Haggard, etc. It gets down right ugly when someone we thought had their act together takes a fall because they depend on their own abilities. And we see it all the time right on our t.v. screens.

We're going to take a biblical look at humility today and how Joshua revealed his humility before all of the Hebrew people over 3000 years ago and how his example can be a model for us. What we know is that humility is incredibly important and I think I can say this about you, that for most of us we struggle with humility. Okay, maybe not so much with having humility but, how it works and at what levels to apply it from one circumstance to another.

Joshua was no different than us. He lived in a day when kings and princes and leaders were anything but humble. They built large palaces for themselves, married who ever they wanted, wore opulent jewelry, flaunted their wealth with large parties and extravagant living. Their lack of humility is rivaled today by rock stars and heiresses who take their fame and success and flaunt it in front of all of us. The Pharaohs of Joshua's day had large, ornate palaces constructed by slaves and tombs built for themselves when they died.

Joshua had to be tempted as a leader to do exactly the same kinds of things he saw in the leaders of the other nations around him when they became famous or successful. I'm going to ask you to turn with me to Joshua 8:30-35 but, before we do that it's important to see what led us to this point and why Joshua's humility is so significant. For the last several chapters we've been looking at the journey of millions of people who have been successful at everything they have attempted to do. And not only successful but, fruitful and powerful...so much so that it's really miraculous. No body

sees this kind of success in this kind of pattern...not even successful sports teams see this sort of run...this is the equivalent of watching a team of no bodies join forces and winning the Super Bowl, the Masters, the NBA finals, the World Series, the Tour de France, the World Cup and the Stanley Cup (all in one year). Everything they touched turned to Gold. And what is interesting about this is that Joshua could have stood up in front of everyone and said something like "aren't I great? What a great leader I am." Instead, look at what Joshua does...

[Read Joshua 8:30-35]

³⁰ Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, ³¹ as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the Israelites. He built it according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses—an altar of uncut stones, on which no iron tool had been used. On it they offered to the LORD burnt offerings and sacrificed fellowship offerings. ³² There, in the presence of the Israelites, Joshua copied on stones the law of Moses, which he had written. ³³ All the Israelites, with their elders, officials and judges, were standing on both sides of the ark of the covenant of the LORD, facing the Levitical priests who carried it. Both the foreigners living among them and the native-born were there. Half of the people stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had formerly commanded when he gave instructions to bless the people of Israel. ³⁴ Afterward, Joshua read all the words of the law—the blessings and the curses—just as it is written in the Book of the Law. ³⁵ There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the foreigners who lived among them.

It would be easy to think more of ourselves than we should if we were pushed into the position Joshua found himself in. Joshua was told by God that he would be exulted as king. He has seen one success after another. Jericho had fallen, The king of Ai was defeated and everyone in the promised land was learning about the victories and successes of the Israelites...and they were in fear. As a leader Joshua could have be prideful, arrogant, and boastful. He could have thrown a ticker tape parade, rode on the back of a really nice car with a beautiful woman by his side while he was showered with confetti. But, Joshua decided to turn the honor around on God and exult God by lifting the Words of God before all the people as the source of their victory.

What would you have done? If you were in Joshua's position what would you have done? It would be hard to say no to all of the applause and attention. Is there some place in your life right now that this issue of humility is raising it's head? Where do you need to humble yourself and give God the glory for the successes in your life? Now I;m not talking about deflecting. For many of us...we don't want a whole lot of attention. We like to do things quietly, with little recognition and we deflect attention. It's nice once in a while to be appreciated. But, how do we stay humble. A lot of people go too

far and down grade their efforts or even belittle their work in an effort to deflect the attention. But listen...

Humility is not self-degrading

Too many people think that putting themselves down or lessening what they accomplished is what humility is all about. Not wanting the recognition because you believe that it is putting yourself on a pedestal is not a healthy form of humility. Putting yourself down and/or making light of an effort is not humility. We know lots of people who have a false humility. We also know people who do great things but, due to shyness or a reserved personality refuse to receive any recognition. Humility is the unique ability to be free from pride and arrogance; the skill of having a modest estimate of one's own worth...it is not worthlessness. We are all valuable in God's eyes. True humility invites us to appreciate the fact that all virtue and ability is not ours but, given to us by God to be used by God for God's glory.

That means we shouldn't hold back from doing what we're here on earth to accomplish out of fear that we'll somehow step into the lime light. Too many people hold back from doing something important in an effort to be humble. We know people who say "Oh, I can't do that," or "I could never do what they're doing" as they point to someone else, when we know all the time that they are able and capable. On the other hand...we hear those "behind the back" criticisms of those who are out front and pushing for something they strongly believe in. Humility is finding the balance between doing and being who God made you to be but, not boasting about it. That means you do what you're here on earth to accomplish. It doesn't mean you hold back.

Humility is not about being weak or lacking ambition

A whole other group of people live out humility in some kind of self imposed whimpiness. They think that to assert their thoughts or their faith or biblical standards on others is not being humble. The background of many of our ancestors here in Pennsylvania was one of withdrawal due to a definition of humility that is not consistent with how Jesus lived. The Quakers, the Brethren, the Amish, the Mennonites are incredibly accomplished but, will hold back for fear of stepping into a spot light. That's not why God gives us gifts and talents...so we can hide them under a basket.

But, that balance also means that we don't put ourselves out so far that we end up in trouble. Humility or humbleness is a quality of being courteously respectful of others. It is the opposite of aggressiveness, arrogance, boastfulness, and vanity. Rather than, "Me first," humility allows us to say, "No, you first, my friend." Humility is the quality that lets us go more than halfway to meet the needs and demands of others. It is the opposite of pride and humility leaves no room for self aggrandizement. We all know people who could use a good dose of humility from time to time, right.

Now, there are plenty of times when we need to have the reins pulled on our tongues, our motives, our ambitions and maybe more. A healthy level of humility keeps us from stepping in where angels fear to tread. **Humility protects us from disaster** We're all too familiar with the scenario where someone shoots off their mouths, bragging about all they're able to do and when the crowd calls them to perform they fall short. A dose of humility goes a long way toward keeping us from getting in over our heads. "***The graveyards are full of indispensable men***" **Charles De Gaulle**. I can't help but think of a guy like Gen. George Armstrong Custer. A man who boasted about his abilities and it cost him his life and the lives of his men.

Joshua could have boasted about all of the great things he had done and it could have easily led him to boast about all the things he would do in the future. Instead...Joshua makes a decision for humility by redirecting all of the success that he has experienced as a leader. That's what humility does...it helps others see that there so much more going on than what meets the eye. Great team players always tell people that the win was not due to a singular effort but, due to a great team of people who all worked together to make the win happen. In Philippians 2:3 we're reminded that we are to: ***Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.*** That's exactly what Joshua does. He points the success of the nation of Israel back to God, where it belongs.

Humility always points the honor toward God and away from self

A great way to live a life of humility that is proper and balanced is to give the credit to God who made the success, the effort, the blessings, the opportunity possible. The first urge might be to take the credit for something you've done. There is this good feeling when we get recognized for doing something. It feels good. It's right to say thank you to those who see those good things happening in your life. The struggle is taking that recognition to a place of pride. I think we all find ourselves in a place where we're tempted to boast a bit. It's good to remember God's warning to us from **Luke 14:11 *Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.***

So, when you're recognized for something say thank you and strive to redirect the recognition back to God in some way. That's what a balanced life of humility does, it:

Humility is always about giving what you've been given back to God

Our worship, our obedience, our service is a humble act of giving back to God what He's given to us. Only the prideful person says I owe no one anything, especially God.

Joshua could have said "look at me, what a great leader I am." Instead, he called all the people together and directed them toward God. Look at Joshua 8:34-35 ³⁴
Afterward, Joshua read all the words of the law—the blessings and the

curses—just as it is written in the Book of the Law. ³⁵ There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the foreigners who lived among them.

So, how will you live out a life of humility in your everyday life?

How will you redirect everything back to God like Joshua did?