



## BOOK REVIEW

### *Humilitas: A Lost Key to Life, Love, and Leadership*

John Dickson

In his book, *Humilitas, A Lost Key to Life, Love, and Leadership*, John Dickson presents an explanation of what is humility, how it came to be important in this culture, and how it impacts daily living. He points out that **humility** is a key element in leadership, which is marked by a steely determination in one's professional will and an attitude of humility in all areas of living. Finally, he concludes by offering suggestions regarding how one might develop humility in one's own life.

Dickson defines humility as the power to redirect one's power from a position of elevation in society to serve others who are in a lower position. Thus, it is possible to be humble, iron-willed, and successful. Three ancient languages present this concept: Hebrew (*anawa*), Greek (*tapeinos*), and Latin (*humilitas*). All three have the perspective that one chooses to forgo one's status and use one's influence and resources for the good of the community. Therefore, there are three fundamental components in humility: one has dignity, one is willing to act, and it is social.

Leadership employs four tools: ability, authority, persuasion, and character. These are rooted in humility and relationship. Without each, the leader will fail to impact the community in positive ways. At the same time, humility is rooted in understanding that one has both strengths and limitations. Therefore, humility involves both a sense of inherent dignity and a sense of finitude. This is manifested in both a vertical relationship with God and horizontal relationships with others. The ancient Greeks described this virtue as *aretē*, which means *attractive and worthy of praise*. This is why we are attracted to those leaders who are humble. Such individuals are more likely to transform those around them.

Jesus Christ transformed society when He voluntarily went to the Cross. Prior to that time, honor-shame communities were fundamental to society. Here, life centered on receiving honor and avoiding shame. So, humility would not be viewed as a virtue. When Jesus died on the Cross, society underwent a transformation since He chose to lower Himself for others, both of which would not be acceptable in an honor-shame community. Paul writes in Philippians 2:3-8 that one should *live in humility, choosing to think of others as better than themselves*. This principle became central to the lives of people in the culture.

Dickson points out that G K Chesterton reminded us that human pride hinders excellence. Instead, we ought to be humble so that we might learn more and impact others. In fact, it is the virtue of humility that leads to new knowledge and abilities, allowing learning and growth. This opens the possibility of influencing others as well. This is more than merely having a good reputation; it is rooted in true character. This leads to a powerful influence on others, even inspiring them to grow to new heights. To do this, one must treat others with respect and friendship, even if we disagree with them deeply.

Dickson offers six suggestions to becoming more humble. (1) *We are shaped by what we love.* (2) *Reflect on the lives of the humble.* (3) *Conduct thought experiments to enhance humility.* (4) *Act humbly.* (5) *Invite criticism.* (6) *Forget about being humble.* To grow in humility, one must first recognize that *I am not humble, but on a journey toward humility.*

This book provides a context to humility so one may understand its purpose and its value. Applying the insights will be invaluable if one desires to become a more humble person.