



## The Virtues and Character Development Project

*The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.*

I Thessalonians 5:24

### Humility – Humble – Pre-Activity Curriculum

**Note** – before reading the content in this module, it is important that Step 1 has been completed (reading *Overview – a background perspective for parents to get started*). This provides the context on which each virtue module is based. As pointed out in that document, the instructions are written to parents, but they apply to any leader who is working with youth (ages 5 to 25). Since the family unit is the foundational one, the focus of the materials lies here.

Imagine you are part of a team that is competing in a competition. At the end, your team wins. However, when the awards are given to everyone, you do not get one. What would you think? How would this make you feel? Suppose all the recognition went to your coach instead of you and your teammates. How would you respond?

It is common for an individual to respond with a sense that this is not right. *The person who is responsible for the outcome should receive the award, the recognition.* One aspect of humility is to learn to give proper credit to those who deserve to receive it. We are comfortable when we are the recipients, but what happens when the credit goes to someone else?

When you deserve recognition, but do not get it, that is like what happens when you take credit for accomplishing something without recognizing that God deserves the glory. God is the one who enabled you to have the ability, strength, energy, and determination to succeed. He is the one who deserves the recognition, praise, honor, and glory. One of the first steps in learning humility is to surrender your rewards to God. This will lead to surrendering control of your life to Him.

Humility is a virtue that is rooted in Christianity, in particular, what Jesus did on the Cross. Prior to Him, many cultures were based on an honor-shame model. Here, everything was done to gain honor and to avoid shame. Therefore, the idea of humbling oneself was not a common way of living. Since Jesus came, this new virtue of humility has become central to the life of any believer. The root meaning of humility in the Bible is *to bow down, to not rise far above the ground*. This requires a deep sense of one's moral littleness. It is having lowliness of mind, i.e., having a humble opinion of one's self. To quote C.S. Lewis, *This is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.*

The Bible reveals God's view toward those who are humble. Here are four examples (two in the Old Testament and two in the New Testament):

- II Chronicles 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 I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

- Psalm 25:9 – *He leads the **humble** in justice, and He teaches the **humble** His way.*
- Philippians 2:3 – *Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with **humility of mind** regard one another as more important than yourselves;*
- Colossians 3:12 – *So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, **humility**, gentleness and patience;*

God desires that His people have His humility, which means they know how to have a right view of themselves. Humility presumes a high position from which one can lower oneself. However, one does not obtain this high position alone. God created each person in His image (the image of God; *Imago Dei*). Psalm 8 reminds us that God made humans as the peak of His creation, just a little lower than God Himself. Furthermore, many others have invested in this person, including family, friends, teachers, pastors, and many, many others. This has enabled the person to be in a high position such that humility ought to be possible. Yet, this person does not feel a need to communicate this high position to others.

As with the other virtues, humility does not exist in a person alone. There is a community in which it develops and in which it is expressed. This expression requires working for the good of the community (the common good). It is important to note that *being humble* is not the same as *being humbled*. When one is *being humble*, it is a voluntary decision to act toward others that is for the benefit of the others. Being lowered by others is *humiliation*, which is destructive to both the one humbling someone and to the one being humbled. Therefore, humbling oneself is a voluntary decision to reach down to those in the community who are in need. It is an action that began as a virtue inside.

One of the key attributes of leadership is serving others. If someone has not learned humility, the ability to influence others is hindered. In fact, excellence requires one to be humble. This enables the person to realize that more must be learned. As a result, others will be able to speak into the life of the humble individual. It might require allowing someone to point out an area where growth is needed. The one who is filled with pride cannot accept this and rejects the opportunity to grow. The one who is humble is able to receive the guidance and become more mature.

We have already discussed the comparison of the *Tree of Vices* with the *Tree of Virtues*. One important element is the place of **pride** in the *Tree of Vices* and **humility** in the *Tree of Virtues*. When one lives out of self, pride appears. On the other hand, when one lives out of Christ (through the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through that person), humility appears. This becomes a tool that can be used in determining what is necessary in the development of character. When working with youth, it is important to remember that this distinction may be a way to help identify when the need to work on being more humble is present. If pride appears, more time on humility is necessary. Remember, this work is being done in response to the transformation that the Holy Spirit desires to complete in the individual.

The list of activities for developing humility include some that are intended to focus on a particular age range. Others could be used with many different ages. As you read through them, select the one(s) that you believe will be appropriate with your family. As stated in the *Overview*, you might need to *adapt* them to your particular setting and time. Since no two people are exactly the same, you might need different ones for each child. Maybe none of these will be what

you need. However, it might trigger some creativity on your part to develop ones that accomplish the goal of establishing life habits that lead to humility, eventually becoming part of the character of the children.

You may notice that some of the activities presented in this module on humility involve thanking others. This reinforces the idea that the virtues are integrated with each other; no virtue exists alone. So, more than one virtue might be learned from a single activity. When the focus behind an activity is on humility, that is the virtue to be formed. However, in the next module (gratitude), the same activity might be used to focus on gratitude, resulting in developing this virtue.

Since you are working on developing habits, repetition will be very important. If possible, repeat the activity at regular intervals, preferably each day. It also is important to do these at the same time each day, and maybe even in the same setting. These factors will enhance the learning that occurs as the brain creates circuits that will be repeated over and over until they become a natural part of life (*second nature*). This means, these practices of being humble are more likely to be occurring without the need for a specific activity as a reminder. This is an example of what occurs in Proverbs 22:6, *Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.*