

WHAT CAN AN ANCIENT VIRTUE TEACH US ABOUT LIFE TODAY?

- ▶ Christ Presbyterian Church: Humility
Deep Dive

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What is humility?



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- Humility is about being the **right size** (not too big and not too small)
- There are two primary parts:
 - **Intrapersonally: Accurate view of yourself**
 - Knowing your strengths and weaknesses
 - Admitting limitations of beliefs
 - **Interpersonally: Thinking about the needs of others**
 - Restraining your ego
 - Respectful interaction with others

What kinds of humility are there?

| Type of Humility | Focus | Experience | Expression |
|-----------------------|--------------------|---|--|
| Relational humility | People | In relationships | Being other oriented and checking one's ego |
| Intellectual humility | Ideas | Around ideas | Being open to new insights and seeking learning |
| Cultural humility | Ways of Life | In cultural interactions | Learning from others and not viewing one's own culture as superior |
| Existential humility | Ultimate Questions | Feeling small relative to nature / the universe / God | Feeling grateful to something larger than oneself |

Why is humility important?

1. It's good for relationships (**social bonds hypothesis**)
 - People want to form new romantic relationships with humble people
 - People forgive humble partners more
 - People are more satisfied with humble partners
 - People are more committed to humble partners

Humility is a signal of how you're likely to be treated in a relationship

Why is humility important?

2. It smooths conflict and power struggles (**social oil hypothesis**)

- People prefer humble leaders
- Humble leaders can be harder driving
- Improves therapy sessions
- Reduces intergroup conflict and aggression

Humility reduces relational “wear-and-tear”

Why is humility important?

3. It makes your life better (**well-being hypothesis**)
 - Greater ability to engage diverse perspectives
 - More openness to evidence and the reality of the world (rather than defensiveness)
 - Willingness to learn
 - Reduces negative effects of stress
 - Better cardiovascular responses to relational conflict

Humility improves mental and physical well-being

What is the key to humility?

- The key to humility is a sense of **psychological security**
- We get defensive when we feel like we're under attack, striving to protect our overinflated egos
- When we chase contingencies of self-worth, we're prone to fragility and defensiveness
- The goal: developing non-contingent self-worth—AKA the view that you are a person of worth and value, *ipso facto*

Do we really need humility today?

- The United States is experiencing a narcissism epidemic
- We're enamored with ourselves and addicted to self-esteem
- It's becoming increasingly difficult to interact with people with whom we disagree (filtered news, blocked friends, tense family meals, stressed holidays)
- We're refusing to see the world as it is, preferring to see it as we want it to be
- **The end result:** We're entrenched in our biased, selfish way of engaging the world, convinced we're not as bad as other people, and we're more lonely, anxious, depressed, and miserable than ever

Humility as a possible solution

- Humility is a possible countercultural solution to this problem
- This stands in direct opposition to strong cultural currents
- How do we cultivate humility?



Cultivating humility

1. Open Your Eyes: Seek Feedback
 - Seek feedback from a **trusted source**
 - Adopt a mindset of growth (not perfection)
 - Be aware of your biases (and work to counteract them)

Cultivating humility

2. Open Your Mind: Reduce Defensiveness

- Realize your belief systems provide your life with meaning (which is why you defend them)
- Regularly affirm other sources of meaning (especially if you know conflict is likely)
- Get comfortable with the idea you're wrong

Cultivating humility

3. Open Your Heart: Build Empathy

- Empathy might be the cornerstone of humility
- Take another person's perspective
- Reflect on your own shortcomings
- Think about the needs of others
- Get a wider view (nature walk, anyone?)

Cultivating humility

4. Practice Makes Potent: The Importance of Self-Regulation
 - Overcoming selfishness is hard and tiring
 - Practice helps develop this “moral muscle”
 - Practice in different settings with different people at different times
 - Make humility a habit

The “dark side” of humility?

- Can someone be too humble?
 - No, that’s something else
- Aren’t humble people be exploited?
 - It’s possible, so choose your relationships wisely
- Don’t nice guys finish last?
 - Research says no
- Has humility been used to oppress people?
 - Historically, this has happened. That’s why humility is for YOU, not other people

Let's discuss



"We'd now like to open the floor to shorter speeches disguised as questions."