

There's No I In Humble

I Peter 5:5-6

Our topic today is about a book I recently heard about *Humility, and How I Attained It* written by an English Philosopher, C Moore Me.

Our passage is in I Peter 5:5-6 where I invite you turn this morning.

Peter just finished addressing the elders of the churches in Asia Minor, the ones responsible for the spiritual well-being of God's flock scattered throughout that region. He provided for them an outline of how they should and shouldn't lead. They were to shepherd willingly and eagerly setting a godly example for believers to follow. What, then, is the response of believers to their spiritual leaders? There is one word that Peter uses to sum it up. It's the word humility.

I believe that humility encapsulates all the other Christian graces that we are to exhibit.
It takes humility to love on another.
It takes humility to forgive one another.
It takes humility to be patient with one another.
It takes humility to be in unity with one another.
It takes humility to be kind to one another.
It takes humility to submit to one another.

As we look at our passage Peter addresses that first. I believe that submission is the action and humility is the attitude.

Let's first discuss a necessary admonition.

I. A NECESSARY ADMONITION – v. 5

In the previous chapters Peter addressed the need for everyone to submit to authority. You may not like those who are in office but the command is to submit to them anyway. Remember that God is the one who put them in that position. We can't say we submit to God if we won't submit to those God put

in office.

There was the command for wives to submit to their husbands even if they were an unbeliever for the purpose of winning them over when they observe their purity and reverence.

Slaves were to submit to their masters, even to those who were harsh. Submissive behavior is commendable before God.

In chapter 5 Peter once again zeroes in on a specific group of believers in the church – young men. He tells them they are to submit to those who are older.

A. Be Submissive To Elders – v. 5a

Verse 5 is all about horizontal relationships, our relationship with others. He begins by speaking to young men, which puzzled me as to why they would be singled out.

Why not young women?

Why not children?

Why not believers in general?

Why just the young men?

Without any rationale given by Peter we are left to speculate. But before we do that, let's understand what Peter means by young men and those older.

When I was in my 30's anyone in their teens was young.

When I was in my 40's anyone in their twenties was young.

Knocking on the door of 60 anyone in their 40's is looking quite young.

Writing to his friend and protégé, Timothy, Paul told him not to let anyone look down on his youthfulness. Timothy was overseer of the churches in Ephesus and Paul was expressing concern that maybe Timothy was having second thoughts about his position because he was relatively young. In Greek culture anyone who was under the age of 40 was still considered a youth. It

is estimated that when Paul wrote this Timothy was in his mid to late 30's. Anyone that was younger than 40 didn't have a lot of time under their belt to establish credibility with others. Respect was given to those older because they felt they deserved it based on gained wisdom through life experiences.

By Greek standards Timothy was still young. To gain their respect Paul exhorted Timothy to be an example or model to the believers in his speech, in his conduct, in his love for others, in his faith, and in his purity. We could sum it up by saying that he should be an example in what he thought about, in what he did, and in what he said.

Keep that in mind then in regard to the age of the group that Peter is addressing. But also understand that this is in reference to age not in reference to their spiritual maturity. He is speaking to young men not young believers.

When we come to those older (NIV) or elder (KJV) you might naturally conclude that if he is referring to young men based on age that the older men spoken of here are older men in the congregations based on age as well, but that's not the case. If Peter meant older men based on age he would have used a different Greek word. In verse 5 he uses the same Greek word used in verse 1 referring to those who had the spiritual oversight of the congregation. These older ones to whom the younger men are to be in submission to are the church leaders who, coincidentally could have been older as well.

So, why does he single out young men? While there is nothing hard and fast to support Peter's singling out this group there is a plausible suggestion among scholars. Keep in mind that they are living in a time of early church persecution. It could be difficult for Christians to get or hold a job, to buy in the market. They were targeted for persecution and execution in many regions of the Roman Empire.

Young men in their youthful zeal can be impetuous and aggressive, and impatient. They can throw caution to the wind and go where angels fear to tread. They may have wanted to take matters into their own hands and seek revenge and retaliate for all the persecution. They may have even been a bit intolerant of their elders who wanted to move more cautiously and with greater precision. Young men want to shoot first and aim second.

It's possible that Peter was encouraging them to reign in their youthful ambition in wanting to mount a counter attack, to vocally if not even violently protest all the persecution.

Peter may have been suggesting that these young men follow the lead of their elders who, in their godly wisdom would understand and employ that old, lifelong principle of discretion being the better part of valor.

Paul advises in I Thessalonians 5:12-13 "Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other."

They were to submit to the elders of the church. It's a word we have considered before, but to refresh our memories it is a military term which means to place under or to rank or line up under. A private couldn't usurp the authority of the captain nor could a captain usurp the position of the general.

In the same way the younger men were to place themselves under the authority of the church elders.

John MacArthur writes: Peter "calls everyone in the church to put aside self-promoting pride and willingly and respectfully place themselves under the leadership of their shepherds."

I want to underscore two important words from his

statement. This submission is done willingly and with respect. In a Biblical context submission implies doing it with the right motive. A person can submit unwillingly and without respect, but a person who is led by the Spirit of God will choose to do so not just because he must but because he voluntarily puts himself under the leadership of the other person. This is a demonstration of respect.

Hebrews 13:7 “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.”

When submission is the attitude within the church, spiritual growth and unity will thrive.

Any kind of self-aggrandizement or self-promotion by any group in the church will result in a spirit of disharmony as well as a lack of spiritual growth. Pride is what leads a person to pursue his own interests at the detriment of the body of Christ. It was pride that brought disunity in heaven when Lucifer took 1/3 of the angels in rebellion.

While it’s a word to young men, it is an admonition to submit to church leadership.

With a broad brush stroke Peter next addresses everyone.

B. Be Humble Toward Each Other – v. 5b

As I said earlier, if submission is the action, humility is the attitude. You might be able to submit without humility, but you cannot be humble without submitting.

You can submit to a decision by a superior and do it not because you want to but because you have to. A boss can tell you to go do a job you don’t like, perhaps even hate and you can go do it, but you can grumble and complain and have a bad attitude and hold a grudge.

But if you are truly humble you will submit and do even the most menial of tasks with a joyful spirit. Christ gives us the greatest example of humility
Philippians 2:3-8

Christ humbly submitted to the Father, not because He had to but because He wanted to – thinking of our need for salvation. Even though He was God, He didn’t flaunt His deity. The king of the universe veiled His deity and humbled Himself by becoming a man. He did not give up His deity, but set aside His glory and became a servant. He assumed a truly humble position.

Jesus clothed Himself with humility. It’s the same idea that Peter conveys to us. It literally means to put on and refers to tying on the apron of a servant. A.W. Tozer calls humility an identifying garment of the Christian. In that culture you dressed according to your status. Just by looking at your clothes you could tell the class you belonged to. To some degree we can do that today.

We know a policeman by his uniform.

We know a fireman by his uniform.

We know a doctor or nurse by their uniform.

We know a mailman by his uniform.

Jesus put on the uniform of a servant and washed the feet of the disciple. The one who had every right to be served was the one who served. Jesus did that on the night before He was crucified.
John 13:1-5

A week earlier the disciples had argued about who was the greatest. James and John even wanted to sit next to Jesus in His kingdom.
Matthew 20:20-28

Humility is setting aside your own agenda and desires considering the needs of others before yourself, putting them first. Amy Carmichael once said “Those who think too much of themselves don’t think enough.” Jesus says if we truly want to be great learn to serve others.

Perhaps when they came to the Passover meal the issue of who was greatest was still on their mind and consequently no one offered to pick up the wash basin and put on the servants apron.

“There’s no way I’m going to wash his feet.”

John 13:12-17

If Jesus humbled Himself and served others, we should do the same. Look for ways to tie on an apron and truly serve them as Jesus demonstrated. Think of ways today that you can serve someone.

Humility is inseparably linked to submission and is the essence of unity in the church.

Matthew Henry calls humility the great preserver of peace and order in the church.

The person who has a right attitude toward himself and others will be humble and we’ll see in a moment that this humility begins first with being humble before God.

Humility is universal in that we are to serve each other without exception or exclusion.

It is unending in that we continue to serve each other every day.

It looks for ways to put others first.

It Doesn’t look to be rewarded

It goes out of the way to serve someone else.

You may have heard recently in the news about the homeless man who walked several blocks to buy gas with his last \$20 for a young woman who was stranded. So overwhelmed with gratitude that he would do that for her, as a stranger, she started a go-fund me page and raised almost \$400,000 for him to help him out. He didn’t do it to be rewarded. He just tied on an apron and served her.

That’s humility.

Humility doesn’t wait to be told to do something. It sees a need and promptly acts, expecting nothing in return.

If there is a negative motivator for our humility it’s found in this verse.

C. Be Warned About Opposition – v. 5c

The culture in which Peter lived and wrote had a different view of humility. Peter and Paul both indicate that humility is a virtue that should be practiced by the Christian. The Greek culture however looked down on anyone who displayed humility. Humility was a sign of weakness not strength. Like today, it was a self-promoting society. Me first was the mantra. With our iPods and iPads and iPhones and selfies we are living in a selfish society that focuses on me now and me first.

We are living in an unprecedented age of selfishness. Humility isn’t a popular characteristic today. You won’t find books written on humility in our bookstores. Humility isn’t applauded in an age where the texture of the work environment is to be assertive. Resumes are laced with the “I did’s”. I did this and I did that.

A number of years ago the Star Tribune carried an article written by a guest editorial that, in the words of John Piper, “captured the atmosphere that asphyxiates humility”. Listen to a segment of the article. “There are some who naively cling to the nostalgic memory of God. The average churchgoer takes a few hours out of the week to experience the sacred...But the rest of the time, he is immersed in a society that no longer acknowledges God as an omniscient and omnipotent force to be loved and worshiped...Today we are too sophisticated for God. We can stand on our own; we are prepared and ready to choose and define our own existence.” In essence, you don’t God.

The evolutionary ideology has fueled the me first mindset making us believe that since I came from nothing I am my own person, I call the shots, and so we summarily sing along with Frank Sinatra
And now the end is near
And so I face the final curtain
My friend, I’ll say it clear
I’ll state my case of which I’m certain

I've lived a life that's full
I've travelled each and every highway
and more, much more than this
I did it my way

Regrets I've had a few
But then again too few to mention
I did what I had to do
And saw it through without exemption

I planned each chartered course
Each careful step along the by-way
And more, much more than this
I did it my way

Yes, there were times
I'm sure you knew
When I bit off more than I could chew
But through it all when there was doubt
I ate it up and spit it out
I faced it all

And I stood tall
And did it my way
I've loved, I've laughed, and cried
I've had my fill, my share of losing

And now, as tears subside
I find it all so amusing
To think I did all that
And may I say, not in a shy way

"Oh no, oh no, not me
I did it my way"
For what is a man, what has he got?
If not himself then he has naught
To say the things he truly feels
And not the words of one who kneels
The record shows I took the blows
And did it my way
Yes, it was my way

Notice very carefully what God's Word says: "God opposes the proud."

It's in the present tense meaning that He's continually opposed to the proud, the one who puffs himself up, the one who thinks he's all that and a bag of chips.

When we casually or carelessly eliminate God from the picture, humility cannot survive. Humility is a garment that God gives us to wrap ourselves in in order to serve others. When God is removed that leaves man to take His place and instead of humility there is pride and where pride exists God stands in opposition.

Our culture is hostile to humility. It rebelliously stands in opposition to God and asserts its will and ignores God's ways and God's Word. It seeks to be served and not serve.

Pride puts self first.

Pride says I don't need God.

Pride says I don't need others.

Pride says I'll do it my way.

In Proverbs 6:16-17 we read that God hates pride. The word "oppose" or "resist" is a military term and means to arrange against in battle.

In Numbers 22-24 we read about Balaam. Balaam was asked King Balak of the Moabites to help him by cursing the Israelites. Balaam didn't want to because God told him not to, but he did want their money. So he saddled up his donkey and headed out. As he was traveling along the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the middle of the road and wouldn't let him pass so he took another route. The angel stood in opposition to Balaam.

God will set Himself up against the person who is proud.

Proverbs 11:2 says shame comes to the proud.

Proverbs 13:10 says contention or strife comes to the proud.

Proverbs 16:18 says destruction comes to the proud.

Proverbs 29:23 says that pride will bring a person down low.

God will humble the proud.

The pride of Ahithophel caused him to hang himself after his advice was ignored (II Samuel 17:23).

Pride almost cost Naaman his life when he initially refused the instruction of Elisha to dip in the Jordan River in order to be healed. Had he persisted in his pride his leprosy would have literally eaten him alive. (II Kings 5:11-13)

It was pride that led Hezekiah to reveal all his wealth. (II Kings 20:13) Israel would later be carried away by the Babylonians.

It was pride that led King Uzziah to offer incense on the altar. God opposed him by making him a leper. (II Chronicles 26:16-19)

It was pride that led Nebuchadnezzar to assume his kingdom's greatness came at his own hands. God made him insane for a year living like an animal in the field. (Daniel 4:30-34)

It was pride that caused Haman to seek the termination of all the Jews in the kingdom, but ultimately led to his own death. (Esther 3:5)

It was pride that kept the religious leaders from believing in Christ as the Messiah.

It is pride that keeps many from trusting in Christ today. Pride says it will do it in its own power. Pride says it doesn't need God.

When I served as the chaplain for hospice we were discussing a new admission and his care. Part of the routine for a new admission was to discuss the different services offered to patients. When he was asked if he wanted the chaplain to visit he said "I haven't needed God for 89 years, I don't need Him now."

God resists the proud and is opposed to them.

But for those who choose to live in humility God says they will be given His grace.

D. Be Given God's Grace – v. 5d

"He gives grace to the humble."

I believe that only the humble person can be saved, because the humble person recognizes that he can't save himself. He recognizes that he needs Christ.

He recognizes that he is a sinner hopelessly lost in need of a Savior.

That's what Jesus meant in the illustration about the Pharisee and the tax collector going to the Temple to pray. In his pride the Pharisee compared himself to the other guy and considered himself far superior in every way. God was lucky to have him on the team.

In our pride we compare ourselves with other people and we come out looking quite good. When we compare ourselves with God then we can only be humbled to see how far short we fall. That's what the tax collector did. He acknowledged his sin and utter helplessness asking God for His mercy. It was in humility that he cried out to God for mercy, a mercy he was shown.

God gives His grace to the humble to save them.
God gives His grace to the humble to sustain them.

It's a rhetorical question and the answer seems to make sense to me but which would you rather experience, God's grace or God's opposition? Yet why do so many choose to remain proud?

If we fail to humble ourselves, God will humble us through some circumstance or through another person or by some weakness or infirmity.

I have shared this with you before, but it illustrates the opposition of God against the proud. Running in the regional meet my senior year, I was expecting to go the State meet in the mile. Warming up on the infield watching another race one of the teams was disqualified and I sat joking about it with the others around me. I felt pretty high and mighty. I ran my race and finished third which qualified me to run in the State meet but I was disqualified because of an infraction during the race. I believe God was humbling me for my pride and stood opposed to me.

That is the horizontal relationship we have with others. In verse 5 we see a necessary admonition.

If in verse 6 we notice the vertical relationship with God. It is about a necessary action.

II. A NECESSARY ACTION – v. 6

If we are going to experience the grace of God we must first humble ourselves under His mighty hand. Let God rule your heart.

A. Let God Rule Your Heart – v. 6a

Our pride is no match for God's mighty hand. We need to acknowledge that God is in control and allow Him to have control of our life. Humility puts God first in your life. We can't demonstrate a life of humility before others until and unless we have first humbled ourselves before Him. That phrase can be translated "allow yourself to be humbled."

Humbling ourselves before God is allowing Him or trusting Him to control our lives and to work out His purposes in His time. It's telling God that we know His plan is best and whatever we go through we know God is going to bring good from it. Think about Abraham walking up that mountain with Isaac. It not only took faith, it took humility to give up this son of promise to God. He had to trust in God's greater plan, and that took humility.

If you are going through something right now that you don't know the reason, then humble yourself before God and tell Him you don't understand but you're going to trust Him through it. That takes humility on your part. We will see in a few weeks when we come to verse 7 that humility casts all care and concerns on God because we know He cares for us.

Be humble because God opposes the proud.

Be humble because God gives grace to the humble.

Be humble because God's mighty hand is on you.

It is through humility that we are able to grow spiritually.

Humbling ourselves before God is an act of the will.

What happens when we humble ourselves before God?

God will reward your humility.

B. Let God Reward Your Humility – v. 6b

Humility is one of those character traits that as soon as we think we have it we have lost it. It's difficult to know how to explain that you have it without being proud. So what I can say is that if you just endeavor to serve others with a willing spirit putting their needs before your own, then God sees and will reward your humility. Notice that it's in His time that He will exalt you.

Joseph served about 13 years as a slave and then in prison. His humility led to being exalted in Egypt. Daniel was led from Israel to Babylon and in time he was exalted to a high position under three different kings and kingdoms.

If we seek to exalt ourselves, it will be cheap and temporary, the Pharisees did that. Their supposed piety was a thin veneer covering their pride. But when God lifts us up, His reward is eternal.

If you're going through trials, wait humbly and He will lift you up. Humility is both an attitude and an action.

Micah 6:8 "He has showed you, O man what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."