

Why is Humility the Key?

[James 4:6-10](#)

James, Day 19

But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

- James 4:6-10, ESV

What would you say is the most vital key to real spiritual growth as a Christian? Bible knowledge? A vital prayer life? Active church involvement? Obviously, all of these things are important elements in the spiritual life and growth of believers, but one virtue is the underlying key to real growth in all of these areas and more: humility.

The great Puritan pastor and theologian Thomas Watson said, "Let us carry ourselves as God's children in humility. . . It is a becoming garment. Let a child of God look at his face every morning in the glass of God's Word and see his sinful spots. This will make him walk humbly all the day after. God cannot endure to see his children grow proud. He suffers them to fall into sin, as he did Peter, that their plumes may fall, and that they may learn to go on lower ground."

Why is humility so important? In part, it is because humility breaks us of our addiction to ourselves. By nature, we tend to rely on ourselves, trust in ourselves, listen to ourselves, and serve ourselves. This is the worst kind of idolatry, and it is as natural to us as breathing and sinning.

Humility says no the tyranny of self and turns our gaze to the Lord instead. We cannot open our hands to receive good things from God until we let go of the selfishness and pride we're already holding so tightly.

Think about it: You don't really grow in Bible knowledge if you think you already know the Bible. You have to confess you don't know and you need to know. You don't grow in prayer if you think you can handle life on your own. Prayer moves from an obligation to a true dependence only through humility. And we are never really committed to serving others as long as we think we should be served.

Pride is the root sin, and humility is the key virtue. James 4 puts humility in the context of spiritual warfare, because pride is the language of Satan, and humility submits to God, who then gives us power to resist the devil's selfish lies, so he flees from us in defeat.

One of the best ways to grow in humility is to approach God through His perfect law, especially as Jesus unpacked it in Matthew 5. God's law shows us our sin in the light of God's perfect righteousness. Stripped of our self-righteousness and exposed to God's righteousness, we are ready to confess our need and weakness in true humility.