



HUMILITY

Humility (Zoe Ward but written by Julia Durham)

The basic definition of *Humility* is simply “the state of being humble.” If I asked you what it looked like to be humble, I rather suspect that everyone would have quite different views. And perhaps even wonder why it made it into the culture guide.

You may even have visions of a self-deprecating, snivelling servant figure who does not know his own worth. And indeed, both the word humility and humble have their origin in the Latin word *humilis*, meaning “low.”

But to be truly humble is quite the opposite. The Cambridge dictionary definition expands on that a little further describing humility as ‘the quality of not being proud, because you are aware of your bad qualities’. But the Merriam Webster dictionary, which I think is my favourite, speaks of HUMILITY as freedom from pride or arrogance.

And it is in having freedom, that humility is both a wonderful and a I think, a very Christian place to be. It is, I believe, a gateway to a whole host of virtues. After all, it is the freedom of living in Christ that we have all been blessed with. The same Jesus, “who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited.” (Philippians 2:6)

When we are humble, we remember **who** we are. That is, a child of God’s creation. To quote the psalm, ‘fearfully and wonderfully made’. All unique and beautifully different, an expression of God’s creativity.

Being aware of ‘who we are’ helps us to find our place in a community of God people. Surrounded by other children of God, living in God’s amazing work of creation. All of which is precious and special but none of which we can take the credit!

This awareness means that we can be free’d up from always focusing on ourselves! Free to look about us in wonder and see all that God has done in other people, the way God has used gifts and talents to bless the world, and to celebrate God’s work. This should encourage us, in our churches, to nurture and develop God’s gifts as a blessing to the whole community. To see others not as people we have to compete with, always under the pressure of pushing ourselves forward hoping that we might be seen; but as a beautiful

diverse and abundant community of treasures, offered by God, who values and supports everyone.

In the words of Jesus, in Matthew, 'For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

When we are humble, we also recognise **what** we are.

The sobering words from the funeral liturgy says ' –For he knows of what we are made; he remembers we are but dust. Our days are like the grass; we flourish like a flower of the field; when the wind gives over it, it is gone and its place will know it no more

Humility gives us a sense of perspective on the vastness of creation, our transient nature and the smallness of our part in all that God is doing. We remember that all that we have- God gave to us. Our amazing intellect, tremendous beauty, our money, our talent for speaking, or writing or teaching – all came from God. Gifts given that we might use to bless others, rather than ourselves. But as quickly as we acquired those gifts they can be taken away.

We're also aware of our flaws, that we are but human beings. That self awareness that we are a work in progress, that we **all** make mistakes and that **none** of us is perfect, is an important part of what helps us grow, what helps us have compassion on others and that nurtures love in a community.

For 'when pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom '(Proverbs 11:2)