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Walking in Humility

(Part 1)

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Series: The Mind of Christ

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Walking in Humility

In so many ways, His was a life no different than yours or mine. He worked. He walked. He waited. He worshipped. His daily trials were just like ours. But in other ways, He was utterly unique. He was God in human form, tempted in all points like as we, but He never sinned. Because He never sinned, and because He did always those things that pleased the Father, He lived a life totally devoid of pride.

Think about it! Never at any time did Jesus act outside of the realm of humanity. Never! That's important for us to note, for if He was always humble, then our definition of humility must be taken from watching Him, not from the world's saccharin-sweet imitation, or even from the church's substitute that has been handed down through years of interpretation.

Humility is Jesus Christ. We know that because the Scripture says that Jesus never sinned, and that

“...God resists the proud,”... (James 4:6, I Peter 5:5 NKJV)

Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord;
(Proverbs 16:5 NKJV)

Jesus never sinned, so Jesus was never proud. Always He defined humility. As He healed the blind, He was humble. As He taught the multitudes, He was humble. When He cleansed the temple, He was humble. When He rebuked the Pharisees, He was humble. And the message He left to us was this:

Let this mind be in you... (Philippians 2:5a NKJV)

The Living God, demonstrating through His Son how He looks when He lives through a human life, showed us pure, unadulterated humility. It was not a gift given to Him because He was God. It was an act of obedience required of Him because He was a man. Paul said that Jesus

...being found in appearance as a man, He Humbled Himself... (Philippians 2:8 NKJV)

Peter said:

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,
(I Peter 5:6a NKJV)

So the act of choosing to be humble, minute by minute, second by second, incident by incident, is up to us. The power to be humble

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comes from the indwelling Christ. The Scripture says of Jesus,
yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.
(Hebrews 5:8b NKJV)

The circumstances of life brought pressure upon Him to choose. He always chose to identify with the Father. True humility, then, exists only in a believer, but it is not evident just because it is resident. In fact, many of the proudest men and women you will ever meet will be Christians.

Why? Because of spiritual warfare. Because we

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against
principalities, against powers, (Ephesians 6:12a NKJV)

The Satanic forces in the heavenlies want your life and mine to be ineffective in their demonstration of the Christ-life, and Satan's trademark is pride. It was pride that caused his fall. It was pride that he dangled in front of the Master in the wilderness. True humility will change the world, so Satan will work in your life and mine to tempt us to all forms of insidious pride. He will tempt us to pharisaical kinds of religious hypocrisy. He will tempt us to be proud of our good works, proud of our ministries, proud of our external forms of spirituality—scripture memory, quiet times, witnessing, church leadership. He will tempt us to that equally effective sin of false pride—pride in our humility. He will tempt us to be proud of what we can do for God, when in reality, *we can do nothing for God*. He will tempt us to self-degradation, a negative form of pride that says we are worthless failures. Apart from Christ, we are; but on the contrary,

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:13 NKJV)

We are invincible in Him. Satan hates that.

So he focuses his onslaught exclusively on believers. He doesn't need to work on his own, they are *naturally proud and when they fall, it's no trophy for him*. So he focuses on us. Scripture says,

Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."
(Job 2:2 NKJV)

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.
(I Peter 5:8 NKJV)

He doesn't eat his own for lunch. He's after *us*. And the more

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spiritually sensitive you become, the more desperately he will try to trip you up. His number one weapon will always be the perennial problem of pride.

It starts with an attitude, works into your conscious behavior, and ends up giving you an independent spirit that thinks you can live apart from God's power and in defiance of God's word and get by with it. Once-great Christian men and women who fell into sin and were disgraced, all fell prey to the sin of pride.

You say, "But brother so-and-so fell into immorality. How is that pride? Don't you see, Beloved, before you can choose to live or even fantasize in immorality, you must believe that you are above God's divine discipline, and that you can sin and get by. It's what he used to tempt Eve. It's what he used to tempt Jesus. It's what he'll use to tempt you.

Pride in its simplest form is independence. It is calling attention to self, because self operates independently of authority and thus independently of God. One reason we know that Jesus never demonstrated pride is that He never did anything independently of His Father. He was at all times dependent on His Father for wisdom, for strength, for direction, for power. By saying that "apart from the Father I can do nothing", He was defining humility. Humility is not hiding in a cave so you can't be seen; humility is allowing the divine activity of God's nature to flow through you without calling attention to the fact that it is flowing through you. Just let God be God and you will become humble. You humble yourself by choosing to never act independently of God's divine indwelling Spirit.

So long as you stay in a mind-set of submission and inadequacy apart from God, you will stay humble. At whatever moment you determine consciously or subconsciously to act in your own strength, you will be choosing to be proud. Think about Eve's temptation. It was to act independently of God's word because "no one needed to tell her what to do".

"You shall be like the most high," Satan whispered. He didn't tell Eve what a neat gal she was. He didn't even start out by telling her how bright she was. She wasn't very bright or she wouldn't have made such a dumb choice. He just questioned God's right to make her decisions, to rule her life, and to determine her limitations.

He'll do that with you as well. He'll cause you to question what right God has to lock you into a marriage like this one; what right God has to let your child go astray; what right God has to let

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disease reach its vicious tentacles into your body. He'll cause you to question how a loving God could allow that loved one to be taken from you. And once the doubts begin to form; once the question marks take the place of the exclamation marks of God's word, He will begin to tell you that you must make your own decisions based on what's good for you. After all, if this is the best God can do, maybe you can do better yourself.

And the minute you listen to the "voice of the stranger", as he is called in John 10, you enter into that chasm known as pride. It is a dark pit fashioned out of self-centeredness; but painted over the door is a mirage called "self-image". Satan says you need to be yourself, assert yourself, call attention to yourself. But once inside, self is helpless to rescue you from the downward spiral that independence from God leads you to. It leads to immorality, hypocrisy, religiosity, and ultimately, when its failure is evident, to deep hostility.

Redefine pride in your mind. Pride is self in control. It is any act or attitude that has as its roots operating independently of God's control. Its facets are many, but its roots are singular. Let's follow the Master, now, and see humility come alive.

He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8 NKJV)

Only one man ever perfectly walked humbly with God. His name was Jesus Christ. Let's follow Him and see humility come alive.

THE MASTER CALLS THE TWELVE.

We have looked in recent studies at Jesus' humility at His birth, His humility as a child, and His humility at His baptism. We take up there in this lesson, and begin to look at how God looks when He is living His life of utter humility in the body of an adult. You may be thinking that it was easier for Jesus than it is for us. Quite the opposite is true. Remember, two things made it more difficult for Jesus than it will ever be for us:

1) He could never, even once, yield to pride, or He could not be our Redeemer.

2) He had every right to be proud; we have none. Nevertheless, He never gave in. Always, He was humble. Always.

Using primarily the book of John as our textbook, let's follow Jesus beyond His humble baptism. Let's follow Him now as He

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takes the next step in obedience to His Father. His Father says, “Son, call out a team of disciples to walk alongside you. We will commit the Kingdom to them.” In John 1:35-49, we read the Master’s response:

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples.

When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!”

When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.

Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?”

“Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.

Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.

The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ).

And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John, You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter).

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, He said to him, “Follow Me.”

Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida.

Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip.

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.”

“How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.”

Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.”
(John 1:35-49 NIV)

Here was the Master’s next great test of humility. Having humbled Himself to be baptized, He now receives a call from His Father to begin assembling a team of men to change the world. Can

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you just imagine how you and I would have gone about obeying that charge? We would have told God to step aside while we used the world's concepts and man's insights into what kind of men and what kind of plan to implement.

We'd have gone first to the synagogue and sought the great religious minds of the day. Then we'd have gone to industry and looked for men who understood planning and organization. We'd have searched for men whose natural talents and abilities made them candidates for greatness. Then we'd have interviewed them, checked their references, and eliminated any who lacked "self-confidence". We'd have spent a little time in prayer, asking God to "bless our efforts", and then we'd have moved out to get the job done. And had we been told in advance that we only had three years to get the task accomplished, we'd have either panicked or stepped up the speed of the agenda. We'd have utilized our skills as men and women who understand character, and we'd have scrutinized the backgrounds of those under consideration. We certainly would have wanted men of dignity and reputation, lest they be rejected for their inexperience or lack of worldly wisdom. We'd have searched the halls of government and education as well.

Not Jesus. He decided instead to let His Father choose His team. He humbled Himself. He placed Himself in His Father's hands and decided to just walk the walk of faith and see what God would do. What God did was exactly the opposite of what men would have done.

Look at the essence of Jesus' plan:

1- He simply went about quietly, unobtrusively, naturally, doing what He always did. Try to imagine how anyone could be that relaxed in the face of a challenge like this. He had waited all those years just to get started. We would have called committee meetings, hired staff members, at least fretted and fumed and worried. Not Jesus. Don't you see? It wasn't His problem! His Father had it all under control. All He had to do was stay in harmony with His Father's plan and...rest. That's humility. That's the Christian life. Individuals, church boards, staff members, all running around frustrated, angry, tense, worried, about how the copying machine will get fixed or the bulletin will get printed or the tapes will get made. What fools we are. Here was God demonstrating how to relax and watch the only one who can minister, do it.

2- He made no fanfare. He didn't advertise to anyone who He

was. John made the announcement on his own, and the two who turned to follow Jesus did so with no prompting from Him. We don't think the Word itself is enough to draw people. We think we need to use the world's methods and the world's message to get people to come to Christ. Jesus, the Word made flesh, simply was Himself, and that's all that was needed. Beloved, we so easily forget. Jesus Christ is still alive. He is not dead. He lives in us. We don't need to *promote* Him. We need to *reveal* Him.

3- His message was incredibly simple. It still is. He said to Philip, "Follow me." Nothing more. Nothing less. That is the gospel. We have made the gospel in our day a compilation of moral, social, and personal doctrines, all intertwined. You can listen to a sermon or read a book and never really understand *how simple* the gospel really is. You are a sinner. You need a Savior. God knew that. He loves you. He sent His only Son, Jesus, to die in your place. Now all you have to do is acknowledge your sin, ask Him to save you, and *follow Him*. The gospel is not a barrage of theological tongue-twisters. The gospel is simple. A child can understand it. People are lost and wandering in the wrong direction. They need to "repent" (turn around) and, instead of following their own desires, prompted by Satan, they need to turn and "follow Him". The lost are lost. The redeemed are saved. No one is in between. Why must we make it so complicated?

4- His focus was on the people He was ministering to, not on His own message. He engaged Simon in a conversation about His name. He engaged Nathaniel in a conversation by referring his guilelessness, even though they had never met. He didn't pass out a tract or preach a ten-point message with cold, calculated insensitivity. He looked them in the eye, talked to them about who they were, and caused them to think about who He was. That's evangelism—involvement with people that results in gentle confrontation about who God is.

5- He accepted skepticism as natural. If someone rebuffs us, or questions us, or doesn't like our brand of evangelism, we cringe. Not Jesus. When Nathanael asked, "What good thing could possibly come out of Nazareth?", Jesus ignored his sarcasm and proceeded to get to know him better. As He did, Nathanael responded, "You are the Son of God". So often sarcasm, and even resistance, is a facade waiting to be removed by reality and love.

6- He allowed the ministry to grow naturally. He didn't start an instant seminar with those He'd found, nor did He rush to recruit

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more. He just said, “follow me”, and waited on the Father to bring His next recruits. For a church to grow naturally, its leadership needs to wait on God for the right people, the right time, and the right ministries to develop. Just because it worked somewhere else, doesn’t mean your church needs it. Relax. Give God a chance. What a precious leader He is.

7- He gave God all the time He needed. The Father’s timetable was good enough, and though God’s ways seem interminably slow to us. Jesus understood that slow is better when God’s in it. He had waited for thirty long years for this moment. Most of us, once it came, would have raced off into the sunset. Not the Master. He knew that one move in the flesh would frustrate God’s higher ways. So He just concentrated on those God had sent Him and let His Father stay in control. That’s the hardest part. Once God begins to bless, the hard part is letting Him *stay in charge*. That’s when most of our big mistakes are made.

8- He never wrestled control of the situation away from the Father, nor did He argue with the Father about His seemingly unworkable plan. If Jehovah said it would work, it would. Look at this whole scenario from man’s perspective. So far, there wasn’t a winner in the lot. So far, God had sent Him the likes of fishermen and plain folks with no apparent following, no formal training, no acceptance by the religious elite, no real cultural appeal, and at best, average intelligence.

Think about His challenge: All He had to do in the next three years was:

- 1) Revolutionize history
- 2) Redeem fallen man
- 3) Restore mankind to its intended purpose

Other than that, not much of a challenge. And here He was, letting His Father do the recruiting, and what a motley crew of rejects was starting to form. Prejudice? Nat didn’t think anything good could come out of Nazareth. Faithful? Two of them, including Andrew, didn’t even bother to say goodbye to John. They just turned on their heels and changed leaders. No, God wasn’t putting together a team of winners. He was putting together a team of people who *could not in and of themselves do the job*. You see, He didn’t need them to do the job. He needed men who would *humble themselves, admit they couldn’t, and let God be God*.

Perhaps the most difficult part of the “Christian experience”

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is the Christian experience. If that sounds like double-talk, it's really not. Most folks can come to an intellectual understanding of lordship. Theoretically grasping the fact that God is God and that we are to submit to Him is something even the natural mind will admit to. It is certainly something that redeemed man will acknowledge. But, on a day-to-day basis, to actually *live at rest* and, as we consciously obey what we know to do, *let God live His incredible life through us*, that is where the rub comes in.

The reason is (you guessed it) pride. Letting God do whatever He wants in our lives takes us out of the driver's seat. It removes all of our talents and all of our abilities and all of our personality traits as factors in producing spiritual fruit. It says that the only way we can make right choices, do things of eternal significance, or have any lasting fruit is to die to ourselves and humble ourselves and let God take over.

The flesh cringes at the thought. And well it ought to. It is hearing its own funeral march. The Spirit in us, however, will have nothing else. God does not authorize a double throne room. He does not alternate being Lord at will, so we can practice reigning, while handing the scepter back to Him when the going gets tough. That's why the word "death" is used in the spiritual sense over and over and over in the New Testament. True resurrection life can only exist in the presence of the death of the old you.

Dying is never fun. And dying to self is an awesome thought. The reason is that in order to let someone else take over the territory you thought only you could manage requires humility. It requires accepting the fact that you can't, that God can, and that's that. On a day-to-day basis, it requires constant dying. Your desires, your plans, your programs, your acceptance, all have to die! Whatever God wants has to supersede what you want. Wherever God leads has to be more important than where you want to go. Whoever God sends your way has to be the most important person in the world, even if you can't stand them, humanly speaking.

If you want this job, and God gives you that job, you have to be more excited about His choice than yours. If you want to get well, and God leaves that sickness to change your heart, you have to glory in that sickness that the power of Christ might rest upon you. If you have plans for your ministry, and God doesn't honor those plans, you have to be relieved that God has something better for you, even if that something better is far less appealing. If you have plans for your children, and God's plans are different, you have

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to learn to praise Him that He knows best. His ways are higher than ours. His ways are deeper than ours. His ways are better than ours. And usually they are not the same as ours. Unless we humble ourselves, we cannot grasp that.

So many Christians live their entire lives never experiencing that life of humility and lordship. We just take the problems of the flesh and overlay them into Christian terms, and while proceeding to look good among our Christian friends, we still struggle to live our own lives our own ways, trying to pretend that “all things have become new”. It doesn’t work. Sooner or later, the lid blows off, and we end up frustrated, angry, confused, or bitter. The counseling rooms are filled with “active” Christians who never learned to die.

All God is asking us to do is “*to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.*” Walking humbly with our God means humbly letting our God do the walking. It means coming to the point at last where we’re tired of being in the driver’s seat, pretending to be passengers. It means finally saying to God,

“I can’t, you can. Here, live my life any way you choose. Take my possessions. Take my children. Take my marriage. Take my ministry. Do with them whatever will most glorify Thy name. I will worship. I will wait. I will work. But I will not, by your grace, take control. You live through me from this day forward. I’m tired of trying to do what only You can. Here, Lord, I’m yours. Amen.”

Life won’t become less complicated. It may become more so. There won’t be less warfare. There will probably be more. But, oh, Beloved, amidst the complications, in the very heat of the battle, you will have a peace, a calm, a joy that is indescribable. Circumstances may not be what you want them to be, but you will be where God wants you to be, *quietly resting while He does the living.*

Call it what you want. I prefer to call it the *normal Christian life*. It is yours for the asking. It is mine for the asking, if only we will come to the place where we humble ourselves and let God be God. It was the life Jesus lived, and it is the life He wants to live in us. Stop fighting it. Let go, and just begin to *walk humbly with your God.*

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