

LEAD! B.5 From Pride to Humility

In Which We Humble Ourselves Before God and Our Elders, Who Exalt Us

This week we shift our study of [wisdom](#) from the "theological virtues" ([faith](#), [hope](#), and [love](#)) to what might be called the "blessed virtues" from the [Beatitudes](#). We will follow Peter Kreeft (below) in contrasting them with the [Seven Deadly Sins](#), beginning with Humility vs. Pride:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven." --
[Matthew 5:3](#)

Pride is the first and deadliest of the deadly sins. It can be defined as "*trusting our own name rather than God's*" -- relying on our own [character](#) and [identity](#) as the ultimate [authority](#).

In contrast, humility is recognizing the painful fact of our own poverty of spirit, so that we empty ourselves in order to receive our heavenly King.

Assigned Reading

1. [Peter Kreeft: *Back to Virtue*](#)
 - 6. The Beatitudes Confront the Seven Deadly Sins
 - 7. Poor in Spirit vs. Proud at Heart
2. Dick Hockett: *Foundations of Wisdom*
 - 8. Pride, Humility, and the Fear of the Lord
 - 3.2 (Truth) Example: Proverbs about the Tongue

Admonition

Read [Proverbs 16](#). Why is Pride so dangerous?

Bible

[1 Peter 5](#)

Our chapter begins with Peter **not** lording it over his readers as an apostle, but simply exhorting them as a "fellow elder":

[5:1](#)The [elders](#) who are among you I [exhort](#), I who am a [fellow elder](#) and a [witness](#) of the [sufferings](#) of Christ, and also a [partaker](#) of the [glory](#) that will be [revealed](#):

Suffering is a [prominent theme](#) in 1 Peter, where it is seen as the path to glory (cf. [1 Peter 4:13](#)). As is being a shepherd [C.1]:

[2](#)[Shepherd](#) the flock of God which is among you, serving as [overseers](#), not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

The crucial point Peter makes is that elders should *intrinsically* want to serve. That is,

they should **not** serve out of either a sense of obligation or a desire for external rewards -- since the former leads to burnout, and the latter to corruption [C.2].

³nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;

Peter has clearly internalized the lesson Jesus tried to teach him in John 13, about how leaders must model the values they want to pass on to their followers. We do not "own" those under our care, to mold them into our **own** image [C.3] -- they are "entrusted" to us, that we might reveal Jesus to them even as He is revealed to us [C.4]:

⁴and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

This is key to achieving humility as leaders: seeking our glory **not** in those who follow us, but in the One we follow.

For if we sow humility by our example, we will reap it as a fruit among our followers:

⁵Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to [your] elders. Yes, all of [you] be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

We will return to 1 Peter in a few weeks to study submission in more detail. For now, our focus is on humbling ourselves before God, so that instead of needing to resist us, He is free to exalt us by His grace:

⁶Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

The word "exalt" means "to raise to dignity, honor and happiness." When we try to exalt ourselves -- pursuing "dignity, honor, and happiness" through the riches of our own spirit -- we are at cross-purposes to the Order of the universe, and encounter resistance everywhere we go. But if we embrace our poverty of spirit, and our utter inability and unworthiness to achieve these things on our own, we then receive our full birthright as citizens of heaven:

⁷casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

The life of pride is a life of constant worry, because we must protect and feed our ego while we expend our own strength to save ourselves. It is doubly dangerous for the Christian, since must contend against not just the world, but the devil:

⁸Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Pride is Satan's native food, and there is nothing more appetizing to him than a Christian who scorns humility. The only sure protection is to **not** trust in ourselves, but

to have [faith](#) in the God who cares for us:

⁹[Resist](#) him, [steadfast](#) in the [faith](#), knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your [brotherhood](#) in the world.

Peter doesn't pull any punches: to humble ourselves before God and resist Satan means we **will** travel the path of suffering, rather than enjoy the fleeting ego-gratification of the world. [C.5] But at least we will not travel alone, nor suffer in vain:

¹⁰But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have [suffered](#) a while, [perfect](#), [establish](#), [strengthen](#), and [settle](#) [you].

To be humble ultimately means to **not** look to ourselves -- our cares, circumstances, or character -- but to God, and what *He* desires to make of us. For all the things we seek in our own spirits are really only found in the Kingdom of Heaven -- which is to say, the Lordship of Christ:

¹¹To Him [be] the glory and the [dominion](#) forever and ever. Amen.

Are you willing to let go of your own glory, to receive His?

Conversation

1. Do you see being in charge as a trial or a perk? Why?
2. Have you ever burned out as a leader? Or been tempted to use your position for your own benefit? When and how?
3. Are you ever frustrated that the people you oversee aren't more like you? Is that a good or bad thing?
4. Share about a shepherd in your past who helped reveal Jesus to you.
5. How have you suffered for resisting what Satan wanted you to do?

Decision

- Repentance: Where have you trusted in your own "name"? Empty yourself before God.
- Action: What "cares" can you cast upon Jesus this week?
- Worship: Meditate on the crown of glory we will receive, and how superior it is to mere human glory.

Explore More

- [Humility – International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- [CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA: Humility](#)
- [Exalt – International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- [C. S. Lewis on Humility « rustinS myth](#)
- [YouTube – Humble Thyself in the Sight of the Lord](#)

For Next Week

For next week, read [1 Timothy 6](#). How should we think about money?

References

1. **Blue Letter Bible.** "[1 Peter 5](#) – New King James Version." Blue Letter Bible. 1996–2009. 14 Jan 2009. < <http://www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?t=NKJV&b=1Pe&c=5> >
2. **[New King James Version \(NKJV\)](#)** Copyright © 1982 by [Thomas Nelson, Inc.](#)

