

## **A Call To Meekness, Not Weakness**

### **Topical**

By Phillip G. Kayser

In the Leadership Journal there is a cartoon that has a guy shaking the hand of the pastor at the back of the church and saying, "Powerful sermons, Pastor. Thoughtful, well researched. I can always see myself in them...and I want you to knock it off."<sup>1</sup> I had a quite different response this week. Instead of telling me to knock it off, I have had people telling me that they saw themselves in the sermon on pride last week and they would like more in depth teaching on how to put on the opposite of pride. And so today's sermon is on meekness.

And I want to begin by distinguishing between humility and meekness. There is a difference of connotation between meekness and humility but they both have the same denotation; they are both pointing to the same thing. And humility and meekness are placed together as Siamese twins in the Scripture – you can't have one without the other. Jesus said, **I am meek and humble in heart** (Matt 11:29). So even though you can't separate them, you can distinguish them. Where humility refers to an absence of pride and a sense of one's own lowliness (and thus some translations have, "I am meek and lowly in heart"), meekness describes how that person got humble – through a complete taming and submission of his will to God's will. And so in one sense, meekness is the more radical and basic grace. If you gain meekness, you will have an abundance of humility. So I want to look at the nature of meekness and how one gets it and how one can put off pride.

### **I. Christ's Life Corrects Many Mistaken Stereotypes of Meekness (Matt 11:29)**

And I think it would be helpful to start with what Jesus meant when He said that He was meek. I think Jesus breaks all the stereotypes of what a meek person is like. Is a meek person simply a person who gets along with everyone? That may not be adequate because Jesus didn't get along with the Pharisees too well. Is it a picture of a person who didn't talk very much and who was timid? Again, we strike out with Christ. He talked a great deal and

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<sup>1</sup> Seeing Yourself in a Sermon, Citation: From a cartoon by Lee Johnson, The Best Cartoons from Leadership Journal, Volume 1 (Broadman & Holman, 1999)

was not shy and retiring. In fact, there are some shy and retiring types who are not meek at all. Is it a person who is easygoing? Jesus seemed to be rather intense at times, so if He is the definition of meekness, I think you would have to say that it has nothing to do with lack of intensity. Is it a person who rides the fence and wants peace at any cost? Hardly. Jesus breaks those stereotypes. Is it a nice person? Well, there are ways in which Jesus was very nice, but the moneychangers sure didn't think he was nice. Is it a tactful person? Jesus sometimes seemed to lack all tact. He was a straight shooter. And yet the Scripture is quite clear that He was meek and lowly.

And I think the kind of meekness with which Jesus is painted in the “What Would Jesus Do” Movement, is just as unrealistic as the “Precious Moments” Christianity that portrays the mighty warrior cherubim angels as rosy-cheeked babies. No! If you met one of those cherubs, you would be terrified with the sight. So it is critical that we start with a definition. And because it is such a misunderstood word, I want to have a rather extended definition of this term meekness. If we are to put off pride, then we need to understand the grace of meekness.

## II. The Meaning of Meekness

### A. *Gentle strength; forbearing power; one who is able to yield his rights; gracious determination*

Unlike the term “humble,” the Greek term for meek (*praüs*) always assumes great strength that is under control. As some people say, “Meekness is not weakness.” It is a forbearing power that has the ability to resist, but yields anyway. For example, *praüs* is sometimes translated as “gentle,” yet it can describe a warrior who is gentle with his wife, but is hardly gentle with his enemies. This is the word that would describe a powerful stallion that is gentle with a child. It can be translated as humble, yet the humble person may be a king like David. So there is always an implied strength, but it is a gentle strength.

### B. *Forbearing power*

Second, the Greek word has the idea of forbearance, and in this sense, God Himself is said to be meek (Psalm 18:35). Now that ought to give a totally different conception of gentleness. He could blast us off this planet, and yet He has self-control and forbearance. It is translated as yielding or

gracious, and yet it can describe a person who knows exactly what needs to be done, and is pursuing that goal.

**C. *"not being overly impressed by a sense of one's self-importance."***

There is a third nuance to this term. The Greek dictionary says it is "not being overly impressed by a sense of one's self-importance." And largely it is because it describes a person who is simply not preoccupied with himself. That is what makes it so closely related to humility and so far removed from pride.

**D. *Tamed - or "strength under control"***

But the next point gives us the most intriguing usage of this term. The Greek word *praiis*, is used to describe tamed animals. Let me quote from Barclay's commentary: "In Greek '*praus*' is used in one special sense. It is used... for a beast which has been tamed. A horse which was once wild but which has become obedient to the bit and to the bridle is *praus*. Now herein lies the secret to the meaning of *praus*. There is gentleness in *praus* but behind the gentleness there is strength of steel, for the supreme characteristic of the man who is *praus* {the man who is meek} is that he is the man who is under perfect control. It is not a spineless characteristic, a sentimental fondness, a passive quietism. It is a strength under control." Well of course you can see how that beautifully describes Jesus and accurately describes Moses. Both bore God's yoke upon them. Both harnessed their abilities to God's will.

**E. *"using one's strength, energy and abilities for a cause which is greater than self."***

Another author adds an important dimension. He says "The use of the word then in classical Greek was to describe an animal that had been domesticated and whose strength is channeled in a certain direction... [It is] using one's strength, energy and abilities for a cause which is greater than self." Let me repeat that last part, because I think it captures the essence of the word wherever it is used. He says, "[It is] using one's strength, energy and abilities for a cause which is greater than self." I think point E is the essence of meekness.

***F. "Described negatively, meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest."***

But let me give two more definitions. Here is how Vine's dictionary describes it - "Described negatively, meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest; it is equanimity of spirit [in other words composure of spirit that doesn't get ruffled] that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because it is not occupied with self at all."

Now I think you can understand why Jesus said that the meek shall inherit the earth. A meek person is a person who is pre-occupied with serving the interests of another. Just as a wild stallion is not useful to the master as long as it wants to serve its own interests, we are not useful to God's kingdom or His dominion as long as we lack meekness. A person who lacks meekness is by definition proud and God resists him.

Here is how R. J. Rushdoony pulls together the shades of meaning in describing the meekness of Moses in the Old Testament:

The meek are the redeemed whom God has burdened, oppressed, and broken to harness, so that they are tamed and workable. God subjected Moses to a more rigorous discipline than any other believer of his day, and Moses accepted that oppression, grew in terms of it, and became disciplined and strong. Hence Moses was the meekest man of his age. Meekness is thus not mousiness, but disciplined strength in and under God. . . . The blessed meek are the tamed of God, those harnessed to His law-word and [to His] calling, who shall inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5). The blessed meek are those who submit to God's dominion, have therefore dominion over themselves, and are capable of exercising dominion over the earth. They therefore inherit the earth."

***G. A grace that results from greatness of faith.***

When you take all of those definitions into account, you will see how meekness cannot exist apart from faith. To be tamed, you have to trust your master. To be interested in God's interests more than your own takes faith that He will provide for you. Otherwise it would seem suicidal. To use your energies in a cause that is greater than your own takes a vision of faith in God's purposes. And so faith is often shown to be the polar opposite of pride. In fact, John Piper sees faith as the opposite of pride. And you can see why:

Where pride shows self-reliance, faith shows reliance on God. Where pride considers itself to be above instruction, faith is always looking to

God's directions. Where pride is insubordinate, faith is submission *par excellence*. Where pride takes credit for what God has done, faith deflects praise to God. Where pride exults in being made much of, faith knows that every good and perfect thing flows from above. Faith exults in making much of God. So it is not surprising that the greatest men of faith were also the most meek and humble. Those three graces necessitate each other. So if we are going to get rid of pride, then by faith, we need to put on meekness that will result in humbleness.

### III. The Blessings of Meekness (Matt 5:5; Ps. 22:26; 25:9; 149:4; Zeph. 2:3; Matt 11:28; Is. 29:19; Psalm 32:8-9)

Having described what meekness is, let's get motivated by seeing the blessings that flow from meekness. And we would automatically expect this to be true if God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. We would expect blessings. Jesus said, **Blessed are the meek.** He said, "The meek ... shall inherit the earth." Meekness is related to success in dominion. It was because Joseph learned meekness in his trials that everything he touched was prospered. The meek shall inherit the earth.

Here's another blessing: Psalm 22:26 says, **The meek shall eat and be satisfied.** Commentators point out that this eating is a Eucharistic eating. It's coming to the Lord's Table. A proud person can come to the Table Sunday after Sunday and find nothing special in it. But the meek can eat of the table and find themselves tremendously filled and satisfied. The meekness gives us a capacity to enjoy God's spiritual blessings. Are the means of grace dry and empty to you? Put on meekness.

Here's another blessing: Psalm 25:9 says, **The meek will he guide in justice.** That whole Psalm speaks of the rich ways that God gives guidance to those who have been tamed by Him. There is no point in guiding a person who is wild and rebellious. You pen a horse in when he is like that, until he has learned how to use bit and bridle. But the meek He will guide. So that Psalm says, **"Show me Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths, lead me in your truth and teach me... the humble he guides in justice, and the humble He teaches His way... The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant."** Etc. This is one of the greatest blessings I have enjoyed from God's hand – personal guidance. And I dare say that I don't know more because I still need to grow in meekness. The Puritan William Bridge, said, "If you lay yourself at Christ's feet [that's meekness, right? "If you lay yourself at Christ's feet"] He will

take you into His arms.” Do you want intimacy and guidance? Seek meekness.

Here is another blessing: **He will beautify the meek with salvation** (Ps. 149:4). Or as some translate that, He will adorn them with victory. Where the proud keep falling, the meek find victory after victory. They find salvation over sin. Do you want victory? Then seek meekness. IN fact, since meekness is the opposite of pride, you will find the opposite results of pride: if God resists the proud, the He helps the meek.

Isaiah 29:19 says, **the meek also shall increase their joy.** Are you miserable? Well, meekness is the pathway to joy. Many times our joy is robbed from us simply because we are not meek in our reactions to God’s providence.

Here's how Christ words it in Matthew 11:28. Jesus describes the untamed, un-meek person without a yoke as miserable **Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.** The irony of Christ's words are that the wild oxen that we love to idealize as “born free,” are in actuality often sick, weary and heavy laden, and only those tamed to his yoke find his provision and care. Many think that disobedience to Christ is freedom, but when we fail to be the tamed of God, like untamed animals, we end up being torn and bruised, and mangy, and ill. You look at the coat of any wild animal and it is gross. It's full of ticks and sores and stinks. Wild animals do not live nearly as long or as comfortably as domesticated animals. The wild animals are not usually the healthiest of animals. They die young. And Christ is saying that the only way to find fulfillment, rest, and satisfaction in life is by wearing the yoke of meekness; by being tamed of God. Or as Isaiah 29 words it, “**The meek shall increase their joy.**”

But the last benefit that I want to mention is liberty in calling; liberty in labor; liberty in your service. It may seem odd, but it is definitely true. Let me illustrate. I had a horse out in Ethiopia that was anything but meek. He wasn’t too bad when we first bought him, but he seemed to learn bad habits from the mules. He would try to bite you, buck you off, run you under a branch and knock you off. The only time you could get him to run was when he was coming home to his oats. If you wanted to gallop, you would walk him for ten minutes away from the house and then you would gallop him home where he would get some feed. Sort of like Christians who are only motivated to serve the Lord if they can see an immediate reward in it for them. But anyway, my horse would go most places only at a reluctant

walk. That was about all you could get him to do. You could whip him with a hippo hide whip, kick him with your heels, and sometimes I had to literally drag him by the harness because the mouth was the only part sensitive enough for him to pay attention. And he still was too stubborn to learn. It was as if he would rather be miserable than obedient. And many times we as Christians are like that horse. We obey, but it is grudgingly. We drag our feet. It is not from the heart. Every ounce of strength is not at the master's disposal. We do not turn at the slightest touch of the reigns to our neck. And consequently we miss out on the joy of galloping with the wind; we miss out on the happiness of feeling the master's caress after we have done well, and hearing Him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." We trade in the happiness of kingdom living for the misery of discipline. God is in the business of making tamed Christians; useful Christians; meek Christians.

Listen to Psalm 32. It describes the meekness that we are called to with the metaphor of an untrained horse. **Do not be like the horse or like the mule . . . which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall surround him.** He's enveloped in mercy like in a sea. That's how much God blesses him. The previous verse described meekness this way: **I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.** No need even for reigns on that horse. You are to be so in tune with the master that all you have to do is see something in His eye; see His desire, and you do it. His eye directs you. And what a joy it is to ride a horse that is totally in tune with your riding style. What a joy it is for God to have us meek; tamed; ready to do His bidding. It delights Him and He in turn delights us. It ushers us into the closest fellowship according to John 14. He loves to bless the meek. But if you are proud, He puts you in the corral for some bronco busting.

**IV. Learning Meekness from Christ (Luke 2:49; John 5:19,30; 8:28; Col. 3:12; James 3:13; Matt 11:27-30; Psalm 18:35; Phil. 2:5-8; Psalm 32:8-9; Heb. 5:8; Luke 2:41-52; Psalm 37; Zeph. 2:2-3)**

**A. *Our learning of meekness must be Christ-centered, learning from Christ as He learned from the Father (Matt 11:29; Luke 2:51; John 5:19,30; 8:28)***

But this brings us to how we gain this meekness. We want the blessings, but our pride is so constantly before our face that it can be discouraging. Before we look at some specific steps, let me point out that we

must have a Christ-centered focus on all of them. In Matthew 11:29 Jesus said, **Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and humble in heart...** He is the one who gives us meekness. He said “learn from Me.” Jesus Himself had learned meekness from the time He was a child. I think the subjection of Jesus in Luke 2:51 implies that. In fact, when he was twelve years old he said, **Did you not know that I *must* be about My Father's business?** There was no desire to be doing his own thing and running wild and free. In John 5:19 He said, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.** That speaks of radical meekness – totally submitted and yielded to the Father’s will. And we are to learn from Him that same kind of meekness. And by the way, that relates to our parenting. We are to learn from Jesus who had learned meekness from the Father. If we want our children to learn meek submission to us, then we must model meek submission to the authorities above us.

**John 5:30 “I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.**

**John 8:28 ....I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.**

Jesus was meek. He was our model. And if Zephaniah says that the meek of the earth must seek more meekness it implies that meekness is something that must come from a source outside of ourselves. Colossians 3:12 tells us it must be put on. James 3:13 indicates that it must come from above. Matthew 11:28 says that it must be learned from Jesus. And so I want to spend a little time on point IV - learning meekness from Jesus. How do we develop more of this characteristic, which is so essential for dominion and inheriting the earth?

***B. Regeneration begins the taming process so that Scripture calls all believers "the meek"***

Well, point B - before we can seek more meekness from the Lord, we must be captured by God's grace. The taming process begins at regeneration where God takes human wills that are wild and rebellious and captures them and corrals them in by His grace. And from that moment on, He begins the taming process. He speaks of this as drawing us with “gentle cords” and “with bands of love” (Hos. 11:4). He’s talking about training us as wild animals with gentle cords and bands of love. God guarantees that He will tame all His elect, but He does so without destroying our spirit.

There are two ways you can break an animal in. My Dad was a broncobuster for a while, and he was firm but gentle with the animals. He didn't break their spirits. And the horses my Dad tamed had much more life than the ones whose wills were broken. God draws us with gentle cords and bands of love. So it starts at regeneration. Every Christian has at least some meekness or he would not have bowed his neck to our Sovereign Lord in conversion.

***C. Learn that the whole Christian life is to be lived by grace***

But point C indicates that you can't be content with being in God's corral of grace. Yes, that's where we start in our salvation; that's where our training begins. But God wants us to graduate from the corral to running in the battle. Once we are trained, meekness is to characterize our whole life. Matthew 11:28. **Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.** Christ wants us to get harnessed up. He wants us to bear the yoke of service to Him.

I want you to especially notice whose yoke we take on ourselves. We take Christ's yoke on ourselves. In other words, it is the yoke that He is wearing. He doesn't make us pull the weight by ourselves. The purpose of the incarnation was to pull us up, not to weight us down. So Christ continues to be the one who carries the yoke, but He now invites us to be in harness with Him. 1 Corinthians 3:9 says, **“For we are God's fellow workers.”** Astonishing words! We are harnessed together with Him. That speaks of grace. So step one – you've got to be saved by grace; step two – you've got to keep walking in grace.

***D. By God's grace start to recognize pride, confess the sin of pride, turn from pride and crucify pride***

The third essential step to developing meekness is recognizing pride wherever it exists, repenting of it and turning from it and crucifying it. Treat anything related to pride as Kryptonite that will weaken you. In the Superman movie you no doubt saw how Kryptonite weakened superman. And down through history, a failure to avoid spiritual Kryptonite of pride has done in many a man and woman. What made Samson weak? Delilah wanted to know that. What's the Kryptonite that will make Samson weak. It wasn't his sin of fornication, as bad as that was. He was still strong for a while after that. Certainly the immorality contributed to his downfall. But ultimately his Kryptonite was his pride because it kept him from God's

cleansing grace and made him think that he could be strong alone. He had become so proud that he didn't even recognize when the Lord departed from him.

In your outlines I give a chart that was developed by Nancy DeMoss that contrasts proud people with broken people. I encourage you to read three or four lines of that every day to your children and discuss it. Discuss concrete examples of the presence of pride in your life and in their lives. It will help to expose pride in your family. You will likely find that they will immediately see examples of pride in each other's lives, but won't see it in their own lives. It takes spiritual eyes to see our own pride. But I think it is a great chart as a discussion guide. And you can pray that God would open the eyes of your understanding and to flee from this Kryptonite.

[Insert of chart that was in handout]

**THE HEART GOD REVIVES**

“The Sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

Psalm 51:17

Proud People....	Broken People....
focus on the failures of others.	are overwhelmed with a sense of their own spiritual need.
have a critical, faultfinding spirit; look at every one else's faults with a microscope, but their own with a telescope.	are compassionate; can forgive much because they know how much they have been forgiven.
are self-righteous; look down on others.	esteem all others better than themselves.
have an independent, self-sufficient spirit.	have a dependent spirit; recognize their need for others.
have to prove that they are right.	are willing to yield the right to be right.
claim rights; have a demanding spirit.	yield their rights; have a meek spirit.
are self-protective of their time, their rights, and their reputation.	are self-denying.
desire to be served.	are motivated to serve others.
desire to be a success.	are motivated to be faithful and to make others a success.
desire self-advancement.	desire to promote others.
have a drive to be recognized and appreciated.	have a sense of their own unworthiness; are thrilled that God would use them at all.
are wounded when others are promoted and they are overlooked.	are eager for others to get the credit and rejoice when others are lifted up.
have a subconscious feeling, “This ministry/church is privileged to have me and my gifts”; think of what they can do for God.	have a heart attitude that says, “I don't deserve to have a part in any ministry”; know that they have nothing to offer God except the life of Jesus flowing through their broken lives.
feel confident in how much they know.	are humbled by how very much they have to learn.
are self-conscious.	are not concerned with self at all.
are unapproachable or defensive when criticized.	receive criticism with a humble, open spirit.
keep others at arms' length.	are willing to risk getting close to others and to take risks of loving intimately.
are quick to blame others.	accept personal responsibility and can see where they are wrong in a situation.

are concerned with being respectable, with what others think; work to protect their own image and reputation.	are concerned with being real; what matters to them is not what others think but what God knows; are willing to die to their own reputation.
find it difficult to share their spiritual needs with others.	are willing to be open and transparent with others as God directs.
want to be sure that no one finds out when they have sinned; their instinct is to cover up.	once broken, don't care who knows or who finds out; are willing to be exposed because they have nothing to lose.
have a hard time saying, "I was wrong; will you please forgive me?"	are quick to admit failure and to seek forgiveness when necessary.
tend to deal in generalities when confessing sin.	are able to acknowledge specifics when confessing their sin.
are concerned about the consequences of their sin.	are grieved over the cause, the root of their sin.
are remorseful over their sin, sorry that they got found out or caught.	are truly genuinely repentant over their sin, evidenced in the fact that they forsake that sin.
wait for others to come and ask forgiveness when there is a misunderstanding or conflict in a relationship.	take the initiative to be reconciled when there is misunderstanding or conflict in relationships; they race to the cross; they see if they can get there first, no matter how wrong the other may have been.
compare themselves with others and feel worthy of honor.	compare themselves to the holiness of God and feel a desperate need for His mercy.
are blind to their true heart condition.	walk in the light.
don't think they have anything to repent of.	realize they have need of a continual heart attitude of repentance.
don't think they need revival, but are sure that everyone else does.	continually sense their need for a fresh encounter, with God and for a fresh filling of His Holy Spirit.

INTERCESSORS FOR AMERICA-The above outline was presented by Nancy DeMoss during the November Fasting & Prayer '95

### ***E. Some practical steps on overcoming pride<sup>2</sup>***

But once you see that pride is in your heart, you will begin to be overwhelmed with how pervasive it is. It will grieve you to no end because it will seem like an impossible monster to kill. Even after you think you have slain it, you will find it resurrecting itself. So, let me end with some practical tips on putting off pride and putting on meekness. (As the last tip states, this will be a life long battle.) These are some of the things that have helped me over the years.

#### **1. Pray that God would help you to see your pride and that He would give you a hatred for pride.**

First, pray that God would help you to see your pride and would give you a hatred for pride. You know pride is in your heart. Every human has it from time to time. And if you have never seen yourself as proud, it is almost guaranteed that pride is powerfully present in your life. But as we saw last week, we all tend to be blind to our own pride. So pray for illumination.

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<sup>2</sup> Ideas for this section came from Barton Priebe of Dunbar Heights Baptist Church, Wayne Mack (*A Homework Manual for Biblical Counseling*), C. J. Mahaney (*Humility*) and Dwight Wagner of Garden Heights Baptist Church.

## **2. Meditate on the attributes and glory of God**

The second tip is to meditate on the attributes of God and the glory of God. Pride is weakened when you begin to comprehend how awesome God is. The Puritan writer, Thomas Watson, said, “A sight of God’s glory humbles. The stars vanish when the sun appears.” That is certainly true when you begin to seriously consider God sovereignty, His majesty, His omnipresence or other attributes. As an example, just spend a few minutes thinking about what a small speck we are in this city, and what a small speck this city is on this planet, and what a tiny speck our planet is in our solar system, and what a infinitely small speck our solar system is in our galaxy, and what a tiny speck our galaxy is in this vast universe – and that God spoke that into existence. That is humbling. It makes us feel very small. But you need to feel small to develop meekness.

Or take the attributes of self-existence and self-sufficiency – the doctrine of Aseity that I preached on some time back. Here is what Sproul said about that.

“The grand difference between a human being and a supreme being is precisely this: apart from God, I cannot exist. Apart from me, God does exist. God does not need me in order for me to be. This is the difference between what we call a self-existent being and a dependent being. We are dependent. We are fragile. We cannot live without air, without water, without food. No human being has the power of being within himself... We are like flowers that bloom and then wither and fade. This is how we differ from God. God does not wither, God does not fade, God is not fragile.”

There is nothing like a vision of God’s greatness to humble our pride and to stir up meekness.

## **3. Meditate deeply on the cross of Christ**

A third thing that I recommend is to meditate deeply on the cross of Christ. The more you understand of God’s wrath against Christ as our substitute, the more pride will be humbled and grateful praise will ensue. Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones said,

“There is only one thing I know of that crushes me to the ground and humiliates me to the dust, and that is to look at the Son of God, and especially contemplate the cross. ‘When I survey the wondrous cross/on which the prince of glory died/my richest gain I count but loss/and pour contempt on all my pride’. Nothing else can do it. When I see that I am a sinner...that nothing but the Son of God on

the cross can save me, I'm humbled to the dust...nothing but the cross can give us this spirit of humility.”<sup>3</sup>

#### 4. Study the doctrines of grace (Calvinism)

The fourth remedy for pride is the doctrines of grace, or what we call full-blown Calvinism. Why is predestination resisted? Because it humbles man; it is contrary to pride; it makes us realize that we are totally beholden to God and at His sovereign mercy. There is nothing so humbling and pride-destroying as the five points of Calvinism. The flesh rebels against it. But when once those doctrines are embraced, the sweetness of Christ fills the soul. When we meekly let God be all, we find God raising us up to the glory of sons and daughters and seating us with Him in the heavenlies. I have found that throughout my life the doctrines of grace have done a marvelous work of crucifying my pride.

Total Depravity means that anything good in me had to come from God's grace. What can depravity produce but more depravity? The good comes because God works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

Unconditional election means Christ gets all the glory for my salvation. He didn't predestine us because He saw anything good in us. He didn't predestine us because He saw faith in us. He *gave* us the faith. He gave us everything. That is humbling. Even the faith by which we grasp our justification is a gift of grace.

Limited atonement makes people think that God is not fair. But when we are meek we realize that saving anyone by condemning Christ is not fair. He could justly send us all to hell just as he sent all the rebellious angels to hell. He didn't offer the fallen angels any salvation. The phrase, “You have redeemed us to God by Your blood *out of* every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9) is humbling. Why did He not redeem everyone in the nation?

People think it is not fair of God to love Jacob and hate Esau, but when God tames us and makes us meek, we realize what an amazing miracle it was for God to love Jacob. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.”

Irresistible grace does not mean that sinners don't resist. No. Far from it. It means that God's grace conquers our resistance and all men are resistant apart from grace. Irresistible grace destroys the false god, “Free Will.” It gives us a new nature and tames us by what Hosea speaks of as the

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Cited in C.J. Mahaney, “Humility”, p. 66.

gentle bands of grace and the cords of love. Irresistible grace then becomes a comfort. Why? Because God has given us meekness; He's the Bronco Buster who trained us for the harness.

Perseverance of the saints means not only that we will persevere, but also that nothing but God's grace could enable us to do so. The doctrines of grace are a fantastic remedy to pride. And you might want to start by reading my favorite book: A.W. Pink's book, *The Sovereignty of God*.

### **5. Study the doctrine of sin**

The fifth recommendation given by numerous people is to study the doctrine of sin. A. W. Pink's book, *Gleanings in Genesis*, if it doesn't make you sick to your stomach over the realization of the ugliness of your sin, will at least make you realize that we have nothing in which to boast.

### **6. Spend lots of time worshipping God**

Sixth, spend much time in private worship of God – adoring Him for His excellencies. It is impossible to worship God truly and still hold onto pride. The moment I find pride welling up in my heart, I confess it, acknowledge my baseness to God and begin to worship His excellency. It provides speedy relief from pride.

### **7. Read the devotional writings of the Puritans, and read the Major and Minor Prophets**

One of the things that has helped me a great deal in my fight against pride is to read the Puritans. Modern writings let sins such as this get away quite easily, but the Puritans dig, and dig and dig more deeply. They dig till it hurts. They dig till you weep. We need to quit reading sissified books and start reading heavy meat. It will do several things: 1) The Puritans will expose your heart in a way that very few others have been able to achieve. They knew the human heart. 2) Second, they will speak of the practicalities of God's grace in a way that many moderns brush over. They were very practical. They knew how to mortify sin and grow in grace. I especially recommend John Owen on the mortification of sin. 3) Third, they will help you to realize how little you really know – a truly humbling work.

But if you have never read the Major Prophets, I encourage you to read Isaiah, Jeremiah and especially Ezekiel and pray that God would make those Scriptures real to you. Ezekiel and Jeremiah are particularly hard on pride. They are great homework.

### **8. Invite and implement correction**

Next, let your friends know that they can be free to correct you. And even the thought of doing that will make pride squirm inside of some of you. But if pride is as dangerous as we saw that it was last week, then we ought to be delighted to receive corrections. The Proverbs and the Psalms speak of the wise man desiring such rebukes. They are like precious ointment on the head.

And make sure that you do not argue with them when they do correct you. Even if they are wrong in their corrections, it's good for you. Don't argue with them. Instead, look for the small grain of truth that may be there somewhere. Pride hates correction, and since we hate pride, we should crucify it with this anti-Kryptonite.

### **9. Find Christian service outside your home – the more unrecognized and unthanked, the better.**

Eighth, find Christian service outside your home to be engaged in. The less recognition that you get for it, the better. This starves pride, and helps you to become more God-directed in your service. As you serve, tell the Lord that you want to do this for Him alone, and not for recognition from others. Beg the Lord to let you accomplish this service without anyone noticing. Tell him this is your love gift for Him.

### **10. One person suggested playing golf. ☺**

One person suggested playing golf. I just threw that in there for fun. That could actually increase pride in some people, but I'm sure it would be good for my pride.

### **11. Daily acknowledge your total dependence upon God.**

Eleventh, make it your daily prayer that you recognize that you are dependent upon God for life, breath and all things. Ask Him for wisdom, for grace, for physical and emotional strength.

### **12. Engage in spiritual disciplines of Bible reading, memorization, fasting, and prayer.**

Twelfth, engage in the spiritual disciplines of bible reading, memorization, fasting and prayer. Failing to read the Bible is a statement that we can live without God's wisdom. That is so proud – to go week after week with so little looking to God's wisdom. Failure to pray is a statement that I can do it on my own. Prayerless people are proud people. On the other

hand, fasting acknowledges not only our weakness, but that we are willing to trust God's ways (however foolish they may appear) implicitly.

Memorization is hiding God's Word in my heart that I might not sin against God. So the spiritual disciplines must be engaged in.

**13. Since worry is a form of pride, cast your anxieties on God daily.**

Thirteenth, whenever you start worrying, get rid of it. Worry and fear are forms of pride that will rob your day of productivity. I've given entire sermons on worry, so won't take the time here. But in a nutshell, you can get rid of worry by being discipline in three areas: 1) First, be disciplined in your prayer life by refusing to moan and complain in your prayers and by beginning to thank God for all things and to pray in faith for His will to be accomplished. 2) Second, discipline your thought life by focusing on the positive and by refusing to let your mind go down the downward spiral of self-pity, brooding and bitterness. 3) Third, discipline your habits by doing your responsibilities before pleasures. All three steps are described in Philippians 4, and Paul guarantees that it will conquer worry and the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

**14. At the end of every day transfer all glory to the Lord for what you have accomplished.**

Here's another humbling thing to do. At the end of every day, transfer glory to God for everything great you have done. Tell the Lord that it was His grace, His health, His breath and life that have enabled you to do these things, and thank Him.

**15. End each day by acknowledging your limitations as a creature, and going to sleep.**

Next, embrace sleep as a symbol of your creaturely limitations. I used to hate sleep and think of it as a waste of time. I kept trying to cut back on my sleep until it was damaging my health. I now embrace sleep as a reminder that I am not God and I better not try to act like God. C. J. Mahaney, in his book on Humility gave a sample prayer that he prays at the end of the day,

“Father, thank you for this gift. The fact that I'm so tired is a reminder that I am a creature and only You are the Creator. Only you neither slumber nor sleep, while for me, sleep is something I cannot go without. Thank you for this gracious humbling refreshing gift.”

**16. Remember that your war against pride is a life-long war.**

**Conclusion: Don't see the call to meekness as a call to a powerless, joyless Christianity or to a life of mediocrity. See it as joyful conformity to God's will and His image.**

In conclusion, let me say that we should not see the call to meekness as a call to a powerless, joyless Christianity or for that matter to a life of mediocrity. On the contrary, it is Moses (the man who was said to be the meekest man upon the face of the earth) who was said to be the greatest. David said to God, **You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your right hand has held me up. Your meekness has made me great.** Meekness does not do away with greatness. The very opposite happens. The meek runner or gymnast who submits to the Olympic Coach can become great. To fail to be meek is to consign oneself to mediocrity. The meek stallion that moves at the master's whim can do great things. And the meek Christian is the one who is best qualified to be more than a conqueror and to inherit the earth.

Zephaniah 2:3 says, **“seek meekness.”** If you are a non-Christian, you need to seek meekness as you bow before the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He promises in Psalm 149:4: **“He will beautify the meek with salvation.”** If you are joyless, seek meekness from God's gracious throne. Isaiah 29:19 says, **“The meek also shall increase their joy.”** Are you lost and confused? Seek meekness. Psalm 25 promises, **“The meek will He guide.”** Meekness is the remedy to a powerless, joyless, mediocre Christianity. Seek meekness. Amen.