



Can Humility Keep Me From Success?

Luke 14:11: (NASB) *For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*



It is a competitive world out there! I need to focus and to stop at nothing to make my mark. I will apply myself to get the job I want, the life I desire and the status I deserve, while engaging in the leisure and entertainment I crave. Wow! While this description can be of someone who is truly success-motivated and has specific goals, it can also be a warning for us as well. As Christians, we should applaud motivation while at the same time be alert to fend off the destructive poisons of pride and ego. But how do we do both and still have a chance at succeeding in this world? Is it our Christian destiny to be

continuously overlooked for that promotion, that opportunity or that position? As usual, applying the Christian principle of humility in this world is bewildering and can be discouraging as well. However, once we get our arms around how Jesus handled this, the whole confusing matter becomes clear!

We will focus on the parable Jesus taught at the home of a powerful Pharisee about being guests at a meal to highlight our humility and success lessons. This parable was an unmistakable and direct reference to what Jesus was observing at this Sabbath meal.



The context:

Luke 14:1: (NASB) *It happened that when he went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread, they were **watching** <3906> him **closely** <3906>.*

(Source: The Pulpit Commentary) The house into which he entered this sabbath belonged to one who was a leading member of the Pharisee party, probably an influential rabbi, a man of great wealth, or a member of the Sanhedrin. "To eat bread on the sabbath day," as a guest, was a usual practice; such entertainments on the Sabbath day were very usual; they were often luxurious and costly.

Jesus was invited to this meal along with Pharisees and other people of great stature in the religious world. *They were watching him closely.*

Watching: Strong's #3906: *paratereo*; to inspect alongside, i.e., note insidiously or scrupulously
King James Version translates this as: observe, watch

Why were they watching him so closely? Two reasons:



They were perpetually suspicious of Jesus and looking to set him up for a fall:

Luke 6:7: (KJV) *And the scribes and Pharisees **watched** <3906> him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him.*



Just a few weeks earlier, Jesus was at the home of another Pharisee, and it did not go well for the Pharisees:

Luke 11:37-40: (NASB) ³⁷*Now when he had spoken, a Pharisee asked him to have lunch with him; and he went in, and reclined at the table. ³⁸When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that he had not first ceremonially washed before the meal. ³⁹But the Lord said to him,*

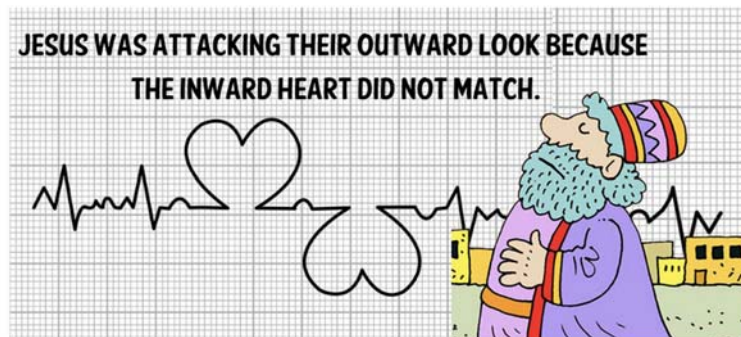


now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness. ⁴⁰You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also?

When Jesus did not do this specific ceremonial washing, the Pharisee condescendingly looked at Jesus as though he were dirty. Jesus basically tells the Pharisee he is a hypocrite. This took great boldness.

Luke 11:43: (New Living Translation) *...How terrible it will be for you Pharisees! For how you love the seats of honor in the synagogues and the respectful greetings from everyone as you walk through the markets!*

Look at the contrast to Jesus. He had adoring throngs of people following him wherever he went, and yet he was able to remain humble.



Jesus went on with several other “woes” and then:

Luke 11:45-47: (NASB) ⁴⁵One of the lawyers (an expert in religious law) said to him in reply, Teacher, when you say this, you insult us too. ⁴⁶But he said, Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers. ⁴⁷Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them.

OUCH!!

The Pharisees were looking to find fault as Jesus obviously had no regard for their fabricated piety. They would not even “lift a finger” to relieve the burdens they put upon the people. They were not representing godliness and Jesus was not afraid to be firm with them. He brought out their hypocrisy and did what he needed to do. There is something very special about this kind of humility.

Now back to the context of our featured parable:

Luke 14:2: (NASB) *And there (literally - “look or behold”) in front of him was a man suffering from dropsy.*

(Source: Albert Barnes Notes on the Whole Bible) The dropsy: A disease produced by the accumulation of water in various parts of the body; very distressing, and commonly incurable.

This is an old-fashioned word for edema, meaning a swelling of soft tissues because of fluid in a body cavity or cellular tissues. We might have heard of this from congestive heart failure where the heart pumps improperly and blood collects in the lower extremities, or fluid buildup from cirrhosis of the liver. Angioedema is severe swelling under the skin.

It would have been noticeable that there was something wrong with the man.



Was having this man in front of Jesus a coincidence? Why would such a man be at such an elegant event? Was he a member of the Pharisee's family, or was he planted by the Pharisees to trap Jesus? Today was the Sabbath and there was to be no work on the Sabbath.

Jesus sees they were attempting to trap him by having him heal the man, and he gently and wisely addresses it:

Luke 14:3-6: (NASB) ³And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, *Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?* ⁴But they kept silent. And he took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away. ⁵And he said to them, *Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?* ⁶And they could make no reply to this.

- ◆ Jesus asks the "experts" regarding healing on the Sabbath. There is no response.
- ◆ He heals and sends the healed man on his way.
- ◆ He again asks for an explanation of the Law and gets no answer.



Why were they so uncharacteristically quiet when Jesus says, *is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?*

The Pharisees were the ones used to asking Jesus the questions and setting him up to fit their agenda. This time they did not use words; they used a person! Jesus recognizes what is happening, so he asks them the question. It is possible that the Pharisees suspected this was a trick question and thought it was best to be quiet.

Jesus saw the man's need and healed him. Another reason why we believe this was a setup was because Jesus *sent him away* after the healing, rather than the man taking his seat at the banquet.

Even before we get to the parable, we see Jesus following the will of the Father and lessons of humility in action being revealed.



Jesus is our model of humility.

He always humbly did his Father's will. If it meant calling out hypocrisy, he did it. If it meant seeing through a trap and acting mercifully, he did it. If it meant opening up the true meaning of Scripture to a closed-minded audience, he did it.

How was this showing a humble Jesus? He was bold, in-their-face and unabashedly strong. Fearless and humble do not seem to pair. But humility is not being silent or passive when it comes to speaking up for God, even if it changes our reputation or goes against our natural inclinations.

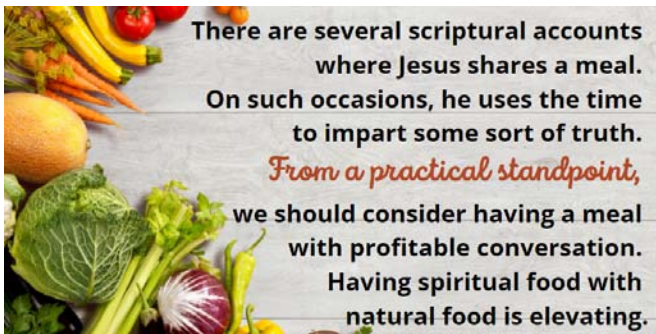


Jesus showed strength in humility. The world often looks at humility as weakness.

It is amazing how fearless Jesus was. He did not back down when confronted or when he was trapped.

**Jesus plowed through the "test" set up by the Pharisees.
Where does our parable fit in?**

With this kind and merciful healing, Jesus now has the focused attention of everyone. As we will see, he will use it to teach a lesson in humble self-recognition. This lesson was just demonstrated by the Pharisees not answering the questions of Jesus.



They did not learn, so Jesus will take another approach:

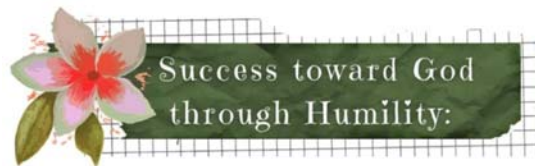
Luke 14:7-9: (NASB) *⁷And he began speaking a parable to the invited guests when he noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table, saying to them, ⁸When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, ⁹and he who invited you both will come and say to you, Give your place to this man, and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place.*

They had been picking out the places of honor at the table - Jesus is watching the Pharisees vie for position at this dinner. He uses the example of a wedding feast rather than a Sabbath feast, which makes this parable easier to hear in that the Pharisees would not be immediately defensive. They would actually listen to the story, not realizing at first that Jesus was speaking about them.

This attitude is equally as damaging for us as Christians, as self-exultation is a sure-fire way to be displeasing to our Father. It takes us out of our discipleship role of service rather than self-aggrandizement.

Jesus here appeals to basic human ego. He talks about the humility in being demoted to sitting in the least honorable place to make his point about accurately assessing their particular value. Recognition from others is important to our human nature - we desire recognition. How we pursue this is whether we honor God or honor ourselves. Allowing our recognition to come from the Father through our experiences is always best. Jesus is going to show how we can appropriately pursue appropriate recognition and honor at an appropriate time.

We are going to look at success through humility in two different ways throughout the rest of the podcast. In each segment, we will first consider **Success toward God through Humility**, and then follow it with **Success in the Real World through Humility** and compare notes on both.



Our first object of success -

know who you are and who you are not! Such knowledge requires clarity of heart and mind. With this honest and humble assessment in place, we can now begin to pay attention to our highest objective - honoring God.



What does this mean, "know who you are and who you are not"? These Pharisees were important people to Jewish life and they acted like they were, so what went wrong?

They were important people, but had the unfortunate attitude of being far more self-important than they were important. If we look at how Jesus described them and how he attacked their stance, he was showing them their self-importance was blown so far out of proportion that they had lost the value of their actual importance. Their pride got in the way.

We are all different. Each of us has different sets of talents and abilities. We need each other to fill in our strengths and weaknesses. This is why we need to accurately know who we are and who we are not to be the most effective in serving the Lord's interests.

Jesus lived the example of knowing who he was. Because he was sure of who he was and what he came for, he ALWAYS did the highest, right thing.

For example, the raising of Lazarus:

John 11:38-44: (NASB) ³⁸So Jesus, again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹Jesus said, Remove the stone. Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to him, Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days. ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God? ⁴¹So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised his eyes, and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard me. ⁴²I knew that You always hear me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent me. ⁴³When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. ⁴⁴The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, unbind him, and let him go.

Lazarus, come forth!

Here Jesus sets up this tremendous miracle. Yet, when he says, *Remove the stone*, he meets with resistance from the family due to the horror of uncovering a decaying body. The response of Jesus is that it is to the glory of God, just remove the stone.

Jesus could have taken the credit for the miracle. In contrast, Moses, *the humblest man on earth* (Numbers 12:3), struck the rock and took partial credit for producing water for the people in the wilderness. For this reason, he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land (Numbers 20:10-12).



There is a subtle yet powerful lesson in this most dramatic of all the miracles of Jesus. He prays *out loud* to his Father so there would be NO question as to the source of the miracle. This was the humble son of God wielding the greatest power any human could ever have, making sure all credit went to God!

We also need to know who we are and why we are sent:

Romans 12:3-5: (NASB) ³*For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment (sound mind), as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.*

Here the apostle tells us to use sound judgment in thinking of ourselves. We need *not to think more highly*...or more lowly! We should use sound judgment in reviewing our strengths.



Humility is accurately assessing who you are. Do not add OR subtract - see reality as best as you can. Admittedly, it is hard not to be biased about ourselves either way, but it is important to try to evaluate ourselves accurately. This is a VITAL base to build from because *it reflects the reality of how God can use us.*

Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less. — C.S. Lewis

Humility is giving credit where credit is due - any good in us is by the grace of God. Being "too humble" is paralyzing and does not help God any more than being too arrogant. That is not real humility, it is more of a false humility or a fear of too high an expectation. If God called us, we have value. We need to recognize that. It is not like He made a mistake!

⁴*For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

Accurate self-knowledge dictates our ability to be the *properly functioning member of the body of Christ we are called to be*. To do the jobs God has set forth for us in the body, we need to know who and what we are. We have to recognize that God gave us certain talents, or maybe simply a desire to serve. We need to be willing to ask Him how to use what we have been given in His service.



How does this work in the real world?

How does humility in recognizing who we are provoke success?

Our natural inclination is to compare ourselves to others. What do you do for a living? What kind of car do you drive? How big is your house? We want to know we are doing at least the same or better than our peer group. While this might help motivate us to be better, to study harder in school, or to work two jobs to feed our families, we really should be looking to Jesus for a better comparison.



This will TRULY motivate us to serve others as we serve God, just like Jesus did. This gives us proper perspective.

In our working lives, this might translate to not trampling on others on our way up. We will take care to be collaborative and give credit where credit is due. This does not happen often in today's working world. This may be hard to do in today's world because of the pressure to get ahead. But this is what Jesus would do – he is our “big brother” who shows us the way and the standard to strive for even if we cannot do perfectly what he did.

Here are three points to help us deal with our day-to-day experiences in the world:



Am I willing to recognize how often and how thoroughly pride has and can destroy lives?

Proverbs 16:18-19: (NASB) ¹⁸Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling. ¹⁹It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud.

It is better to resign ourselves to be in a lowly position than to look at everything through an egotistical lens. It is not all about us; there is too much inherent destruction there. Pride destroys lives.



Do I want to be that person who gets ahead by misrepresenting anything?

Proverbs 11:1-3: (NASB) ¹A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is His delight.

We have to have integrity in everything. Do not misrepresent or exaggerate. Do not skew the truth of the position of others when they differ from ours. Be scrupulously honest. We should strive to always do the right thing, the best way we know how, especially when no one is looking.



Am I willing to look at my endeavors through the lens of a long-term, God-honoring view? Will I simply act with integrity?

²When pride comes, then comes dishonor, but with the humble is wisdom. ³The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the crookedness of the treacherous will destroy them.

Understand who we are and who we are not. If we are called to be followers of Jesus, our standards will dictate how we approach success. Humility, by definition, is an integral part of that approach.



Success in the world
through Humility:

*Our first object
of success –*

know who you are and who you are not! I will be honest with myself about myself so I can be positioned for whatever success God, in His providence would want me to have.



When trying to be successful, everyone is vying for position much like the Pharisees - putting themselves forward at the expense of others.

Here is how a Christian is supposed to vie for position in the world:

We will be honest with ourselves about our abilities so that we can be positioned for God's providence to bring us whatever success He deems necessary.

This is a completely different mindset towards "vying for position," but is more effective in the long run.

How we see our life and our role in it plays a massive part in how our experiences can move us forward!

Once we understand ourselves, what do we do if those around us do not recognize our potential?

Imperfect humans are so insecure! The observations, opinions and reactions of those around us can easily play a massive role in what we say, do and even think. One of the important steps we need to learn to take is that of prioritizing how God's observations of us matter most - now and forever.

Jesus continues the parable and presents a solution to the overblown ego approach. Our all-too-human default is: "I have to show you my value. Excuse me, let me elbow you out of the way so I can get ahead" approach.

His solution will prove to be a real test of character:

Luke 14:10: (NASB) *But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, Friend, move up higher; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you.*



I can't help but think place cards would have solved the problem, but I can see the Pharisees secretly switching the place cards around!



The Pharisees would have been questioning who made up the place cards: "That person obviously does not know how important I am!" To the overblown ego, the problem will still exist no matter the circumstance.

To take the lowest seat might seem counter-intuitive, but here again, Jesus appeals to our human desire for recognition. However, the true humility described here should not be lost in the idea of *feigned* humility for the purpose of personal honor. Jesus does not mean that even though we know we are great and important, we will take the lowly seat so we can show how humble (and worthy) we are. We will shine when we are moved to the higher, more proper position by our host and show everyone our worth. This is just pride that has lost control! Jesus says, just go and sit down and be content with whatever place is left. The host *may* come and invite you to a higher seat... or he may not! That is unimportant. We need to be ready to serve - recognition or not.



Success toward God
through Humility:

*Our second object
of success –*

be willing to be lowly and serve, regardless of recognition or a lack of it. Such a posture requires determination and faith as our flesh naturally craves attention. Determine to be noticed by God and leave the rest!

One of the many examples of Jesus condescending to a low estate to fulfill God's will:

John 13:3-5: (NASB) ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come forth from God and was going back to God, ⁴got up from supper, and laid aside his garments; and taking a towel, he girded himself. ⁵Then he poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded.

On this night before his crucifixion, Jesus was determined to leave a powerful legacy of service behind for those who would represent him going forward. Jesus is carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders. He is burdened with *everything*, but he takes the time to wash their feet because he wants to set them in a pattern for serving one another in his absence. This is what Christianity is supposed to look like.



He is serving others in what is, arguably, his time of greatest need:

John 13:12-15: (NASB) ¹²So when he had washed their feet, and taken his garments and reclined at the table again, he said to them, Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.

In other words: "As your Lord and teacher, watch what I do, then live like I live." This is how we find success through humility towards God. Jesus showed us how to find this godly success every day of his life. How do we find success as a disciple? Do what Jesus did - serve first

and foremost! This sets the tone of what Christianity should look like. It is unique! We are responsible to "rise up" to the challenge of such lowly servitude.

Try not to become a person of success, but rather try to become a person of value. — Albert Einstein

The Apostle Paul explains *our* lowly and service-oriented Christian approach in an honorable way:

1 Corinthians 12:18-26: (NASB) ¹⁸But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. ¹⁹If they were all one member, where would the body be? ²⁰But now there are many members, but one body.

We have all of these different working pieces for the purpose of making a working whole.



Now we get into the “ego” part where we have our perceptions of how we *should* work and what our part *should* be:

²¹And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. ²²On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; ²³and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, ²⁴whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked,

Here Paul tells us there are obvious parts of the body and not so obvious parts. Paul is saying there is great honor inherent in ALL parts, no matter how small the part. All disciples have this inherent honor. Those who are the more “out in front” members should be given that honor in a natural way. They may have a more visible part to play. Paul tells us we should strive to find that honor in the “other” members. Let us recognize those who are working behind the scenes.

All should strive to find the honor in other members:

²⁵so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

All are honored together so all can all share the sufferings.



As a side note, there are about 60 volunteers at Christian Questions. This podcast is made possible through those who are contributing quietly and anonymously in the production. It is NOT just Rick and Jonathan.



How does this work in the real world?

How do we remain holy and full of integrity?

1 Corinthians 1:26,27: (NIV) ²⁶Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

It is not that the rich and powerful cannot be faithful Christians. It is that when you have everything, you do not have the proclivity to listen to the gospel message. It will not appeal to the ultra-ambitious, the ruthless, the wealthy. Such a person would not think they have NEED of the gospel message. It will not make us rich or healed or popular. The true gospel offers peace and trust in *future* promises. At first glance, it is seemingly low in value.

Having excess lends itself to pride. Poor people can be prideful, too.



Episode 1031:
What Happens to My Christianity
When I Go To Work?

Avoiding the pitfalls of workplace talk, thinking and behavior



Check out our CQ Kids video:
WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?
christianquestions.com/youtube



Does our discussion on humility vs. success mean we should not ask for a raise at work? Should Christians just write "Welcome" on their faces and be doormats? What about family members (especially teenagers!) taking our efforts for granted and disrespecting us? Are we supposed to just accept this with humility?



Jesus spoke up and spoke out. Children of all ages should respect their parents and parents do a disservice to children by allowing them to be disrespectful. In the workplace, there is nothing wrong with presenting your contributions and asking for commensurate pay. Watch for God's providence in the answer. This must all be done in humility - in making the proper assessment of ourselves with integrity.

Approach our earthly responsibilities with our mindset focused on the most important things:

1 Peter 1:13-16: (NASB) *Therefore, prepare your minds for action...*

The real world requires action; we need to have our minds focused. In order to do this, we need to stay the course.

Even though we might be dealing with earthly matters, keep them in the perspective of honoring God in ALL things:

...keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Put these matters in perspective, stay the course, then proceed based on the higher knowledge of sanctified (set apart for a godly purpose) actions rather than on knowledge and experience regarding the base things of this world.

Stand above the fray:

¹⁴*As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,* ¹⁵*but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;* ¹⁶*because it is written, you shall be holy, for I am holy.*

In our everyday work world, we must still remain holy and full of integrity and humility. This is how we find success.



be willing to be lowly and serve, regardless of recognition or a lack of it. I will resist the temptation to be like everyone else and compete on their level because I know the ultimate futility of such actions. My life is accountable to something higher and I look for success in this world only as God permits.

The more we talk about how import humility is, the more it becomes obvious how difficult humility is.



**What is the end result of all this humility?
Will we get what we want from this world because of it?**

The easy answer to that question is, of course you will – *as long as* (here is the caveat) what you want from your interactions in this world is to honor God in all that you say and do! The harder answer is to address the fact that our successes as Christians often are NOT what the world defines as *their* successes. In many ways we might be talking about two different definitions of success.

Jesus ends the parable with a concise and eternal lesson:

Luke 14:11: (NASB) *For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*

This is a powerful yet simple lesson. We humble ourselves and put this humble self in the hand of God. He can exalt us however and whenever versus exalting our own selves, taking the very real risk that our self-exaltation is full of ego and ends up being a mess.

The basic principle of this parable is drawn from Proverbs.

Jesus is using the sound principles of the Pharisees' Jewish heritage to show them his teaching is clearly of God and not from Jesus himself:

Proverbs 25:6-7: (NASB) *‘Do not claim honor in the presence of the king, and do not stand in the place of great men; ⁷for it is better that it be said to you, Come up here, than for you to be placed lower in the presence of the prince, whom your eyes have seen.*

The Pharisees would have been familiar with this proverb and would have understood that Jesus' story taught this exact thing. How could they argue? Jesus is using an illustration written before anyone knew who Jesus was. The approach of Jesus is so wise to get them to rise up higher by becoming lower in their own minds.



The simple point of the story is, when we spend our time and effort exalting our accomplishments, position, influence or ego, we are building a house of cards that is inevitably destined to fall. Instead, give God the glory and the authority and see how our success unfolds!



*Our third object
of success –*

leave ALL results in the hands of God! The ability to not obsess over results requires consistent patience and deep faith and yet it really is an obvious conclusion. Who else but God would you want overruling your results?

Patiently leave every result in the hands of God.



Jesus' own humility and the unfathomable exaltation that followed:

Philippians 2:5-9: (WEY) ⁵Let the same disposition be in you which was in Christ Jesus. ⁶Although from the beginning he had the nature of God (meaning, he was a spirit being) he did not reckon his equality with God a treasure to be tightly grasped. ⁷Nay, he stripped himself of his glory, and took on him the nature of a bondservant by becoming a man like other men. ⁸And being recognized as truly human, he humbled himself and even stooped to die; yes, to die on a cross. ⁹It is in consequence of this that God has also so highly exalted him, and has conferred on him the Name which is supreme above every other,

There is no higher place he could go! There is no more dramatic account of how humility - combined *with a godly focus* - can accomplish an impossible-looking earthly mission. In the eyes of the average person, Jesus seemed to fail (he died on a cross, horribly), but in the plan of God he changed everything! He did this all by being humble, doing all that the Father wanted him to do.



Like Jesus, we must leave all results in God's hands as we do the humbling work of serving others:

Psalms 116:12-15: (NASB) ¹²What shall I render to the LORD For all His benefits toward me? ¹³I shall lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the LORD. ¹⁴I shall pay my vows to the LORD, Oh may it be in the presence of all His people. ¹⁵Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His godly ones.

Every day we should be asking what can we give back to God for all of the incredible blessings He has given to us. Even if our lives are in shambles right now and everything is very difficult, if we still have our faith in Jesus Christ, and the words of God, we have great power and great potential blessing. We want to give back in thankfulness!

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones - this does not sound very good!

We need to add this text to round out the thought:

James 4:10: (NASB) *Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.*

Being exalted after death means we were found faithful. If we live a humble life of thankfulness and gratitude in the presence of God's children, it will be contagious, lifting everyone up together. Success comes through humility because humility allows us to see and then to act. If we want divine favor, it should be sought with humility and not in pride and self-sufficiency.



How does this work in the real world?

How do we stay focused on God in a work environment where such focus can be detrimental?

- Business owners and entrepreneurs can give back by matching a customer's purchase, donating a similar item to someone in need.
- Small businesses can donate a portion of their profits.
- Avoid deceptive advertising that tricks customers in order to get ahead.



One of the best types of employees is a faithful Christian. The employer gets an employee who will put in an honest day's work, who will not steal, backstab or be part of office gossip.

Getting ahead through humility works but requires us to be focused on higher things. It is easy to get sucked in by our environment. By staying humble and focused on God in our dealings with others, we can avoid the pitfalls we will encounter.

Realize that our lives as sanctified Christians are dependent on us following higher standards (not what everybody else says or what we think might be good):

1 Peter 2:11-12: (NASB) ¹¹*Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.* ¹²*Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

Notice how the apostle describes us as *aliens and strangers*. Our world is not their world, but we are in their world. We have to glorify God no matter where we are. *Abstain from fleshly lusts* - our behavior must be excellent while we are *among the Gentiles* so they can see someone with integrity, a good work ethic and one who has a kind word at every turn.

Always remember who is responsible for our ultimate "promotion" and serve Him first:

1 Peter 5:5-7: (NASB) ⁵*...clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.* ⁶*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,* ⁷*casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.*

Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another - According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon, this means the white scarf or apron of slaves to distinguish them from the freeman - a humble garment. This encourages Christians to show their subjection one to another by putting on humility. But HOW do we



clothe ourselves in humility? It is a physical act to put on a garment; it is not part of our natural skin. We have to make the decision about what we will wear to *clothe ourselves*. The Greek word for *clothe* here goes beyond just placing a coat on our shoulders. It means, "to bind or fasten by the tying of knots," so that garment is secured and becomes a part of us. We want to make it a practice never to go out without our "humility coat." We should have it on in every action of life, whether in public or in private.

This idea of humility has a powerful transforming effect on who we are, how we act, what we do and why we do it. We can achieve success when we do these things and put them all in their proper place, honoring God.





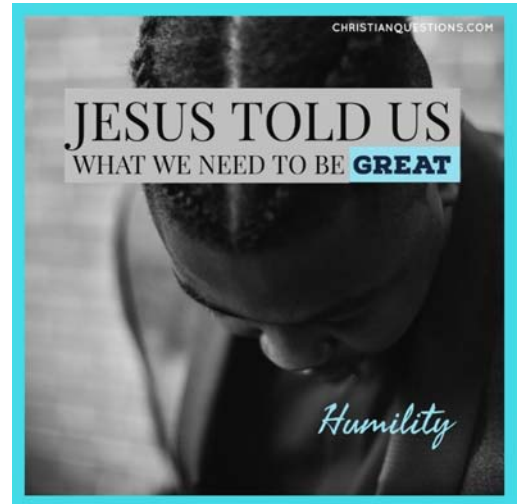
Success in the world
through Humility:

Our third object
of success -

leave ALL results in the hands of God! Whether our abilities are ever appreciated, or our potential is fully realized, we can still have success in this world by being that person who stands out in the crowd for their focus, kindness, hard work and integrity. Praise God with your everyday approach and be successful.

We cannot let the world dictate our success. Their perspective is not important enough to make a difference! Why? Because we are talking about eternity. We are talking about living up to a standard many people do not even want to acknowledge. But it does exist, and we have the opportunity to live up to it. This is how we can find success.

After this parable we might think the host of this gathering, who was a Pharisee leader, might have been sitting there feeling pretty good. After all, he seemed to represent the inviter - the one who decided where guests should sit.



Jesus shares the same humility lesson with him:

Luke 14:12-14: (NASB) ¹²And he also went on to say to the one who had invited him, When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. ¹³But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

Jesus is telling this man that he should include an invitation to the lowly people. Invite them to dinner and do not expect reciprocation. He should give to others because he was in a greatly blessed position.

Can humility keep me from success? The answer partially depends on how you define "success." In many cases, staying humble keeps us motivated and looking at a goal to strive for. Ultimately, divine favor is the only success that will be remembered!

When we review the lessons of this parable, we see Jesus make a significant point. He unfolds the idea of reaching out to those poor and lowly people who had nothing much to give back. He was a humble servant to his apostles, to those he healed and fed, to the lowliest leper and most frightening demon-possessed person. This humble giving of himself elevated him to the highest place in the Heavenly Father's eyes (though maybe not in the eyes of men).



He humbled himself to follow what the Father dictated and provided in his life. This is the way to ensure success for us as well.

For all those people who are vying for success and jockeying for position now, the resurrection will be the great equalizer. The kingdom of God will bring a new set of standards for success. All humankind will be raised up, and all of their successes in this present world will be forgotten. The only successes that will be remembered are those that gave honor and glory to God.

Which kind of success do you want in your life?

*So, can humility keep me from success?
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on May 31, 2021
Ep. 1180: Am I My Own Worst Enemy?

Bonus Material and Study Questions

The proud man can learn humility, but he will be proud of it. — Mignon McLaughlin

Reminders of what the most important things are and why...

Humility really does rule if we are seeking God and His will:

James 4:6-10: (NASB) ⁶But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. ⁷Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

Next is another parable that dramatically reveals the godlessness of an ego-based approach.

Notice that it does not matter what we profess to be; it matters what we actually are from the inside out:

Luke 18:9-14: (NASB) ⁹And he also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: ¹⁰Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and



was praying this to himself: God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get. ¹³But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me, the sinner! ¹⁴I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.

The importance of learning to do things by the strength of God and not our own strength:

1 Peter 4:11: (NASB) *Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

A point of interest: The following is an exhaustive word study on the word used in our podcast describing how the Pharisees “watched” Jesus at this Sabbath gathering.

The use of the word in different verses does lend towards the understanding of their watching, being suspicious and even malicious:

Watched: Strong's #3906: *paratereo*; to inspect alongside, i.e. note insidiously or scrupulously
King James Version translates this word as “observe” and “watch.”

Mark 3:2: (KJV) And they **watched** <3906> him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.

Luke 6:7: (KJV) And the scribes and Pharisees **watched** <3906> him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him.

Luke 14:1: (KJV) And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they **watched** <3906> him.

Luke 20:20: (KJV) And they **watched** <3906> him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.

Acts 9:24: (KJV) But their laying await was known of Saul. And they **watched** <3906> the gates day and night to kill him.

Galatians 4:10: (KJV) Ye **observe** <3906> days, and months, and times, and years.

Christian Questions Weekly Newsletter

CQ Rewind Show Notes and Study Questions

Text

CQREWIND

to **22828** to get started.



Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1179: Can Humility Keep Me From Success?

<https://christianquestions.com/parables/1179-success>

See:  CQ.Rewind
SHOW NOTES

1. Why were the Pharisees watching Jesus closely? What did Jesus do to upset the Pharisees in the Luke 11 instance? What was Jesus' rebuke to them? (See Luke 14:1-11, 6:7, 11:37-43)
2. In what "trap" did the Pharisees seek to catch Jesus in the Luke 14 experience? What question did Jesus ask that the Pharisees did not answer? (See Luke 14:1-6)
3. How did Jesus model *humility* with his bold approach to the Pharisees - even to the point of rebuking them? What part of humility is illustrated here? Why is this considered humility?
4. What were the Pharisees doing in Luke 14:7? Why does Jesus talk about a different kind of feast from the actual event he was attending? How does Jesus make his point? Why is this flaw of self-aggrandizement particularly dangerous for us as Christians? (See Luke 14:7-9)
5. Why is it particularly important for Christians to know who we are and who we are not? What is the proper definition of humble? Why is accurate self-knowledge essential to the body of Christ? (See Romans 12:3-5)
6. What are three points that will help us deal with our day-to-day experiences in the world? (See Proverbs 16:18-19, 11:1-3)
7. How did Jesus end his parable? What was his solution to the overblown egos of the Pharisees? How does this parable apply to us? How did Jesus model what our attitude should be? (See Luke 14:10, John 13:3-5, 12-15)
8. What part does *ego* play in the Apostle Paul's description of the Christian "body"? What part does *humility* play? What part does *honor* play? (See 1 Corinthians 12:18-26)
9. To whom does the gospel message appeal? When will these promises of peace and success take place? (See 1 Corinthians 1:26-31)
10. How does 1 Peter 1:13-16 help us approach our earthly responsibilities?
11. What are the precepts given us here for developing a *successful* character? What are some of the actions taken by a successful godly character? How does this apply in your life? (See 1 Peter 2:11-12, 5:5-7, Luke 14:12-14)
12. What does "success" mean in your life? Who dictates your idea of success?