

LIVING WITH HUMILITY

book sixteen in the series:

THE OWNER'S MANUAL TO THE NEW YOU

DOUG BRITTON, MFT

Five-day Bible study for individuals, small groups, and churches

- Day One: The Danger of Pride
- Day Two: Understanding Humility
- Day Three: Humility in Action
- Day Four: The Power in Humility
- Day Five: Review and Test

Living with Humility: Book sixteen in “The Owner’s Manual to the New You”

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The Owner's Manual to the New You

Forty-eight short books

(Each book includes a five-day Bible study and homework)

By Doug Britton, MFT

Twelve books on "Knowing God"

Twelve books on "Developing a Godly Character"

Twelve books on "Enjoying Healthy Relationships"

Twelve books on "Overcoming Personal Problems"

For

Individuals

Small Groups

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The Owner's Manual to the New You

"The Owner's Manual to the New You," published by LifeTree Books, is a series of forty-eight cross-cultural discipleship books by Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist Doug Britton. LifeTree Books is making these books available free of charge for individual use.

Each book is ideal for a five-day study by small groups, classes, or individuals. Although this is a forty-eight-book series, each book can be studied as a complete book by itself.

Knowing God

- Book 1: Who is God?
- Book 2: Becoming a Believer
- Book 3: Your Identity in Christ
- Book 4: Quick Overview of the Bible
- Book 5: How to Study the Bible
- Book 6: How to Pray
- Book 7: Key Christian Practices
- Book 8: Successful Christian Living
- Book 9: Living a Joyful Life
- Book 10: Knowing God's Will
- Book 11: Obeying God
- Book 12: Living in God's Power

Developing a Godly Character

- Book 13: Growing in Christ
- Book 14: Changing Your Self-Image
- Book 15: Changing Your Attitudes
- Book 16: Living with Humility
- Book 17: Living with Purpose
- Book 18: Living with Self-Control
- Book 19: Living with Integrity
- Book 20: Growing through Problems
- Book 21: Trusting God
- Book 22: Breaking Free from Our Culture
- Book 23: Handling Money Responsibly
- Book 24: Staying Faithful to God

Enjoying Healthy Relationships

- Book 25: Keys to Healthy Relationships
- Book 26: Making Friends
- Book 27: Showing Grace to Others
- Book 28: Forgiving Others
- Book 29: Serving Others
- Book 30: Resolving Conflicts
- Book 31: Overcoming Peer Pressure
- Book 32: Helping Others with Wisdom
- Book 33: Dating, Marriage, and Sex
- Book 34: Embracing the Body of Christ
- Book 35: Respecting Authority
- Book 36: Sharing Your Faith

Overcoming Personal Problems

- Book 37: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 1)
- Book 38: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 2)
- Book 39: Overcoming Rejection
- Book 40: Overcoming Temptation (Part 1)
- Book 41: Overcoming Temptation (Part 2)
- Book 42: Overcoming Anxiety and Fear
- Book 43: Overcoming Jealousy and Insecurity
- Book 44: Overcoming Self-Sufficiency
- Book 45: Overcoming Guilt and Shame
- Book 46: Overcoming Discouragement
- Book 47: Overcoming Failure
- Book 48: Overcoming the Fear of Death

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Foreword

When I was first asked to write a series of downloadable books for intensive discipleship training, I was excited. Jesus has revolutionized my life, and I am glad to share his truths with you.

The pages you are about to study come straight from God's word. They contain truth that puts our feet on the path to the fullest life possible—truth that sets us free.

As Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).

May God speak to your heart as you read, and may he bring his truth alive in your life.

Your brother in Christ,

Doug Britton

P.S. LifeTree Books is offering this downloadable book and all the other books in "The Owner's Manual to the New You" series free of charge. If you find these books helpful, please feel free to spread the news to churches, ministries, and individuals who might benefit from them.

Small Group Leader's Guidelines

Introduction. These studies are for new believers as well as mature Christians. They are for small groups, discipleship classes, mentors, and individuals. They are ideal for studies lasting from sixty to ninety minutes.

Choose the key points, verses, and discussion questions you will talk about. Don't think you need to cover every verse and question. With new believers, go over the main points, key verses, and selected questions. Go into more depth with mature Christians.

Begin and end each study with prayer. Start by asking God to help each person grow from the study. At the end, ask everyone to pray for help to put God's truth into practice.

Review homework. Before starting the current lesson, ask group members to discuss their answers to some of the previous day's homework questions.

Personalize the lesson. Although it's okay to read each lesson word-for-word, the material will "come alive" if you discuss some of the key points in your own words. Share your own experiences and struggles, and how God has helped you.

As you read, identify important points and key parts of verses. Ask group members to circle them, and then explain why you want to emphasize these points.

Get everyone involved. The more people are actively involved, the more they are impacted by what you are studying. Don't ask questions that can be answered by "yes" or "no." For example, don't ask, "Do you have any thoughts about this?" Instead, ask, "How does this insight speak to you?"

Consider breaking up into smaller groups to discuss the questions if you are leading a large group or class.

Use day five for a review and test. Use the questions in day five as a review and/or test. Remove these pages if you do not want group members to see the questions ahead of time.

Want to Learn More?

Free online resources: For more suggestions for small group leaders as well as many online Bible studies on Christianity and daily living (anger, marriage, self-image, finances, and more), visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/small-groups

Small group leader's book: For detailed information on how to lead small groups and overcome typical problems, visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/small-groups.

Day One: The Danger of Pride

What's wrong with pride?

I still remember a friend challenging me: "What's wrong with pride?" He had created a very successful business, and he was proud of his accomplishment.

That was a reasonable question, especially given the fact that he had worked hard for many years to build up his business.

The Bible answers his question in many places.



Nebuchadnezzar's example

Let's start with the story of Nebuchadnezzar, one of history's most powerful kings. (You can read the complete story in Daniel 4:1-37.)

One day Nebuchadnezzar went for a walk. As he strolled, he said:

Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty? (Daniel 4:30)

God's response was quick and to the point. He took away the king's sanity and drove him outside to eat grass like a cow.

Seven years later, when God restored Nebuchadnezzar's sanity, the king no longer exulted in his accomplishments and possessions. Instead, he glorified God as sovereign over all:

At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. (Daniel 4:34)

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble. (Daniel 4:37)

Discussion questions

1. Why do you think this story is in the Bible? What lesson do you think God wants us to learn from it?
2. Do you sometimes talk (or think) about yourself the same way Nebuchadnezzar talked about himself? Explain your answer.

Saul's example

It's easy to be prideful. We see another example of this in the life of Saul, the first man God chose to be king over Israel. Saul started well, but he became increasingly independent-minded and started to disobey God's orders. One time he actually set up a monument in his own honor.

Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, "Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal." (1 Samuel 15:12)

Eventually God rejected Saul as king and chose another man (David) to take his place. The full story of Saul's life and death is found in 1 Samuel 9:1-31:4.

It's easy to read about Saul and criticize him, but it's important to also look at ourselves. At one time I had a job with about seventy staff under me. I still remember one day when I stood outside the administration building and thought how great it was to have so much power.

A few minutes later, I realized how prideful I was being. I asked God's forgiveness and asked him to help me change my attitude.

Discussion question

3. Have you ever felt prideful about your power, position, or accomplishment? If so, do you think God was pleased with your attitude? Explain your answer.

Warnings about pride

Many people think there's nothing wrong with pride. In fact, some think pride is healthy. To see how strongly God disagrees with this, read the following verses:

To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech. (Proverbs 8:13)

When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom. (Proverbs 11:2)

Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice. (Proverbs 13:10)

The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished. (Proverbs 16:5)

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. (Proverbs 16:18)

Before his downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honor. (Proverbs 18:12)

Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin! (Proverbs 21:4)

Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him. (Proverbs 26:12)

He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe. (Proverbs 28:26)

A man's pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honor. (Proverbs 29:23)

They will spread out their hands in it, as a swimmer spreads out his hands to swim. God will bring down their pride despite the cleverness of their hands. (Isaiah 25:11)

Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by his deeds are weighed. (1 Samuel 2:3)

The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride. (Ecclesiastes 7:8)

The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of men brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. (Isaiah 2:11)

The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself, "Who can bring me down to the ground?"
(Obadiah 1:3)

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. (1 Corinthians 13:4)

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6)

When we are prideful, we push God out of the picture. In a sense, we act as if we think we are little gods.

Here are more verses warning against pride: Proverbs 6:16-17, 8:13, 13:10, 15:25, 21:24, 30:12-13, 30:20, 30:32; Psalm 12:3-4; Isaiah 10:12-19; Mark 12:38-39; Luke 18:9-14; Romans 12:16; 1 Corinthians 8:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:2; and James 1:9-10.

Discussion questions

4. Why do you think the Bible says pride is so dangerous?
5. Are you prideful? Check each statement that describes you:
 - I feel superior because I am good looking.
 - I feel superior because I am in good shape.
 - I feel superior because I am good at a sport.
 - I feel superior because I am smart.
 - I feel superior because I am creative.
 - I feel superior because I am musical.
 - I feel superior because I drive a new car.
 - I feel superior because I am popular.
 - I feel superior because I am successful.
 - I feel superior because of my possessions.
 - I feel superior because of my house or furniture.
 - I think I am more important than other people.
 - I think God loves me more than he loves others.
 - I take credit for my successes.
 - Possessions are very important to me.

Does God want us to hang our heads and say we are no good?

Some people think that since the Bible warns against pride, we should think poorly of ourselves and go through life feeling like a failure. As you will see in a few pages, that's not what God has in mind for us. We are encouraged to be humble, but humility may mean something very different from what you think.

Replace pride with thankfulness

Is it wrong to feel joyful when you accomplish something? Would it be a sin, for example, to stand back and look at a garden you planted and think, “Well done”?

It's okay to find satisfaction in your work (Ecclesiastes 2:24) or to be excited when God uses you. Just remember to thank God for creating you and giving you the gifts, skills, and strength that allow you to succeed.

If you say “Look at what I did,” you risk taking credit away from God and giving it to yourself. Instead say “Thank you, Lord, for helping me plant this garden” or “Thank you for the privilege of being able to plant this garden.” In other words, replace pride with a thankful heart.

Discussion questions

6. How can being thankful keep you from being prideful?
7. How will you remind yourself to be thankful, not prideful?

Do you know Jesus?

This book was written to help believers in Jesus grow in their faith and personal life. You will get the most out of these pages if you know Christ, since it is through his love and power that you can truly change. If you have not yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, let me invite you to accept him as your Savior and Lord. Make this your personal prayer:

Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God, and I need your help. I confess I have sinned and failed you in many ways. I invite you to be my Savior and Lord, and I ask you to help me follow you the rest of my life. Thank you for loving me, forgiving me, and accepting me as your child.

If you prayed this prayer, welcome to the family of God. God has plans for you—to transform you. You have an exciting life ahead of you!

Memory verse

Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. (1 Peter 5:5)

Want to learn more?

Free online Bible studies

Studies on your self-image

www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/self-image

Book by Doug Britton

Getting Started, Getting Connected

www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/gettingstarted

Homework – Day One

1. Why did God take away King Nebuchadnezzar's sanity and drive him outside to eat grass like a cow?

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2. What lesson did Nebuchadnezzar learn from this experience?
3. What lesson can you learn from this in your own life?
4. King Saul started well, but eventually gave in to sin and pride. If you are in a position of authority, how can you avoid making the same mistake Saul made?

5. Review the verses warning about pride and write one here that speaks to you personally:

6. Describe why you chose this verse:

7. Does God want you to hang your head and think you are no good? Explain your answer:

8. What does “replace pride with thankfulness” mean?

Day Two: Understanding Humility

What is humility?

At the end of Day One, you read a verse that said you should “clothe yourself with humility.”

Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. (1 Peter 5:5)

What does that mean?

Many people have the wrong idea about God, the Bible, and humility. They think being humble means groveling in front of others or thinking they are no good and others are good.

That’s not the Bible’s picture. God says when you are humble, you are free from pride and arrogance. You know that in your flesh you are inadequate, yet you also know who you are in Christ—and who you are in Christ is wonderful.



Discussion question

1. Does being humble mean groveling in front of other people? Explain your answer.

Being humble means remembering your salvation is by grace

We did not earn our way into the kingdom of God by our own righteousness or our good works. Our salvation is a gift from God.

And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. (Romans 11:6)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Discussion question

2. How can remembering you were saved by grace help keep you humble?

Being humble means acknowledging you need God’s help

Few people actually say, “Here I am God. You’re sure lucky to have me on your side.” However, many of us act like we think this, even if we don’t say it.

When we say we are worthwhile, good people because of our own personal qualities and accomplishments, we fool ourselves. We need to be honest before God, prayerfully acknowledging our need for him and surrendering ourselves to his love, mercy, and forgiveness. Being aware of our own shortcomings or failures helps us stay humble.

There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins. (Ecclesiastes 7:20)

As I go through life, I often find myself slipping into an independent frame of mind. Then God allows something to happen that brings me up short, and once again I confess my need for his forgiveness, and mercy, and help. I find that I need to continually say prayers of surrender.

Discussion question

3. Take a few minutes to pray a prayer of surrender, acknowledging your need for God's help.

Being humble means giving God the glory (or credit) for your accomplishments

It's easy to say "Look at what I did" without glorifying God. Yet it would be foolish to boast in your own successes, not in the Lord, for he is the one who gives you the ability to do what you do. And he is the one who often directs your path and grants you success—even when you are not aware of his intervention.

When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. (Deuteronomy 8:10-14)

The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but man is tested by the praise he receives. (Proverbs 27:21)

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Galatians 6:14)

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. (2 Corinthians 4:7)

Discussion questions

4. What does it mean to give God glory (or credit) for your accomplishments?
5. Do you give God glory (or credit) for your accomplishments? Why or why not?

"But I earned what I have. No one gave me anything."

Remember Nebuchadnezzar? His sin was one of pride and the illusion of self-sufficiency. It's easy for us to say something similar, such as, "I earned my money. No one gave me anything. I had to work for it."

It may be true that you put in long hours to get where you are. Yet it is God who created you in the first place and gave you the strength and talent to make money.

You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today. (Deuteronomy 8:17-18)

It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them. You are my King and my God, who decrees victories for Jacob. (Psalm 44:3-4)

For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? (1 Corinthians 4:7)

It's okay to acknowledge that you did something well or to say "thank you" when someone compliments you. But if you feel like boasting, prayerfully ask God to change your heart.

Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:31)

Discussion question

6. Do you agree that we should give God the credit for our accomplishments? Why or why not?

Being humble is getting your self-image from who you are in Christ

One reason we have so much trouble with insults and criticism is that others' words strongly influence our sense of who we are. We often react to attacks by trying to protect our self-image.

Paul gave us advice that can free us from being devastated by other people's words. He wrote that he didn't worry about what others thought about him. All he cared about was what God thought.

I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. (1 Corinthians 4:3-4)

Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. (Galatians 1:10)

We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. (1 Thessalonians 2:4)

We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. (1 Thessalonians 2:6)

Try to live at peace with everybody (Romans 12:18), but don't let others' opinions control your attitudes or behavior. Remember that you are a vessel of the living God. Base your self-image on the presence of Christ within you, not on what others say or do. Ask God to help you experience his love and grasp who you are in him.

When you learn to turn to God for your sense of self, other people's words become much less important. It doesn't matter what they say, because:

- You are loved by God (Ephesians 3:17-19).
- You are God's child (1 John 3:1).
- You are God's workmanship (Ephesians 2:10).
- You are a temple of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 6:16).
- You are a priest (1 Peter 2:9).
- You are part of the body of Christ (Romans 12:5).
- You are a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20).
- You are Christ's sheep (John 10:11).

Being humble means serving others

Godly humility is being comfortable with who you are in Christ and serving others—putting them first.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. (Philippians 2:3)

In the Bible, we see that Jesus gave us a good example of humility in action. Although he was strong, he also was humble.

I am gentle and humble in heart. (Matthew 11:29)

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:5-8)

Discussion question

7. Why does being humble mean serving others?

Being humble means you don't need to prove anything

You don't need to defend yourself when you understand the Bible's picture of humility, for you know who you are in Christ. You are able to be a peacemaker without needing to fight for your rights. You are able to walk humbly in the power of God's Holy Spirit, not your own personal power.

Discussion question

8. Why don't you need to prove anything, or to defend yourself, when you are humble?

Memory verse

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Galatians 6:14)

Want to learn more?

Book by Doug Britton

Who Do You Think You Are?

www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/who

Homework – Day Two

1. How can remembering that you became a believer because of God's grace help you stay humble?
2. Do you need God's help to be the person you would like to be? If so, how can remembering this help you stay humble?
3. Describe one time that you gave yourself credit for an accomplishment:
4. Could you have enjoyed the same accomplishment by giving God the glory (or credit)? Explain your answer:

Day Three: Humility in Action

What does humility look like?

One way to understand something is to see what it looks like in action. For example, if you never had seen a helicopter but then one day you saw one in a field, you wouldn't have a very good idea of what a helicopter is.

However, if you watched it take off and fly, you would have a very good idea of what a helicopter is.

Today you will read several descriptions of humility in action. As you read, pray to better understand humility and to grow in each area.

When you are humble:



You don't try to impress others

You don't try to impress others by how funny you are, how much you know about sports (or politics or religion), how kind you are, what a good job you do, how strong you are, or how much authority you have.

Discussion questions

1. Do you try to impress others? If so, what do you do?
2. Would you like to stop trying to impress others? What steps could you take to stop?

You defuse arguments

You don't need to stand up for yourself in an angry manner. And you do not have to win every argument.

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. (Proverbs 15:1)

Discussion question

3. Do you think you need to win every argument? If so, why has this been so important to you?
4. How can you break this pattern?

You handle unfair treatment peacefully

You respond to unfair treatment without being overcome by bitterness. You do not feel a need for vengeance or revenge.

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:31-32)

Discussion question

5. Do you try to get revenge? Do you think that's a good idea? Explain your answer.

You welcome advice

You listen carefully when others offer advice. Not only that, you seek out wise men and women and ask for their advice.

Let a righteous man strike me—it is a kindness; let him rebuke me—it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it. Yet my prayer is ever against the deeds of evildoers. (Psalm 141:5)

Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice. (Proverbs 13:10)

Discussion question

6. How easy is it for you to welcome advice?

You respond to criticism wisely

You respond to and learn from criticism without defensiveness—whether it is deserved or not deserved. There may be some wisdom you can glean from others' words that will help you grow.

If someone gives you constructive criticism, you are grateful. If someone says cruel words, you don't take them personally. Instead, you ask God to give you grace and wisdom.

Discussion question

7. How do you respond to criticism? How would you like to respond? Explain your answer.

You do not put on a "false front"

You don't act like a big shot. The better you know God, the less you have to prove.

You ask for forgiveness

Even if you think you are only one percent wrong, you apologize for what you did wrong.

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23-24)

Discussion question

8. How often do you ask others to forgive you? Is this something you would like to do more? Explain your answer.

You forgive others

You don't hold on to a grudge. You are aware that you are imperfect, and you extend grace and forgiveness to other people.

Discussion question

9. Do you easily forgive others? Why or why not? Would you like to forgive others more?

You talk with a respectful attitude

You talk courteously and respectfully, regardless of the situation—even if you need to be firm or take strong actions.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. (Ephesians 4:29)

You learn from your failures

If you fail at something, make a mistake, commit a sin, or are publicly humiliated, you aren't completely devastated, and you don't give up your walk with God. You deal with the consequences of your actions, learn a lesson, accept God's grace and mercy, and press on.

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:14)

Discussion questions

10. Do you learn from your failures? Why or why not?
11. What is one lesson you would like to learn and remember? Explain your answer.

If you are a leader, you guard yourself against pride

You know how easy it is to feel self-important when you are successful or have a position of authority or influence. You pray for a humble spirit and the attitude of a servant.

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (1 Peter 5:2-4)

Memory verse

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. (Proverbs 15:1)

Notes

Homework – Day Three

1. This study says that being humble means you don't need to try to impress anyone. Do you agree with this? Explain your answer:
2. How can being humble help prevent arguments from getting worse?
3. How can being humble help you handle unfair treatment peacefully?
4. How do you normally respond when someone criticizes you or offers you advice?

5. How would you like to respond when someone criticizes you or offers you advice?

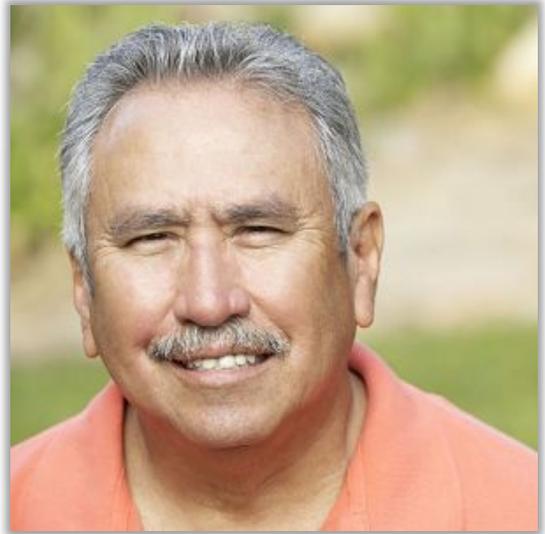
6. Write a prayer asking God to help you respond the way you would like to respond:

7. How can being humble help you respond to your failures?

Day Four: The Power in Humility

Is it possible to be humble, yet also be strong? The answer is yes. There may be times when God calls you to confront someone or take strong actions. You might need to deal with a rebellious child, fire an employee, or confront an abusive spouse.

There are other ways God may want you to be strong, For example, he might call you to be a pastor, start a business, or throw yourself into a ministry to help homeless people.



You can be gentle and strong

I once was hired to be an administrator in a fairly large agency. I soon discovered I needed to fire or lay off about twenty-five people who were doing a poor job.

I had never had that type of responsibility, and I wasn't sure how to go about firing them. At first I thought I would need to get angry at people when I fired them. After all, they were not doing a good job.

However, I quickly learned I could speak gently and even offer people encouraging comments when I discharged them. I discovered I could be gentle and strong.

Paul's instructions

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul gave us guidelines that help us be gentle yet strong:

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. (Galatians 6:1)

Notice three points in this verse:

- “You who are spiritual” tells us to be sure we are close to Jesus. It reminds me of Jesus’s instructions to take the plank out of our own eye before removing the speck from our brother’s eye (Matthew 7:3-5).
- “Restore” tells us to aim for healing, not simply vengeance or punishment.
- “Gently” tells how to go about dealing with someone who was caught in a sin.

Discussion questions

1. How can you be gentle or humble and take strong actions at the same time?
2. Have you known someone who was gentle and strong? Describe him or her.
3. What is one situation in which you think you should take a stand? How could you go about doing this while remaining humble?

Talk with the right attitude.

Ask God for wisdom and a loving, respectful attitude. Talk courteously, regardless of the situation—even if you need to be firm or take strong actions.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:29-32)

Discussion questions

4. What's wrong with bitterness, rage, and anger?
5. Is Ephesians 4:29-32 practical? Is it possible to follow them? Explain your answer.

The results of a humble approach

When you approach people in a humble, friendly manner, you are often more successful than when you take an arrogant approach. Even if the results are not what you wished for, you have the joy of knowing you acted in a godly manner.

Being humble does not mean being unaware of your talents or gifts

Although you should avoid self-pride, godly humility does not mean you should say you don't have any gifts or talents. You—and every other follower of Jesus—has gifts that can strengthen the body of believers (1 Corinthians 12:1-31). You also have natural gifts and talents because of the way God made you.

You can be completely humble yet also acknowledge your gifts or skills. Just remember that they are from God.

Look at Paul's example. He wrote that he was "less than the least of all of God's people." Yet he also wrote that God had called him to preach.

Although I am less than the least of all of God's people, this grace was given to me: to preach to the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. (Ephesians 3:8)

I am not in the least inferior to the "super-apostles," even though I am nothing. (2 Corinthians 12:11)

Discussion question

6. How can you be aware of your talents and gifts without being prideful?

Be strong in God's power, not your own

One of the great benefits of being humble is that we can learn to rely on God, not ourselves. I love these words of Paul:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. (Ephesians 6:10)

Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. (2 Corinthians 1:9)

For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you. (2 Corinthians 13:4)

If you enter a challenging situation, don't simply do what comes naturally. Instead, pray something along the lines of:

God, please help me get out of the way, and let your Spirit take over the situation. Help me love the people I will be with, help me minister to their needs, and help me say the words you want me to say.

Discussion questions

7. What is the difference between relying on ourselves and relying on God?
8. Would you like to rely on God's power more and on your power less? If so, how can you do this?

Paul's prayer

Early in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote a prayer for them. In this prayer, he asked that they would know God better and that they would know his incomparably great power.

I'd like to end this book with key verses from this wonderful prayer. May you continue to grow in Christ, in humility, and in God's power.

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. (Ephesians 1:15-21)

Memory verse

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. (Ephesians 6:10)

Want to learn more?

Book by Doug Britton

Living by Grace

www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/live-by-grace

Notes

Day Five: Answer Key to Test (may be removed by leader)

Note to teachers and small group leaders

Remove this page if you do not want group members to see these answers ahead of time.

True or false

- F 1. Nebuchadnezzar was stubborn and never learned what God was teaching him.
- F 2. There's nothing wrong with being prideful if you keep it to yourself.
- F 3. Being thankful is the same thing as being prideful.
- T 4. Being humble means acknowledging you need God's help.
- T 5. Being humble means giving God credit.
- T 6. Being humble means serving others.
- T 7. Being humble means responding to unfair treatment peacefully.
- F 8. Being humble means being unaware of your gifts and talents.
- F 9. Being humble means letting others do whatever they want.
- F 10. It is not possible to be gentle and strong.

Memory verses

- 1. 1 Peter 5:5

Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

- 2. Proverbs 15:1

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.



About the Author

Doug Britton, Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist, has helped hundreds of thousands of people as a therapist, clinical director of a treatment center, seminar speaker, radio co-host, and author of over twenty books that show people how to apply God's truths in their daily lives.

He has also trained pastors, counselors, mentors, and lay leaders in biblical counseling, mentoring, and small group leadership.

Doug and his wife Skeeter live in Northern California.



Books

Doug has written Bible-based books on many daily-living topics. Visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore.

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Read and download Doug's free online studies on marriage, parenting, anger, self-concept, anxiety, depression, temptation, fear of death, biblical counseling, mentoring, small group leadership, and other topics. Visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources.

Seminars and retreats

Doug is the founder and president of LifeTree Institute and LifeTree Books. If you would like him or another member of the LifeTree team to speak in your church on any of the above topics, please visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com and click on the "Seminars" link.

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In addition to “The Owner’s Manual to the New You,” Doug Britton has written many more cross-cultural, Bible-based books on leadership, discipleship, and key areas of daily living.

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First Things First
Living by Grace

Living Free

Breaking Free (from Drugs and Alcohol)
Conquering Depression
Defeating Temptation
Healing Life’s Hurts
Overcoming Jealousy and Insecurity
Six Keys to Personal Growth
Six Keys to Successful Relationships
Strengthening Your Marriage
Victory over Grumpiness, Irritation, & Anger
Who Do You Think You Are?

Marriage by the Book

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Making Christ the Cornerstone
Encouraging Your Spouse
Extending Grace to Your Mate
Talking with Respect and Love
Improving Your Teamwork
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