

GRACE MINI-BOOK

# *HUMILITY 101*

THE GATEWAY TO GOD'S SUCCESS



CREFLO DOLLAR

G R A C E M I N I - B O O K

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*Humility 101: The Gateway to God's Success*

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Published by:

Creflo Dollar Ministries

P.O. Box 490124

College Park, Georgia 30349

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# ***HUMILITY 101***

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## CHAPTER 1

# Defining Biblical Humility

Many people think Taffi and I did everything we've done in ministry easily—just with the snap of a finger. They just do not know! Many of those folks who think we did everything easily weren't even born when we were learning to submit to God's plan for our lives. We didn't have PPA's (Pastor's Personal Assistants). We called the people who helped us disciples. We had meetings in a little, old office. We met early in the mornings—we had to do everything *ourselves*.

The guys with me used to say, "*Let us serve you.*" But I wanted to be the servant. They were saying, "*Listen, young, 24-year-old boy, would you just listen to what we're saying?*" But I wasn't interested in sitting back and allowing someone to serve me. Again, I wanted to be the servant. We had nothing but Jesus and a school cafeteria in those beginning days of our church. I had already made a deal with God. I told Him that I wasn't going to ask anybody for anything, then I realized we didn't have any chairs. "*And we don't have chairs Lord.*" God said, "*You've got chairs under that stage. Did you forget?*" We had more chairs than we needed.

We wanted to pray in the school building on Saturday mornings. We *paid extra* for the air conditioning; it wasn't included in the cost. But we just believed God and stuck it out.

We did what needed to be done. We had a vision and people started having dreams. I remember a friend of mine, who was Italian—I say that because his accent reminded me of a guy I saw on a mafia movie—told me about this dream he had. He said he saw me on an airplane, flying all over the world. Many times, when I’m traveling now, I think of him and his dream. I had men serving around me who were dreaming about the church. We spent hours talking about those dreams. It’s interesting that during these modern times, we can hardly get anyone to talk about the dreams of the church anymore because most people are so concerned about their own dreams. But we have to submit to God’s dream, and He will give us our dreams. We have to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and, in due season, He will lift us up (James 4:10).

Someone may be thinking, “*What does this story have to do with humility?*” We have to learn to humble ourselves first to God and His way. In doing so, we have to follow how He is ordering our lives. First Peter 5:5, *AMPC*, says:

Likewise, you who are younger and of lesser rank, be subject to the elders (the ministers and spiritual guides of the church)—[giving them due respect and yielding to their counsel]. Clothe (apron) yourselves, all of you, with humility [as the garb of a servant, so that its covering cannot possibly be stripped from you, with freedom from pride and arrogance]

toward one another. For God sets Himself against the proud (the insolent, the overbearing, the disdainful, the presumptuous, the boastful)—[and He opposes, frustrates, and defeats them], but gives grace (favor, blessing) to the humble.

When we look closely at this verse, we see that Peter is not just talking to younger people here. He is spelling out for us, how we should be clothed with humility towards God and one another. Regardless of our roles or titles, he is advocating the servant's heart. The scripture defines its audience by telling those listening to clothe *themselves* in humility. How do we do that? We clothe ourselves in humility through submission. Again, those who are truly humble are those who first subject themselves to God and His Word. We also see the biblical definition of a prideful person here; it is one who will not submit to God or His Word. Submission is the act of getting under the mission of someone else.

Jesus said let the greatest among us be a servant (Matthew 23:11), but God doesn't force us to have this attitude. Humility is a voluntary act. God will neither make us humble, nor force us to submit to Him. He made us free, moral agents; therefore, it's called humiliation when someone forces us to be humble. Choosing to humble ourselves leads to unmerited favor, and the degree to which we humble ourselves is the degree to which we will find grace.

Honoring Him is another way we humble ourselves before Him. When we reverence Him, we find His wisdom, as well. We find truth instead of deception. Proverbs 15:33, *AMP*, states, “*The [reverent] fear of the Lord [that is, worshiping Him and regarding Him as truly awesome] is the instruction for wisdom [its starting point and its essence]; and before honor comes humility.*” No one can honor us like God.

When we are not humbling ourselves we say with our actions: I don’t *need* God in this; I am going to do this my way; it’s all according to what I believe; I don’t need to know what the Word says about it because I know what I am going to do; and I know how to handle it on my own. From this position, we bump into dead end after dead end. When we keep that prideful attitude and live life doing everything our way, at the end of the day, it all equals nothing. God’s grace will not flow through prideful actions. He gives more grace to the humble. He does not fight or beat up the prideful person, but He does set Himself against that person’s prideful ways.

I can look back over my life as a pastor and see where pride did not allow me to find grace in certain situations. That is why I am such a stickler for the Word. It works; the Word works! I don’t receive *anything* I can’t find in the Bible. No one can just quote a religious-sounding phrase to me and think I’m going to believe and receive it. No, I have to see it in the Bible because I’ve spent many years learning things



the wrong way. Someone can take a scripture out of context, and cause people to receive erroneous messages. If we don't understand the Word, we will be in error! Therefore, we need the *biblical* definition of pride. When most people hear the word "pride," they just think arrogance, and will start with a scripture telling us how we have to be low. Here's the problem with that, if I'm arrogant, I'm focused on *myself*. However, if I'm shy, *it's still pride because I'm focused on myself*.

Understand that when *anything* is all about "me," it is all self-centered. Being "lowly in heart" does not describe a self-centered type of lowering, or a belittling of ourselves (Matthew 11:29). It is not being shy or insignificant. When Jesus talks about being lowly in heart, He is talking about someone who will easily and willfully submit to God. When we lift ourselves high, we are lifting up our plans, our program, and our own way. For years, people in the Church have called others prideful because they were bold in taking a strong stance on the Word. However, those people were actually humbling themselves, and those who were seen as humble (but didn't receive their true identity according to the Word) were actually prideful!

## CHAPTER 2

# False Humility

Picture for a moment a baton in a majorette's hand. One end is labeled "arrogance" and the other end is labeled "shyness." Both ends are on the same baton of self-centeredness. Another name for that baton is pride. Remember, whenever "self" is at the center, we'll always find pride.

I know some of you might think, *"Well, I can see that arrogance and boasting are pride, but I don't see a shy person as being prideful!"* When people are shy, they are focused on themselves. They are more concerned with their feelings than with submitting to God's will in their interactions with other people. A shy person does not trust God enough to move out of his or her comfort zone. Even if we have been hurt by someone, we have to develop our trust in God, knowing He will take care of us. We do not have to lock ourselves into "self-preservation mode," which can take on the form of arrogance or shyness. A person who is arrogant has placed himself or herself high above everyone, including God. We have to see ourselves the way God sees us, and be sober in our thinking.

Self-centeredness is exactly the reason we get hurt or offended, or end up in bitterness or unforgiveness. We place ourselves and our feelings on a pedestal, and exalt them

high and above everything else. We are not in a position of submission. However, we cannot live in a world in which everything revolves around us! That is definitely not taking a servant's attitude or being humble.

Pride is also present when we hold on to cares. When we think we can figure out our problems on our own or we don't believe God's help will come soon enough, we are in pride. God tells us to cast our cares on Him (1 Peter 5:7). We need to humble ourselves before Him and allow Him to help us (James 4:10). Also, Scripture tells us to trust God with all our hearts and do not lean on our own understanding or our own wisdom (Proverbs 3:5).

I don't want anyone to misunderstand me, and I'm not trying to make anyone feel condemned. We all have these self-centered moments and feelings. This is not a one-time thing; we have to die to ourselves daily. We don't have to go around, beating ourselves up about being prideful. No, we just repent and trust that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was enough to take care of all of our issues. It's never too late to submit to God, and ask for His help with our issues. When we draw close to Him, He will help us make the corrections, every time!

### **Honor and Humility Go Hand in Hand**

Proverbs 15:33, *AMPC*, states, "*The reverent and worshipful fear of the Lord brings instruction in Wisdom,*

*and humility comes before honor.*” No one can honor us like God, and we will see His honor when we walk in humility. When we want to do things our way, we have to ask ourselves, even in the midst of situations, “*Am I honoring God in this?*” “*Am I reverencing God?*” “*Am I humble in this situation according to the Bible’s definition?*” It may not be an easy thing, but we have to resist the temptation to get emotional or religious and do things in our own strength. There are certain situations in which we just cannot afford to be prideful! When we have everything—our family, money, bills, home—on the line, it’s not the time to start quoting religious phrases we don’t even understand. It’s time to get serious about who we are really honoring.

The Bible also tells us this about pride: It leads to destruction! Pride and haughtiness come before destruction (Proverbs 18:12). When we are truly humbling ourselves, in any given situation, we are saying, “*God, I am going to position myself to hear from You, and do what You tell me to do. If You say forgive, I’m going to forgive. If You say, love, I’m going to love. Whatever You tell me to do in this situation, that is what I will do. I am going to do it trusting You. I may not feel like it. I may not feel anything spectacular happening. It may seem like nothing at all is happening. People may call me a fool for doing it, but I am going to do it, anyway!*” This attitude will exalt us because we have made ourselves subject to God. Humble people do not stay the same because the due

season for their harvest *always* comes.

It all just helps us to examine our character more. We can really be honest about things and begin to evaluate our lives. We have something to measure ourselves by. For me, personally, having this revelation was like a measuring stick to compare what I am doing with the Word. When something I do does not agree with the Word, I must evaluate it and submit it to the Word of God so that I can find the grace to do whatever I need to do.

## CHAPTER 3

# The Sin Issue

Here, we have to clear up the issue of our sins after the new covenant. God's grace is more powerful than the sins of mankind, and we find grace to help us resist sin (Romans 5:20). Sin no longer has dominion over us because of God's grace (Romans 6:14). However, many times, people take teachings on God's grace to the extreme—both ways. Some are extreme with living a sinful lifestyle, and some are extreme in trying to be perfect (or thinking they are perfect with no sin). Both are wrong. We cannot be perfect as far as doing no wrong or never committing acts of sin. At the same time, we cannot continue to live a sinful lifestyle, thinking we will have more grace for doing so. Some people ask the question about sinning and finding God's grace. This question has been asked many times before, even in Paul's day, "*Should we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*" (Romans 6:2). The answer is no! God forbid.

With the understanding of the new covenant, we also should understand that we are truly blessed because God does not impute sin to our heavenly account (Romans 4:8). Many times, we have this religious idea that God is keeping a record of all of our sins. Remember, Jesus bore all of our sins, for all time. The punishment for our sins has been charged to the body of Jesus. God is not charging our

sins against us because Jesus paid for them. This is the main reason we celebrate Jesus' death. He died for our sins. We should just settle this matter and accept what He died for.

Now, here is the problem presented by those who do not understand this message, or get it confused somehow. They may say, "*Well, since God is not charging sin to my account, I can just go ahead and sin as I please.*" No, it doesn't work that way. God gives more grace to those who humble themselves to His Word and His way of doing things.

One of the reasons God does not want us to commit to a sinful lifestyle is because He doesn't want us to suffer the unnecessary consequences of sin. God's nature is forgiving, but situations and circumstances in life are not as forgiving. In other words, negative consequences follow sinful actions.

For example, let's say a true Believer of Jesus Christ is a leader in a company. Then he finds out the company is defrauding customers, yet does nothing about it. *Now* he is a leader in a company that is defrauding its customers, *and* he knows about it. God is not directly against any of those individuals in that company, but His blessings cannot flow through lies and deceit. So, in this case, the consequence is that Believer will not be blessed through his company because his company is in sin. Revelation 18:4 says, "*And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her,*

*my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*” If Believers do not come away from sin, they will partake in its consequences.

## **Resisting the Devil and Submitting to God**

James 4:6, 7, says, “*But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*” Here is what we have to understand: God is not giving us an option. The scripture is not telling us to submit to God *or* resist the devil. It is telling us to submit to God *and* resist the devil.

This is something that we have to do simultaneously. We should do this our entire lives—submit and resist, submit and resist, submit and resist. While I submit myself to do what the Word says, the devil will try to stop me; so I have to actively fight against him at the same time. For example, when I commit to pray, I must also commit myself to fight the temptation *not* to pray. Child of God, we can in no way be passive about resisting the devil! Satan searches for passive Christians, and will try to eat them alive. We have to have a *violent* resolve to take advantage of the kingdom of God. Matthew 11:12 says we have to have violent faith. We cannot just sit back passively and allow the devil to destroy our lives.

Though the definition of the word, “temptation” is more



than just lust, most people think of it that way, so I'll use it here: Let's say someone is dealing with lust by fighting the urge to fornicate. So, they have submitted to the scripture that tells us to flee fornication, and then they are standing on it, right? The devil shows up with sexual temptation. Now, while submitting to the Word on fornication, this person is also actively fighting the devil's attempts to entice him to fornicate. He is fighting against those things that are fighting his commitment. When he makes that commitment, God gives him the grace to actively fight. The type of grace that actively fights temptation is called, "standing grace." It helps us overcome what comes against us to try to ruin our decision to submit to God. Religion will tell us that we can submit without actively fighting against those things that try to ruin our commitment. However, the truth is that there actually is a fight going on, and we find the grace of God *within* that fight (James 4:6, 7).

Let's take a moment to consider the guy that decides *not* to submit to God's Word, but to submit to lust, instead. He is prideful in thinking he can do things his way, and just go along with whatever his flesh says. God will fight against that. Again, God won't fight the man, just his prideful ways. God is trying to get him to change his mind! He may be headed for a trap; an unwanted pregnancy, a deadly STD, or some drama-filled situation. Remember, natural circumstances are not always forgiving. And God wants to change this man's

mind. The man may receive a prompting from the Holy Spirit, and think, “*I feel funny doing this.*” He’s feeling funny because God is opposing His prideful ways.

Understand that God doesn’t cause mishaps and negative consequences. Sin does that! God is the one trying to keep us away from the mishaps and negative consequences. This guy may have thought, “*God is trying to ruin my fun!*” I would say to him, “*No, God is trying to help you!*” God knows that sometimes after the fun, we will have consequences to deal with that are not fun.

### **Walking Closer to God**

James 4:8 says, “*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*” He is not talking about coming closer to Him as it concerns location. He is talking about coming closer in intimacy within a relationship. We can be closer, on a deeper level in our relationship with God. Philippians 3:10, 11, *AMPC*, states:

[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly], and that I may in that same way come to know the

power outflowing from His resurrection [which it exerts over believers], and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed [in spirit into His likeness even] to His death, [in the hope] that if possible I may attain to the [spiritual and moral] resurrection [that lifts me] out from among the dead [even while in the body].

We can know God more. That's such a blessing! Therefore, we should commit to resisting the devil (which includes his plans, purposes, and schemes), and commit to submitting to God. Again, this is a *daily* activity, not a once in a lifetime thing. When we live a lifestyle of sin, we lose confidence in our relationship with God, and we shy away from Him. As we remain in a prideful state, we walk with the devil and his plans. As we walk with God, doing things His way, we remain in a state of humility. The choice is always ours as free, moral agents. God will not force us to choose humility, and Satan cannot make us choose pride. *We* have to make that choice.

## CHAPTER 4

# More Grace for the Humble

I have packed in a lot of revelation, so I want to summarize everything that was covered in this small book. Regardless of our experience, knowledge, or education, we *all* need God in our lives. For this reason, the Apostle Paul said that he boasted *not* in himself, but in his weaknesses. In fact, in reference to revelation he received from Jesus, he states in Second Corinthians 12:9, *AMP*:

But He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you [My lovingkindness and My mercy are more than enough—always available—regardless of the situation]; for [My] power is being perfected [and is completed and shows itself most effectively] in [your] weakness.” Therefore, I will all the more gladly boast in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ [may completely enfold me and] may dwell in me.

Paul humbled himself and acknowledged his dire need for the Lord in his life. Moreover, Paul declared that he could do all things *through* Christ (Philippians 4:13). He knew where his strength came from, and so should we. James 4:6, *AMP*, states:

But He gives us more and more grace [through

the power of the Holy Spirit to defy sin and live an obedient life that reflects both our faith and our gratitude for our salvation]. Therefore, it says, “God is opposed to the proud and haughty, but [continually] gives [the gift of] grace to the humble [who turn away from self-righteousness].

We have to have a new mindset as it concerns humility and pride. Humility is submission to God and His Word; self-preservation and fear are by-products of pride; and grace will not be found in situations where pride is in operation. God actively fights against pride, and He will give more grace to the humble. The grace of God flows through humility like electricity flows through copper. We have to have copper for electricity to flow; we have to have humility for grace to flow.

The Bible gives us specific instructions on positioning ourselves to receive grace. For example, Peter taught younger people to submit themselves to their elders. When everyone is subject to each other, they are clothed in humility (1 Peter 5:4-7). Humility involves doing what we know is right according to the Word. It also involves a personal relationship with God, in which we actively ask Him what He wants us to do. It is a relationship in which we are willing to do what He says. In other words, our lives are focused and directed by Him, not ourselves.

Remember, God does not hate us when we are prideful. Instead, He fights against our prideful ways because they block the flow of grace in our lives. Pride often leads to more sinful activities. A person's pride deceives him when he says in his heart "*nothing can bring me down*" (Obadiah 1:3). It is obvious, then, that pride leads people into destruction (Proverbs 16:18, Proverbs 18:12). This is why God hates pride! A prideful person drives himself right into a pit! But God is always trying to get us to turn around, humble ourselves, and listen to Him. He knows what is best for us.

God wants a close relationship with us so that we can know Him better. Therefore, we should be willing to submit ourselves and our ways to God. When we draw closer to Him, and honor Him, His manifested presence becomes more apparent in our lives. This is humbling ourselves before the Lord, and when we live our lives this way, He *will* lift us up (James 4:7-10).



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