How Godly Humility Can Lead to Lasting Unity

5 Traits of a Humble Leader

I don’t know about you, but I can’t wrap my brain around the task Moses faced. Can you imagine the pressure of being a leader and provider for thousands of people in the wilderness? And these weren’t perfect followers by any stretch.

You can just imagine the voicemails and texts he would get before 6 AM, if there were voicemails back then.

And to top it all off, his own family took offense to his wife’s nationality and let everybody know about it. But Moses, according to Numbers 12:3, was a very humble man. The Lord took care of the situation without a word from Moses and after they received God’s leprous punishment, Moses even prayed for their healing. Evidently, Moses had the Lord’s attention, and I would argue that God came to his defense precisely because of his humility. Ultimately, Moses’ humility led to unity among God’s chosen people.

“Moses, my wife’s having a baby and I can’t find a doctor!”

“Larry, son of Jethro, tribe of Dan has pitched his tent way too close to mine. He’s keeping us awake with his snoring!”

“Moses, I’m afraid I’m manna intolerant. I break out with hives every morning!”

“That pillar of fire at night is scaring our camel! And that cloud during the day is affecting my asthma.”

Humility is the secret sauce of every long-term leader. The Hogan Assessment Firm, a secular research group, offered a summary of their work in studying humble leaders:

Organizations often overlook humble employees for leadership positions in favor of those who are charismatic. Charismatic people are charming and inspirational, but many turn out to be narcissistic, arrogant, and potentially exploitative. In contrast, humble leaders empower followers and promote team learning.[1]

1. **A humble leader is teachable.**

The worst thing that could happen to a servant leader is for him to believe that he has arrived. A humble leader is self-aware. He's aware that every circumstance and relationship is an opportunity to learn. Think about it. We are unique, which implies that there are skills, perspectives and lessons that are found in every relationship. The humble leader would say, "There are some things I can only learn from you." With this as a mindset, every relationship, even the difficult ones, are treasured. Every challenge, trial and circumstance provides an opportunity for growth. Jerry, a deacon in our church recently was diagnosed with colon cancer. In the first five minutes of our initial conversation, he said something that I'll never forget. "You know, Matt, it's difficult, but I'm sure learning a lot of things through all of this. It's really amazing!" Frankly I couldn't believe what I was hearing. It wasn't a posture of self-pity or pessimism, although he had every right to go there. It was almost like a simple prayer of "What's next, Father?" A Christ-follower approaches life as a lifelong learner who is rehearsing his walk with Christ as a prelude to eternity.

- **A humble leader quickly realizes and admits mistakes.**

Perhaps the most impactful moment for the season leader to seize is the opportunity to say to his peers and mentees, "I made a mistake." Or "I need a do-over." Nothing great is ever

learned when leader casts blame on others or seeks to cover up a personal mistake or a sin. The only way a team grows through a failure is when amends are offered, and mistakes are owned. Your ability to be humble means you are not only willing to recognize your shortcomings but also being able to laugh at yourself even now and then. Create a "James 5:16 moment." Joyfully *confess your faults one to another*! It will get your mind right. It might even heal you.

- **A humble leader celebrates other leaders and is quick to give credit.**

The flipside of admitting our mistakes is sharing the credit. In the church, credit is infinitely divisible. We are all part of the same body. As President Truman and Coach Wooden often said, "It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit." As humble leaders we need to look for opportunities to recognize the successes and victories in our church. This is a far greater motivator than constant corrections and tweaks. Some men have to get over the inherent fallacy that if you affirm people, they won't be hungry or motivated. Positive motivation always works best. It's like the old parenting proverb, "Catch your kids doing something good." A narcissist sees credit given to a colleague as a lowering of their own personal esteem through comparison. Envy prevents gratefulness and joy, but the humble leader celebrates others, and he is rewarded.

- **A humble leader admits his limitations.**

Have you ever considered that a heavy workload and a life with no margin could be a hidden symptom of pride? It often connotes a man who is unwilling to delegate or ask for help because he believes that only he could do it right. The humble leader realizes that he's not the resident superman. He burned that cape a long time ago. Don't just give help. Learn to ask

for help. As Larry Eisenburg put it: “For peace of mind, we need to resign as general manager of the universe.”

- **A humble leader realizes that he is only vessel, not the main character.**

We are often tempted in assuming the story is all about us, but of course it isn’t. We must get beyond ourselves and get the 30,000-foot view of all that is going on. We are all a part of a much bigger story than any of us can comprehend. I might not have a starring role, but I have a few lines to say. I commit to saying those few lines as best I can. You and I might not change a nation but we all can help change a child’s life. Imagine what would happen if everyone led humbly. It really *would* change a nation!

Humility is a gift, but it is also a skill. It won’t be accomplished overnight. We must *daily* pick up our cross. We must work on it *daily*. Jesus provides the template: “He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross.” When we focus on Jesus, it’s not hard to be humble.

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[1] https://www.hoganassessments.com/research/ongoing-innovations/humility-2/