

# ACTS OF HUMILITY

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OUR LIFE



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## INTRODUCTION

One way to describe the core problem with humanity is with the word “pride”. Most people have a natural self-sufficiency that believes they don’t need GOD and are better off without HIM.

Fortunately, our miraculous transformation into GOD’S family involves a setting down of our pride and choosing to glorify HIM rather than self. Every Christian has experienced some kind of victory over pride and has attained a degree of humility.

With confidence I can tell you that I’ve experienced that victory, I am a Christian. However, as personally painful as it is to admit, I continue to struggle with humility. I still seek personal glory and attention from others. If you were to ask my closest friends to pick five words to describe me, I’m confident none or few would choose humble or meek. If you were to press the point and ask, “Am I proud?” I imagine a smile or smirk would appear, non-verbally confirming this description.

Only the foolish or blind fail to be overpowered by the life of CHRIST, confronted by the greatest of all who became the WEAKEST of all. What does it mean to contemplate HIS life? We can start answering that question by comparing our greatness with HIS. When I consider my achievements, my victories, my hard won struggles, with the simplicity of HIS humility, I am forced to face the gentle onslaught of HIS meekness. His greatness is beyond anything I have built. A sandcastle never stands for very long against the ocean. For me, these thoughts lead to a wordless acceptance of HIS greatness.

HIS life cannot be reduced to a few sentences ... but I believe a good start is, “HE humbled HIMSELF.” As HE hung on the cross, HE prayed for those who tortured HIM. As HE took upon the sins of the world, rather than worrying about HIS next breath, HE looked after HIS mother.

I know that HE forgives me for the pride I commit, and I know there will be a day in heaven when pride will no longer dominate me. But

**ACTS OF HUMILITY**

relying on the former and waiting for the later isn't good enough. I want to know what it means to be like JESUS, to imitate HIS humility as HE intended.

It's my prayer that the journey reflected on these pages can encourage your faith to grow. I haven't arrived at humility. I know it's going to take time—hopefully 10 years from now, those closest to me would consider me humble. I want to encourage you to think about humility in your own life. The 10 “acts of humility” listed in this journal represent ways that I struggle with pride and self-glorification. For your devotions, I encourage you to read quickly through the material I've written, and move slowly through thinking about your own life. Consider your actions and the conditions of your heart. Submit to the HOLY SPIRIT and allow HIM to further transform your life to resemble and reflect CHRIST.

**ACTS OF HUMILITY**



## SERVE WHEN YOU KNOW YOU SHOULD

*Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins (James 4:17).*

We must accept the reality that most of our choices are really quite easy. I know that life holds difficult situations, where confusion reigns without because Scripture is silent (or seems silent) and wisdom remains veiled. These seasons are short-lived and seldom seen for most of us.

Most of life's choices are black and white—we often know the good we ought to do. You probably wouldn't find it too difficult to think about one act of servanthood that you could do tomorrow. It is more difficult to be aware of the times when we are selfish, but this may be easily overcome with consistent personal reflection.

The kindness of God's leading in our life is that He begins with what we know. There are many deep mysteries of the faith, but serving others isn't one of them. A servant helps where he or she is needed, so all we need to ask: "How can I best help?" We ought to refuse ruthlessly to ignore the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and serve when we know we ought.

Lord, strengthen my will; help me to choose the good that I already see before me.

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**ACTS OF HUMILITY**

# SERVE WHEN YOUR REPUTATION MIGHT SUFFER

*To the weak, I became weak, to win the weak  
(1 Corinthians 9:22).*

We should again acknowledge one thing we all hold in common: pride. It is deceptive, infuriating, and empty. It promises much, and delivers little in the way of satisfaction and significance.

Pride seems to take many different forms, which can make it difficult to identify, but it always looks for some form of self-glorification. There are times when we are not aware of our selfish motives. A constant enemy, it yields false and temporary fulfillment. Pride is the enemy of humility.

Service to others often goes with the thought, "If I serve like this, then others may think less of me . . ." As Christians, we save our egos by claiming humility is good, yet no one should have to be humiliated. To preserve our comfort, we create a distinction that didn't seem to exist in the mind of our Savior. Personal rights have been created and upheld at the expense of servanthood.

When was the last time you stopped yourself from serving another? What was the reason? Have you ever been afraid to appear weak to others?

Lord, help me to serve, even when others may think less of me.

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**ACTS OF HUMILITY**



## SERVE BY SAYING YOU'RE SORRY WHEN YOU SHOULD

*Go and be reconciled to your brother  
(Matthew 5:25).*

We have been hurt by others, and we hurt other people. "No one is perfect" we often think; justifying our own mistakes. Somehow we fail to extend this courtesy to others.

Humility takes the focus off of our pain and hurt, and looks deeply at the pain and hurt of others. We must not fail to "take care" of ourselves, but too often this seems to become an excuse for not helping others. Humility acknowledges damage and assumes responsibility to help the healing process.

Seeing the hurt in others is difficult for the impulsive or the driven, for we lack the innate ability to pause and consider. Speed and sensitivity don't seem to be close companions.

Humility works hard to be reconciled with those whom we have hurt. Jesus knew this was important for our spiritual health—hurting others hinders our personal worship of God.

Perhaps the most difficult time to say 'I'm sorry' is when the hurt person shouldn't be offended. Their weakness, not our actions, is the true source of their pain. This understanding is a difficult to overcome.

Lord, help my relationships to be characterized by peace and reconciliation.

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**ACTS OF HUMILITY**

## **SERVE SO YOU AREN'T BOTHERED WHEN YOU'RE TREATED LIKE A SERVANT**

*Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men  
(Ephesians 6:7).*

We will be hurt by others, and the wounds are more devastating when our service is repaid with offense. It is an easy thing to stand up for personal rights, because this feeds our natural selfishness and affirms the selfishness in others. Perhaps even more than the praise of others, being hurt shifts our attention to our rights.

The smoldering embers of pain quickly ignite into a fire storm of anger as we consider all of the other times we've been hurt and had our rights ignored.

We ought to give up our rights—as Christ clearly did—and allow God to take up our cause. Humility isn't simply helping someone. We must serve with the proper motive. Do we serve because of what God has done and will do in our lives or for what people have done or will do in our lives?

When we serve others out of the overflow of a faithful heart, then the devastating actions of others become **ABSOLUTELY POWERLESS**. We know this must be true: how else could Christ forgive the very soldiers who put Him on the cross? As bearers of eternal life, we can suffer no mortal wounds.

Lord, help me to forgive others as You have forgiven me.

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**ACTS OF HUMILITY**

# SERVE NOT ON YOUR OWN TERMS

*Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others (Philippians 2:4).*

Humility is best practiced with discernment—that is, the ability to accurately know the nature of something. Service to others is an attempt to meet some need, and discernment accurately discovers what need ought to be met.

Many of us are unnecessarily trapped by OUR personal experiences and assumptions. Simply stated, we serve others as WE WANT to be served by others. This isn't wrong, it is just weak.

Many of our interests ARE SIMILAR to the interests of others. Similar doesn't mean the same. Mature humility understands what the other person wants. It connects with the true and personal need of the other person and serves in THAT PLACE.

Knowing and discerning the interests of others requires that we become students of their lives. We ought to consider and evaluate not just our interests, but those of others as well.

Lord, help me to serve according to the needs that others actually have.

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## ACTS OF HUMILITY

# SERVE IN WAYS THAT ARE COMMON

*Anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward (Mark 9:41).*

The human need to be spectacular and gain the attention of others is great. The fertile soil where this festers and thrives is a near bottomless chasm from which we cry, "Someone accept me for what I have to offer!"

Humility expressed in order to satisfy our insecurities often looks for acts of servanthood that are easily noticed. We will travel half the globe to serve in another culture yet neglect the relationships we've already built at home. We ought to seek the simple, more important things that touch the lives where God has placed us.

Life is more about the little things than it is about big things. Our character is the sum of the million tiny decisions we make in our day-to-day lives. These are more important than the "great" commitments we make. Why? Because those little decisions reveal what we are truly committed to. Is a person married after ten years because of the wedding ceremony that lasted a single day or because of the 3,652 days he has chosen to remain committed to his wife?

As we commit to humility, let us act out in small and often unseen ways. We are not after the praises of others—we seek to please God. Offer a cup of water, don't sit in the front seat, lift up the fallen, pick up trash, listen well when someone is speaking.

Lord, help me to serve You in small ways.

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**ACTS OF HUMILITY**

# SERVE WHEN YOU HAVE THE FREEDOM TO DO OTHERWISE

*Do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13).*

There are many situations in my life where I can withhold service and still not look bad. There are plenty of times when this is not the case; but the majority of service from the truly humble comes when they have the freedom to do otherwise.

The gift of free will has made acts of humility optional. Even as believers, adopted into God's family and made new in Christ, humility is not forced upon us. As Christians, we are still free; and while we have been made new through the washing and rebirth of the Holy Spirit, we still possess some portion of the sinful nature.

MANY TIMES HAVE I WISHED THAT HUMILITY WAS OPTIONAL! Often I don't feel like serving, and when I have a choice in the matter, I'll take the selfish route. Sometimes I'm totally stressed, or I'm angry. I might be feeling sorry for myself or I may resent someone else. With these kinds of attitudes and thoughts and feelings, I move to a dark place where I refuse to serve.

When we are faced with the unseen choice, when our freedom is invoked, we ought to serve.

Lord, strengthen me when no one is watching.

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**ACTS OF HUMILITY**

# SERVE AUTHENTICALLY

*Be completely humble  
(Ephesians 4:2).*

It is not enough to simply learn acts of humility; these actions must come from a pure heart. Sincerely seeking the good of others for the glory of God ought to be our core motivation.

It is possible to LOOK GOOD without BEING GOOD (I'm talking from a human perspective). We can be perceived as "good" by others even when we're just a "little" bit more mature. This is especially a pitfall for those Christians who have achieved a tiny measure of spiritual success.

We are capable of doing good things for others for the wrong reasons—poor motives and impure hearts. (There will be times when we ought to serve even when we don't feel like it, but this shouldn't be our regular practice.) There are huge problems with this kind of service: eventually others will see through our façade and our ability to make a lasting impact is severely diminished. People will recognize our deception, and they will find it nearly impossible to trust a person who is fake.

False humility holds another devastating consequence: we miss out on what God wants to do in our lives through our service to others. It is true that God calls us to serve others so He can do something great within us. Some of the greatest spiritual mysteries can only be communicated to one who serves. Delight not in false humility or you'll miss out on the work of God

Lord, purify my heart and cleanse me from sin. Fill me with nothing but love for You.

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**ACTS OF HUMILITY**

# SERVE LIKE JESUS

*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve  
(Mark 10:45).*

I have two final thoughts about humility. First: I don't want to be limited in my service because I'm relying on human thoughts and traditions and teachings. I don't want you to be limited either.

Of course, this applies to this journal! There is more to humility than what these pages reflect. Become a servant like Jesus. To do this, you must study His life and His Word. (If you have not yet fallen in love with God's Word, the Bible, then stop everything in your life until you can realize this thirst within your soul.) Jesus was a greater servant than I will ever be. While He is my model for this work, I know this reflection of humility is not perfect. Seek Him.

Second: keep serving even when it's tough. The reality is that God will never ask you to serve more than He has already done Himself. He didn't need any credibility, but He "earned" the right to ask us to be humble when He humbled Himself.

It is my prayer and hope that your journey is now characterized by a deeper understanding and practice of humility. My encouragement to you: KEEP GOING! You will fail, so what? You will always struggle, don't give up. You will feel less than worthless, but your worth is in Christ! Imitate His acts of humility.

Lord, I want to be like You; show me the way and strengthen my steps.

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