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Hang Humility in Your Closet Proverbs 15:33

Humility. That word tends to draw up pictures in our mind of a weak sort of helpless, run over person that is everybodys doormat to wipe their dirty feet on. Humble seems to carry with it the heavy overcoat that lacks any ambition or drive, totally devoid of any confidence or motivation. That is a pretty sad picture of humility. What is humilities counterpart. Pride. Now pride often gets a pretty nice looking set of wheels. Pride is often pictured wearing the wealthy clothes of confidence and energy and drive. Pride is ownership, position, power. People like the way pride gets things done and drives right to the top.

But...the Bible has a lot of things to say about pride and a lot of things to say about humility. And if you read the Bible, the hands down winner for an attribute to add to your wardrobe of character is humility. The Bible says if you choose to work at putting on humility, you will be wearing the clothes that never go out of style. This morning we are going to talk about how we can put humility into our new wardrobe for the start of a new school year.

In order to begin to hang humility in our closets we need to first recognize our pride. Most of us find it difficult to detect sinful pride in ourselves. I say sinful pride because there is a pride that is God-focused and other centered that is quite healthy and good. Paul talks about boasting in the Lord and what He can do. That's God focused. It can motivate in positive ways. Sinful pride is self-focused. It is the sinful pride that sneaks in and is hard for us to detect and deal with. Often the most proud people are those who are honestly not aware of the pride in their lives. They simply do not see it. We hide sinful pride from ourselves in rationalization and covering so we are blind to ourselves. Of course its far easier to see pride in another person. But this morning we are talking about us. Our need to recognize the pride. That is the first step toward hanging humility in our closet.

If you are like me you struggle with this pride thing. The more I get into it, the more I realize how really full of pride I am. I thought I was a pretty humble kind of guy until I started to take a look inside. I remember when I was about 21. Hiking in the Austrian Alps at a Christian Leadership Seminar. I decided I wanted to be different than all the rest. So while others wore these neutral colored hiking shorts. I wore these. Bright green-blue Hawaiian shorts and a white T-shirt with a big American flag on it. There were people from many different countries and I remember one gal from Canada coming to me trying to explain how offensive, loud and insensitive my shorts were to the native people of Austria and others in our group. Of course I got a little offended and defended my choice of clothes. But I never really recognized how prideful my attitude was behind those shorts. I thought it was just something fun...and it was, until I responded poorly when confronted.

One time while we were working on this addition to the church, I got into an argument with someone working as to how we should finish sheet rocking an area in the chapel. I pulled out my power strings and puffed myself up as the Professional Engineer, and didn't even listen very well to the guy who had done this work his whole life. Pride. It gets in the way. It wasn't until months later that God thumped me on the head and got me to recognize my pride and go ask this brother forgiveness.

Just this last spring, playing tennis with my brother. I got all hot and bothered. Not because I thought he made a bad call. Simply because I was crushing my serves, bashing my returns and he was getting everything back. He was playing incredibly well and cleaned my clock. I got mad because of my pride. I expected I should be doing the beating and yet, I got whipped. My attitude stunk so bad I couldn't even let him enjoy his incredible day of near perfect play. My pride had stolen his joy and ruined our time together that was supposed to be fun. Pride does that doesn't it. But when we recognize it...we have to do something about it. The antidote to killing pride is first to recognize it then do something about it. That next week I had to call my brother up and apologize, to humble myself and ask his forgiveness. That is what restores the relationship, that humility from God is what heals. The more we respond in humility when we recognize our pride has flared up and gotten the best of us, the easier it comes to do right and walk more humbly. I

thought I had grown out of getting angry at tennis matches a long time ago. But now I try to prepare my response that it be filled with a godly humility then a sinful pride.

So how well are you doing at recognizing pride in your life? If you catch yourself regarding yourself as the most important person around . If you feel you need to be above and better than the others around you in order to feel significant and loved, then you probably struggle with pride. Here's the catch. Pride may show itself in either a too high OR too low a view of oneself. Pride is obvious when we think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. Pride is subtle when we are thinking of ourselves more lowly than we ought to think. Either extreme the person is obsessed with one's own value. I'm incredibly great, or I'm only half of a worm and can do nothing. That's both pride. People who show contempt for themselves is really a proud belief that they alone out of all humanity have been mis-made by God and unloved by Him. False humility is simply another form of pride.

So...is there any pride lurking in your soul. Recognizing your pride is the first step toward humility. What are those signs of pride? Do you find yourself focused on how valued you are to the group, the company, the church? Ever caught yourself thinking Boy If I ever left this place it would go under for sure? That's pride isn't it. Do you focus on what other people are thinking about you? Spend too much time consumed by what you look like? How sharp people think you are? Those are seeds of pride. Are you competitive? Yes? Then you probably struggle with pride. It is tough to work hard to do your best and yet not alone the battle to be the best dominate your motivation and thoughts. You know it's a problem when your attitude is sore when it's obvious you're not the best. I'm competitive. I also like to coach. My teams usually do pretty well. But last fall our basketball team did not win one single game the entire season. Now that was tough. I wanted to give it up because of pride. I don't want to coach it again this year because of pride. But...because I need to work on my pride, I probably will coach that same team. Life is more than winning and working hard to do our best is worth pursuing. It's a far greater challenge for a coach to encourage and motivate his players when things continue to go poorly. I like a challenge. Who knows

maybe we have a chance of improving our record this year. Maybe I'll improve my humility character this year.

Pride can sneak into our lives in very subtle ways. Anger can be a symptom of pride. Why? Someone hurts us, we didn't get the respect we felt we deserved. We are violated in some way. Sadly most of our anger is not righteous anger but over issues of pride. We feel they have trampled our rights, so we fight back, we want to make them hurt and squirm. We teach them a lesson no to mess with us. We give them the silent treatment, the loud treatment, we ridicule, ignore, spread around disparaging comments about them. We want to return the pain that we felt. Any pride in your heart this morning? The first step toward humility is to recognize the pride.

What about jealousy. Sinful jealousy rears up when someone has obtained something that we really want. a relationship, a financial boost, a better job, bigger ministry. Yes, it can even look real spiritual. Anger, jealousy, bitterness re all stems off the tap root of pride. They sneak in subtle ways like "I think at least one of us should be on that committee. The implication; everyone else is illiterate and would mess it all up. That's pride. If you feel most people around you are idiots and you are the sharpest cat in town. That's pride. Maybe its also a realistic appraisal of what God has given you. It may be, but its in the attitude. If you find yourself continually mentioning it to others, or thinking about it. Maybe its true but laced with pride. What about name dropping. I was invited to this party. I was just talking last week with this popular or famous person. I just happen to slide into conversation an interesting story about rubbing elbows with. Could be just a story you want to tell. Could be subtle shades of pride. It all depends on your attitude. We can get all paranoid about avoiding any hint of pride that we stop conversation totally. The key I believe it to recognize the pride, be in continual asking before God. Is that moving into sinful pride? Was that last conversation my pride fighting for my rights? My "I'm not any good", "I'm ugly" "I don't have any talent" attitude may look real humble and even spiritual, , is that really my pride talking. And what does that say about my position before God. Ask someone who knows you well and you trust whether or not your pride has blinded you to some warning signs. Give them

permission to be totally honest with you. He or she may help you recognize your pride and avoid a terrible fall.

Proverbs 16:18,19 "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. It's better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud. Regardless of your economic position cultivate a spirit of humility. Far better to be lowly than to rub elbows with the oppressors. Pride is in opposition to the first principle of wisdom, that is the fear of the Lord.

First step to introducing a holy humility into your wardrobe this fall is to recognize your pride. Second step is to Realize your position. Proverbs 15:33 "The Fear of the Lord teaches wisdom and humility comes before honor." This is the opposite of 16:18 "pride goes before a fall" True wisdom teaches the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the willingness to humble oneself before and let his word and truth guide us. One who is dependent on God recognizes His position before Almighty God. Isaiah 66:2 "...But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My Word."

Humility demonstrates to God that we honor Him and rely on Him for everything. Humans since the garden of Eden have exhibited an unhealthy desire to be like God. God is God and we are not. He wants us to by choice, rather than by force, to recognize that He is God. When we choose to act toward Him and others in humility we are acknowledging that God is great and we are somewhere underneath His power and authority. In our humility we invite his strength into our weakness. And He does so quite gladly. Some may question God's desire, even God's demand to receive glory. For us when we see someone demand glory, it smacks of pride and ego and arrogance. Yet, even those subtle accusations questioning God's demands for glory reveal our own pride. We think we can dare compete on the same level of God is laughable. God knows it is best for us if we affirm, if we glory that God is God. That right thinking, that humility comes before honor as we recognize our true position before God.

In contrast to pride, Humility is finding ones worth so securely in God's unearned favor that we don't have to be concerned, worried, even paranoid about what others may think of us. We don't struggle with self-esteem issues because we are esteemed by God Almighty. So a truly

humble person realizes His position. Sees himself rightly just as God sees him. A truly humble person doesn't put himself down, nor does he avoid compliments. A humble person is not one who is always playing the martyr. His confidence, Her confidence comes from where his significance comes. It doesn't come in comparing yourself with other people...that doesn't matter so much to him because His value and worth and significance in God's eyes is already a settled matter. Humility is simply accepting God's evaluation of who you really are. The more grounded we are in the security of God's love, the less inclined we will be to try and push ourselves forward, pump ourselves up. A humble godly confidence will not be so preoccupied with self-worth. How must we humble ourselves to see our right position before God? Before we have a relationship with Christ we must first accept that we are sinners. Romans 3:23 All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. After we are saved we must accept the fact that we are saints. We have been made new creatures in Christ. We aren't what we will be, but we certainly are not what we once were. We are changed. To deny either is pride. It is the humble that clearly recognizes the right position they have before God and then lives like it.

When Emperor Franz-Josef I of Austria died in 1916, his funeral marked the last of the extravagant imperial funerals that closely followed established ceremonial procedures hundreds of years before. A procession of dignitaries elegantly dressed escorted the coffin draped in black and gold imperial colors, descended the stairs of the Capuchin Monastery in Vienna. At the bottom of the stairs was a great iron door leading to the Hapsburg family crypt. Behind the door stood the cardinal Archbishop of Vienna. The officer in charge followed the prescribed scripted funeral "Open" he cried. Who goes there answered the Cardinal. We bear the remains of his imperial and apostolic Majesty, Franz-Josef I be the grace of God, Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary, defender of the Faith Prince of Bohemia-Moravia, Grand Duke of Lombardy, Venezia..the officer went on to list the emperor's 37 titles. To which the Cardinal on the other side of the door replied. We know him not. Who goes there? The officer spoke again this time using a much abbreviated and less ostentatious list used to introduce the emperor in times of expediency. to which the Cardinal replied, "We know him not. Again he asked. "Who

goes there? This time the officer stripped the emperor of all but the humblest of titles. "We bear the body of Franz Josef our brother, a sinner like us all. At that the door swung open. In death and in life we are all reduced to the same level. Only God's grace will be given to those who humbly acknowledge their need and dependence on Him. Have you recognized your pride and realized your position before God?

God is attracted to weakness. He cannot resist those who humbly admit how desperately they need him. Do you need Him?

Recognize your pride. Realize your position before God. Finally for those wanted to add humility to your wardrobe of character. Rest in the Great promoter. Let God be the one who times your promotion. He is the one who lifts up and also puts people on the back burner of obscurity. 15:33 "Humility comes before honor. God will put us in out of the way places, in obscurity so that we can learn certain life lessons before He places us in a position of leading and recognition. Don't be the one pushing for the position or recognition you think you deserve. The cream will always rise to the top, it comes up quite naturally. The humble one waits for it to rise. Proverbs 25:6,7 "Don't claim honor in the presence of the king and do not stand in the place of great men, For it is better that is be said to you, Come on up here than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince." Its wiser to wait to be promoted then to risk demotion by self promotion. The humble one doesn't get all bent out of shape when you don't get the honor and recognition you think you deserve. Let others honor you.

Proverbs 27:2 "Let another praise you and not your own mouth someone else and not your own lips. Self praise can be subtle, dropping in names and accomplishments, who you know or where you've been or how much you've made. Let someone else do the praising. Its far more powerful coming from someone else anyway. Allow God to be the great promoter and don't get bitter when you don't get the things you thought you deserve. A truly humble person doesn't push and shove for honor, trying to always weasel into the spotlight, but also doesn't shrink away from it if it comes. Why? Because they have a confidence that it is God that places people. Ultimately He is the great promoter. Proverbs 29:23 "Pride will bring down a man down low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor."

Humility brings healing. In contrast to pride which always causes conflict. Proverbs 13:10 Pride only breeds strife and quarrels. It cuts us off from God and cuts us off from others. Do you find yourself constantly arguing with people? Time to do a pride check. Time to revisit your humility before God. When we recognize our humble position before God, we find ourselves beginning to serve one another in love and humility. Isn't that what Jesus modeled to us when he bent down before his disciples and washed their feet. Did the job of a servant, the job nobody else bothered to do. That is the humility that brings healing into our relationships instead of quarreling and strife. Our humility before God leads to humility before others. When we are humble before God, we are teachable before God and we then get wise. When we pass on the wisdom we have received from God there is no limit to the resources we have to offer other people. Branch that bears the most fruit is the one that bends the lowest to the ground. Only the stalks of wheat that hold their heads high are the empty ones. What do you want to be full of? Fruit of air?

Do you want to begin to hang humility in your wardrobe of character? First, Recognize your pride...it can be very subtle. Ask a friend you trust to honestly show you where those areas are. Ask God if you don't trust your friends. Second, Realize your position before God. A right understanding of your significance before God and who he is and who we are goes a long way to combating the pride within and resting in humility for God is the ultimate promoter. Let God be God and do His job. Pray this prayer with me.

Lord, I understand your desire for me to humble myself. I understand that you oppose the proud but give grace to the humble. Lord I want you to take charge of my life. Even though I enjoy those feelings of success and fulfillment, I know and affirm that every good thing in my life comes from You. I don't enjoy humbling myself before people who don't respect me in return. I feel humiliated not humbled when that happens. I get angry, ashamed, rebellious. God I know that is my pride swelling up. Help me honor the people you have placed in my life. Teach me to love them as you love them, to pray for them and give to them the respect You would want them to have.