

Spiritually Speaking...

Written by James Washington
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I'm pretty sure I am not the only one who has ever been caught up in church hopping. Once when going to a particular church to hear a particular preacher, I was met with the reality of the dreaded "guest minister." The expected preacher's absence from the pulpit was replaced by the stand in pastor's remarkable word on humility. It was a stark reminder that it's all about the message and not necessarily about the messenger. You would think I should know that, given that it was one of the first principles given to me by the minister who saved my life and, coincidentally the man whom I was going to hear. Humility, as the guest pastor clarified, was very much evident and explainable in Philippians 2. The entire chapter is devoted to Paul's message to the church at Philippi regarding "imitating Christ's humility."

As I listened, humility went from a concept of docile behavior to a strengthening of faith (mine) and discipline of conduct. By that I mean, it was made clear that Christ chose to consider Himself, at best equal to, if not lesser than His fellow man. Don't forget, we're talking about God here. He chose to make Himself human in order to serve His divine purpose. The text tells us to "Do nothing out of selfish ambition and vain conceit, but in humility, consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interest of others." Philippians 2:3-4. If memory serves, that's a pretty good summation of how Christ looked upon His duty and basically what got Him killed. Isn't it interesting to think that the most dangerous, therefore the most powerful and important thing you can do in life is to care about someone else more than you care about yourself and then try and do something about it?

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This humility thing has teeth. Paul teaches us that it is our fundamental responsibility as Christians to be united in emulating Christ's denunciation of status, pride, ego and self. I mean if anyone had the right to be arrogant, try being the walking talking Word and deliberately transform yourself into mere mortal. If you can actually grasp that thought, don't let it blow your mind because you know you couldn't do it; Son of Man, die on the cross at the hands of mere men? Fortunately, as the minister suggested, Paul is not asking us to do the impossible, thank God. He is just letting us know that the ultimate goal is service unto man. He reminds us that the mission is to put a cap on what we think of ourselves and our independence thinking in favor of the recognition of our collective interdependence amongst ourselves and in relationship to God. Christ died (we killed Him) to save us all and here at Philippi, Paul tells us that our conduct must be based on the following truth. Out of this thing called humility, Christ saved the world and that would mean you and me.

Do we propose we are better than Him? If you look down your nose at anyone, if you think you're better than anyone, then you think you're better than Jesus Christ, who thought Himself no better and even less than you. He died in service to us. Contemplate that for a moment and do something today for someone else. Do it simply because you can. If you do not get this, I think you better think again.

May God bless and keep you always.