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MEDITATIONS

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for MEN

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The Basis for True Humility

READ ISAIAH 6

*Woe is me! For I am lost...
for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*

ISAIAH 6:5

Humans—and perhaps men in particular—are nothing if not proud. We love ourselves, promote ourselves, and defend ourselves. Arrogance is sewn into our fallen nature. The problem is this: God detests pride. Proverbs 16:5 says that the proud *person* (not just pride as an impersonal concept) is an abomination to God. James 4:6 teaches that God actively opposes the proud. Pride is dangerous and foolish. Spurgeon described pride as “a groundless thing” and “a brainless thing” and “the maddest thing that can exist” (in a sermon preached on August 17, 1856).

How, then, can we cultivate humility? Is it a way of walking or speaking? Is it an “*Aw, shucks*” personality? A self-loathing? On what is true humility based? Scripture answers these questions definitively in Isaiah 6:1-7. True humility begins with a right estimation of God.

Our humility grows when we recognize God’s unrivaled majesty. The prophet Isaiah was given the unfathomable privilege of seeing God’s majesty (6:1)—the glory of the pre-incarnate Christ, according to John 12:41! Jehovah was enthroned in the temple, which shook beneath His sovereignty (6:1, 4). His robe had a vast train which testified of His splendor (6:1). He was identified as “the King” and “the Lord of hosts” (think “Commander in Chief,” 6:5). His reign outshone the recently ended reign of King Uzziah (6:1). Whereas Uzziah had died, Jehovah lives. Whereas Uzziah’s reign was limited in time and sphere, Jehovah’s is infinite. There is no King like Christ. We too would be humbled if we would see God in all of His majesty.

Our humility grows when we recognize God’s unrivaled glory. Verses 2-4 go on to describe angelic worship in God’s presence. Seraphim surround the throne of God and call out His praises. They’ve done so since their creation, are doing so today, and will continue to do so for eternity. Their flying signifies service. Their covering of their faces and feet shows reverence and humility, which is astounding. As magnificent as the seraphim are—and their very title means “fiery ones”—they’re *still* humbled before God. He alone is “Holy, holy, holy” (6:3); He is completely unique; no one is like Him. Even sinless angels have no grounds for boasting before their matchless Creator. We too would be humbled if we would see God in all of His glory.

Our humility grows when we recognize God’s unrivaled purity. Finally, in Isaiah 6:5, the prophet responded to what he had seen by acknowledging his own sinfulness. Although he lived in a notoriously wicked nation (as he testified throughout the book), he didn’t presume to side with God in condemning sinners “out there.” Rather, he saw himself as a part of the sin problem all around him. He needed cleansing, which God mercifully granted (6:6-7). Isaiah, one of the godliest men of history, needed the forgiveness provided by the ultimate altar, the cross of Christ (Hebrews 10:10, 14). We too would be humbled if we would see God in all of His purity.

True humility is rooted in the gospel. We find it in studying Christ through the Scriptures and responding to Him with faith, love, and worship. My friend Tim Potter puts it this way: “Humility is constantly measuring ourselves by God.” Bow to Jesus, and watch the gospel remove your pride even as it reveals it.

Let the Gospel crush your pride. —CHRIS

As Christ Loved the Church

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 13

*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church
and gave himself up for her.*

EPHESIANS 5:25

First Corinthians 13, often called “The Love Chapter,” is one of the most famous passages in the Bible. Paul uses the word *love* nine times in the chapter and describes it in sixteen ways. While the love he describes is not primarily intended for married couples, it most certainly applies to them. There are at least three ways in which “The Love Chapter” can be specifically applied to Christian husbands.

Christlike love matters more than anything else in your marriage (13:1-3).

Paul is talking to Christians who have amazing gifts and abilities, lots of biblical knowledge, and a long track record of helping out needy people. Yet, these Christians still lack selfless, humble love toward each other. Christian husband, it’s possible for you to do lots of kind things for your wife, but never once do them out of love. You can be a good provider, a respectable parent, and a faithful husband, yet still be lacking in the one quality that really matters to God: love. Spiritual gifts, understanding, and self-sacrifice are meaningless—even obnoxious—without love.

You’ll show the most Christlike love for your wife when she irritates you (13:4-7).

The love that God is calling you to display isn’t fully shown until life gets messy. Notice some of Paul’s less-than-romantic descriptions of love: *Love is patient (13:4). Love doesn’t keep a list of wrongs suffered (13:5). Love bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things (13:7).* Do you see what’s implied here? Unless someone offends you, you don’t need to be *patient*. Unless someone wrongs you, you don’t need to *refuse to keep a list of wrongs*. Unless someone annoys you, you don’t need to *bear all things*. Unless someone disappoints you, you don’t need to *hope all things*. Unless someone hurts you, you don’t need to *endure all things*. In other words, the love that God calls you to show your wife assumes that she is going to offend you, wrong you, annoy you, disappoint you, and hurt you. And when she does, you have a prime opportunity to show her and others what Jesus’ love is really like, because Christlike love is magnified when it’s poured out on sinners. As Kent Hughes told the men in his church, “[M]arriage will reveal something about [your wife] which you already know about yourself—that she is a sinner. Marriage reveals everything: her weaknesses, her worst inconsistencies, the things others never see. *Loving your spouse is not to love her as a saint, but as a sinner*” (*Disciplines of a Godly Man*, p. 37, italics original).

God calls you to be the leader in Christlike love. In Ephesians 5:25 Paul, the same author who wrote 1 Corinthians 13, commands Christian husbands to be the leaders in showing this love in their marriage: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” Jesus Christ Himself is the example you’re called to imitate. He sacrificed Himself for His bride, the church. He constantly seeks the church’s growth. He personally cares for the church’s needs and cherishes her in her struggles. Like Christ, you should be the leader in love. Don’t wait for your wife to initiate love or deserve it. Be the one to pursue peace after an argument, the one to initiate reconciliation after harsh words. Why? Because you’re the leader. Because God calls you to love your wife like Christ loves the church.

Let the gospel shape your love for your wife. —JOE