

Revolutionary Disciple Week 6: The Spiritual Realm

Humility is the most radical and revolutionary trait that a disciple of Jesus can learn and possess. Humility isn't being **weak**, a doormat to be walked on. It is powerful because it starts with God.

Humility is knowing who you are in relation to God and choosing to go lower by... **Serving, Submitting, listening and confessing.**

The foundation is the knowledge of who you are in relation to God. **For those who have committed** their lives to following Jesus by confessing their sin and brokenness, there is a **new identity**. You become **his beloved**. You are **raised up** by Jesus and **adopted** as a son or daughter of God. Jesus has **brought you close** to God. This is the basis upon which we can have the **confidence** that we've nothing to prove. **We can risk going lower** by serving, submitting, listening, and confessing.

Pride is simply being self-absorbed.

As we finish up this series, we have taken a look at what humility looks like in **all the spheres of life**. If you have missed any of these, I would encourage you to get on the **website** and listen to them.

Here's the **diagram** we have been using. The first sphere is in **the center**. It speaks to humility in relationship to Jesus. That's where we wave the white flag and surrender to him. From there, we move outward where we continue to learn humility from the master, Jesus. We start with the **church**. This is our **playground** for learning humility. Then we practice what we learned in church at home. That's doing your **homework**. And that prepares us to learn what that looks like at **work, school**, and in relationship to the government.

We end with something that is encircling all of this. We call this the **spiritual realm**. What happens on a spiritual realm **affects us in church**, home, and in the world. This is where we face our **real enemy**, who is a spirit. And this is also how we fight against him. Some call this **spiritual warfare**.

For this **peak behind the curtain**, we return to Ephesians. ¹⁰ **A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.** ¹¹ **Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.** ¹² **For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this**

dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:10-12

In this section of which we will read more, is the **call to arms or the locker room speech** before the kickoff. Many of the **key areas being talked about throughout** this letter are put into a tight speech for those heading into a conflict. **There will be resistance.** There will be **adversity.** And our **enemy is not of this physical world,** but from the spiritual realm, Satan, the personification of evil.

Paul doesn't want these **new Christ followers to be caught off guard or mistake who the real enemy is.** He wants them to **head out on mission** with their eyes wide open, **ready to move the kingdom forward.**

This begins with commands to "be strong" and "put on all of God's armor." Be strong, **because you can** with the Lord's mighty power. Part of his power is what he is going to **arm you with in your conflict** with evil.

We are commanded to be strong and put on all of God's armor **so that we can stand against the devil's strategies.** The NIV uses the word **schemes.**

"Mention of the 'schemes' of the devil reminds us of the trickery and subterfuge by which evil and temptation present themselves in our lives. Evil rarely looks evil until it accomplishes its goal; it gains entrance by appearing attractive, desirable, and perfectly legitimate. It is a baited and camouflaged trap. As Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 11:14, Satan masquerades as an angel of light." **NIV Application Commentary** page 339.

I remember when I was working for **the cable company** during one of my summer's home from college. I was looking for illegal hookups where people were stealing cable. This had me walking through the back alleys of some of the rougher, poorer parts of Springfield, Ohio. With some **help from my friend, Tracy,** I started to be able to spot trouble before it became my problem. And potential trouble there was. **Some white kid from the suburbs** rambling around the more urban parts of town through alleys looking up at windows. No trouble there.

I learned to take **wide angles around corners** so that I could see what was around the corner with enough time to escape. I also learned to **spot a chain lying in the grass** and **patches where the grass was worn down.** These were the signs that a huge, angry, hungry dog was waiting. And I never got bitten or jumped or mauled. **That was my real enemy, not the people.** As soon as I told them who I was working for, they were fine.

This is what Paul wants them to know, who their real enemy was. And how to come prepared to do what God has called us to do.

When we look at this spiritual realm, let's set some things straight. Yes, I believe that there are spiritual forces at work, like Satan. I also believe that there are structures or patterns in this world that are fed into our sin and brokenness. These are parts of our world and culture that are broken from the beginning, when sin and death enter the equation. This spiritual realm is both, a proposition. There are demonic forces and there are broken systems that are all a part of what the enemy seeks to use to trip us up.

What makes us vulnerable to these schemes is pride. The enemy wants to use our pride to... separate and divide.

First our pride separates us from the sources of God's power, his word, prayer, and fellowship of the body. At the body is where the dividing begins.

The enemy wants to distract us from what will allow us to be prepared and not get caught off guard. There is no power on earth or in the spiritual realm that can keep us from what God wants to give us for our good. But what happens is that we get distracted, busy, and make too much noise in our lives. Then we are separated from God's word, the quiet to hear his voice and his body, the church. And remember, the church is where we learn humility from Jesus. And this message that is being sent is for the church.

Pride says, "I don't really need these resources. I'm fine as long as I get what I want out of church." We don't even know we are being separated from what is intended to keep us safe.

This is where the trouble begins. This is when we are vulnerable.

The next step is where the enemy uses our pride to divide the church. We stop looking to submit, serve, listen, and confess in the church. Our relationship with the church becomes a one-way relationship, where one gives and the other receives. Our limited energy then gets divided and our impact moving forward for the Kingdom is weakened.

Unity can only be achieved through humility. And without unity we get picked off one by one. Listen to this quote from The Revolutionary Disciple book.

"He (the enemy, Satan, the accuser...) leverages our pride to destroy God's work in us. He's so predictable too: as soon as he lures us away from the

pack, he devours us—his plan the whole time. And after he gets one of us, he tries to work through the whole group." 232

And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ for anger gives a foothold to the devil. Ephesians 4:26-27

Pride precedes anger as a foothold. When I have gone to bed angry at Robin, it has always been pride that keeps me from saying something to get the problem straightened out.

⁹ Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. ¹⁰ The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life. ¹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. John 10:9-11

It begins with understanding the enemy's purpose. First, steal what we need in order to follow Jesus. Then kill something in you, but the ultimate goal is to destroy you by separating from God now and for eternity.

Our attack comes from the spiritual realm, but we see its effects in the church, family, and world spheres and, if left to fester, it will affect the Jesus sphere.

It's like an infection from outside the body that enters by way of a cut that, left untreated, can get to your vital organs and kill you. There's a weak, vulnerable spot that is attacked, but once it makes its way through all parts of the body, it can kill. **The entry point might be pride** in the church, family, or world, but once it gets back to the center, that is death.

The enemy wants to use our pride to... separate and divide_and to...**Kill our ability to follow, be changed by and commit to Jesus' mission.** **Pride kills discipleship.**

We will not be able to follow Jesus if we have self-absorbed pride, because no one is going to tell me I can do something that I want to do. No one is going to give me boundaries. Pride makes it impossible to be **changed by Jesus**, because I'm in charge of what I change. **And after all, I gotta be me, this is the way I was born.** And, of course, when you are the captain of your own ship, it's **your dreams for your life** that you must pursue, not Jesus' mission in the world.

Pride kills discipleship, not a lack of Bible knowledge, not being gifted, not committing some heinous sin, or even living a sinful lifestyle. Pride is living

as if this is **my story, starring me**, with Jesus and others in it. When it should be Jesus' story, starring Jesus and I get to be in it.

That's the poison, now how about the remedy? ¹³ **Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor** so you will be able to **resist the enemy** in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be **standing firm**. ¹⁴ **Stand your ground**, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. ¹⁵ For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. ¹⁶ In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. ¹⁷ Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ **Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent** in your prayers for all believers everywhere. Ephesians 6:13-18

There's a temptation to read this as **an individual challenge**. But the challenge in verse 13 is written in **plural** not singular. **It's you all, or y'all**, not you as an individual. This is written to the church. They were interpreting what Paul was saying as a group, not as individuals who simply come together once in a while.

Here is how Jim Putman in the Revolutionary Disciple describes this. **"Remember, though, it takes humility to put on the armor, fight as a team, and go where the Lord commands. And we must also heed what Jesus said when we win in the spiritual realm; 'Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven' (Luke 10:20). (Again there isn't anything on earth or in the spiritual realm that has the power and authority to separate you from God in Christ Jesus.) These words keep us grounded by remembering our salvation is the greatest victory...Instead of fighting individual spiritual battles, we all help each other with the breastplate of righteousness to guard our hearts, we protect each other with the helmet of salvation, and we remind each other of the truth as we put it around our waist. These garments of battle are for the collective church, not just individuals who go to church."** 240 & 241

We are one another's best defense. What I lack, someone here has. The messenger for the hard message that I need to hear is in the church.

We must not be naïve or arrogant... Pride comes before arrogance because we are one of these two things. **Naiveté is allowed to remain** when we are prideful. Arrogance says, "I have all I need, nothing can stop me."

My pride almost derailed this church...

"I'm going to heaven so I don't need to worry. I said a prayer. I'm basically a good person."

We must not be naïve or arrogant... **But be prepared and be alert.**

Alert for me means watching out for feelings of being overwhelmed that lead to a lack of faith and self focus. "It's been really tough so I deserve _____."

For men, it's not complicated, it's typically about money, sex, or power/success. "When we start hearing the siren song of those three things being dangled in front of your face, then you had better be prepared and alert."

Maybe it's a fear that leads to a desire to control.

Remember God provides all we need if we aren't naïve or arrogant.

The following is the full or complete armor of God. It is called that because it is the same armor God wears. It is made up of who he is. It is, therefore, putting on God himself.

Here's where this idea came from. Paul is harkening back to the prophet Isaiah. **Yes, truth is gone, and anyone who renounces evil is attacked. The LORD looked and was displeased to find there was no justice. ¹⁶ He was amazed to see that no one intervened to help the oppressed. So he himself stepped in to save them with his strong arm, and his justice sustained him. ¹⁷ He put on righteousness as his body armor and placed the helmet of salvation on his head. He clothed himself with a robe of vengeance and wrapped himself in a cloak of divine passion. Isaiah 59:15-17**

Sounds fierce, doesn't it? That's God going into conflict when evil is not renounced and there is no justice.

The command to put on every piece of God's armor is intended to harken back to another command to put something on. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. Ephesians 4:24

To put on all of God's armor is to put on the new person I was created to be who is growing in resemblance to Jesus. Jesus is the one who brought God's traits to life in our world. He is our example.

This list is what makes up the character of God that is our new nature or our new self. It's there, so put it on. In other words, each of these aspects of who God is demands a human response. We have to put them on. To respond humbly to these aspects of God is to put on each piece of armor.

- **belt of truth...**My humble response is **"You are the source of all truth."**
- **body armor of God's righteousness...**My humble response is **I have no righteousness** only what comes from Jesus.

It is God's goodness and grace that I have been given. I have been brought close and adopted by God through Christ. **Rest in this. Trust in this. Or keep trying really hard to do better in your own strength.**

- **shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News...**My humble response is **the gospel is my only source of peace** in this world.
- **shield of faith...**My humble response is that I **have no defense against evil without trusting in you to save me.**

"I am one in whom Christ dwells and I live in his unshakable kingdom."

- **salvation as your helmet...**My humble response is you **have saved me by adopting me** as your own through Jesus.
- **sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God...**My humble response is that the **gospel of Jesus is what conquers** anything in its way.

All of these weapons can be used verbally in the spiritual realm. Speak it so that the spirits can hear it. This is why our **singing is so powerful**, our praise is so powerful, it is brought out of our minds so the enemy can hear and know that it has no response to it.

The ultimate purpose of these is to be able to resist and then to be able to stand firm.

People are falling by the wayside. They are **giving up on their faith** and on **God's body, the church.** They are **separating themselves** from what protection God has provided for them. **I want to be able to stand through this strange season in life.** **Do you want your children and grandchildren to be able to stand,** to not be caught off guard unprepared for what the enemy is bringing?

This is our last challenge to act during this series as we wrap it up.

Learning Humility

1. **Check my pride.**

There is a bible study that will help you flesh out some possible areas of pride. I want to challenge you to pick one up in the back or you can use the link to get one digitally.

2. Take the next step to prepare for battle.

What has God been trying to say to you through this series on pride and humility? **What is one step of obedience you need to take?** This will demand that you trust him. Who do you need to help you take this next step? **WRITE IT DOWN!**

3. Put on the armor in prayer together.

This is not an individual thing. We need to do this together because we have been called to be God's church together as a community in fellowship with one another. **Not simply as individuals who happen to come together** on Sundays.

Father, we want to be alert and ready to take a stand against the plans of the evil one and the sinful patterns of this broken world. That means we need to put on all of the armor you have provided for us, our new nature given through your grace. To put this armor on we must humble ourselves before you as Master and Savior.

As you have designed **we will...**

- Put on the **belt of truth** by confessing, "You are the source of all truth."
- Put on the **body armor of God's righteousness** by confessing, "We have no righteousness of our own, ours is like filthy rags. You have given us your righteousness."
- Put on the **peace that comes from the Good News like shoes** by trusting that real peace only comes through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Put on the **shield of faith** by admitting that we have no defense against evil in my own strength, only you can rescue me, anything else is pride.
- Put on **salvation like a helmet** by praising you for bringing us close as adopted sons and daughters of the king through Jesus' sacrificial death and continuing grace.

- Grasp hold of the **sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**, committing ourselves to proclaiming the gospel and announcing that the Kingdom of God has come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Now we must go in the strong name of Jesus, our overcomer.

Amen