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Notes about living as a
Christian

continuous conversion

Humility

The concept of humility is a tricky one. To be humble means to be teachable, to be aware of one's lack of wisdom and knowledge, and to be amenable to correction and instruction.

By definition, humility exists in situations in which a person is aware of his or her shortcomings. But paradoxically, humility can become an inverted pride—"I am special because I know that I don't know everything. I am

humble." And of course, declaring oneself humble is the exact opposite of *being* humble. So how does one actually become humble? How can a rational, educated 21st-century person, into whom society has poured its accumulated wisdom, of whom so much is expected, become as one who has very few resources and little knowledge?

This is a tricky question; the Bible provides answers.

Proverbs 29:23

"Pride lands you flat on your face; **humility** prepares you for honors." (*The Message*)

With the typical bluntness of "the Book of Proverbs," this verse pulls no punches.

by Sara Tusek

Humility is the opposite of pride. Humility puts you into a blessed place, where honors may come your way; pride, on the other hand, "goes before a fall" in which case you land flat on your face.

We're still caught in the same trap: trying to be humble too often leads to spiritual pride, which is the opposite of humility. Is there any more specific instruction on becoming humble in the Bible?

James 1:19

"Post this at all the intersections, dear friends: Lead with your ears, follow up with your tongue, and let anger straggle along in the rear. God's righteousness doesn't grow from human anger. So throw all spoiled virtue and cancerous evil in the garbage. In simple **humility**, let our gardener, God, landscape you with the Word, making a salvation-garden of your life." (*The Message*)

Now here is something we can understand! If we want humility, we must throw all spoiled virtue and cancerous evil in the garbage. We can do that!

Or can we?

What will become of us if we throw spoiled virtue and cancerous evil into the garbage? Will there be anything left of us? Is there any part of us that isn't spoiled and evil when compared to the purity and righteousness of God? Can our sinful self really throw out its own sinfulness? We may just need some help for such a spiritual housecleaning.

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Humility

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Ephesians 4:1

“In light of all this, here's what I want you to do. While I'm locked up here, a prisoner for the Master, I want you to get out there and walk—better yet, run!—on the road God called you to travel. I don't want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don't want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. And mark that you do this with **humility** and discipline—not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences.” (*The Message*)

Here is some substantial help, just when we need it. In order to run on the road God has called us to travel, we need humility and discipline. This verse makes it clear that humility is not in itself a goal—it is rather a tool, a needed characteristic of the person who wants to travel the road that God has shown him.



If humility is a prerequisite for living a Christ-like life, then developing humility must be a very basic chore for the Christian.

Obviously humility is not a rare commodity, a mysterious, elusive, paradoxical quality. It's expected that committed Christians become humble in the natural course of living for Christ. Oh, yes, and they also develop discipline. That's taken for granted.

Well. We've reached a new understanding of humility. Far from being an intellectual trap (pride vs. humility), humility

is a simple prerequisite for being a Christian.

So it's clear that we have to do more than just a bit of inner housecleaning to become humble. We are to model humility and discipline; we are to steadily pour out ourselves for each other in acts of love.

It seems that developing humility is an “on-the-job” kind of training. It's a by-product, perhaps, of performing those deeds of love, as well as being a necessity to perform the deeds of love in the first place. Another paradox.

Colossians 3:12

“So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness,

humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.”

So are we putting the cart before the horse when we try to become humble? Can we become humble by our own efforts? Or will we be gifted with humility by God as we perform deeds of love?

Maybe we need to do both at once—act with humility while developing humility. This seems impossible, but God specializes in the impossible. Perhaps the acceptance of this impossibility is the beginning of humility. It doesn't make sense to our human reason, but we trust God to make sense of it for us, through His mighty power—and our humble attitude.