

First Step Up Is Down: 1

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Luke 14.7-11

As I was waiting on the Lord a few weeks ago for the theme of the year, I just heard the three words “Come Up Higher!”

A few years ago I was in a hotel and noticed something strange. In order to get to the upper floors you first had to go down a few stairs to get to the where the lifts and staircases were.

In this parable Jesus told about a man who was invited to a feast and presented the scenario where he occupied the best seat. Then a man came in who was an important guest and the first man was sitting in the seat reserved for the important guest. He was shamed as he was made to take a lower seat. Jesus taught that we should occupy the lower seats in order that we may be exalted.

If we want to come up higher we need to first go down or humble ourselves – this is the teaching throughout the New Testament and not just an isolated case.

John the Baptist said of himself “Jesus must increase and I must decrease” (John 3.30) To be exalted we must become less and less.

1 Peter 5.5-6

“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you”

Humility (or to be humble) is to submit yourself to someone higher or greater, submission, make low.

Humility is not to make ourselves so great or build ourselves up. Humility is to submit ourselves to God. Pride will bring us down, Humility will exalt us.

The first step up is down – to submit to God.

James 4.6-7,10

James quotes the same Old Testament scripture – God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble

To be humble is also not making ourselves to feel so unworthy, or so poor, so debased – this is not humility, this is a type of pride, an inverted-pride and God resists that. To be humble is to submit yourself to God and what He says about you.

Philippians 2.8-9

Jesus humbled Himself. He submitted to His Father – He only did and said what He heard from His Father – that's humility

He was obedient to His Father's will – even in the garden of Gethsemane as He was facing the cross, He prayed and surrendered to His Father's will.

Because he humbled Himself, God has highly exalted Him

If we humble ourselves under God He will also raise us up, exalt us and bring us higher.

Luke 18.9-14

Another parable Jesus taught about two men.

Trusting in yourself is pride – God resists the proud. The Pharisee was full of pride, His prayer was based on himself and his achievements.

The tax collector could hardly lift his eyes as he focused on God and not himself – be merciful to me. He submitted to God and he went home justified

Verse 14 reminds us that those who exalt themselves will be brought down, those who humble themselves will be exalted.