

Lent 2021

Cultivating the Fruits of the Spirit

Discussion Questions

Developed by the Pastors and the Adult Deepening Team



Week One: Humility

(Week of February 21)



UNITED PARISH IN BROOKLINE

American Baptist • United Church of Christ • United Methodist

Purpose of this Lenten study

To expand our individual understanding of the gifts - or fruits - of the Spirit

To explore how we can cultivate and embody these gifts to feel more in alignment with and authentic with God

To appreciate that each of us has particular gifts to contribute to the fruitfulness of our community aspirations and efforts

Based on Galatians 5:22-23:

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Purpose of this session

To introduce and examine humility as a Christian virtue

Week One: Humility**Opening Prayer**

Dear God,

Giver of all the fruits of the Holy Spirit, be with us as we explore the virtue of humility in this first week of Lent. We pray for all those in our United Parish community who are joining in this Lenten journey individually and in groups. Inspire us to manifest these virtues, as Jesus' hands and feet in our world.

Amen

Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness
to be tempted by the devil.

He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished.

The tempter came and said to him,

'If you are the Son of God,

command these stones to become loaves of bread.'

But Jesus answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."'

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you", and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." '

Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." '

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.'

Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him." '

Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Philippians 2:1-8

If then there is any encouragement in Christ,
any consolation from love,
any sharing in the Spirit,
any compassion and sympathy,
make my joy complete:
be of the same mind, having the same love,
being in full accord and of one mind.
Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit,
but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.
Let each of you look not to your own interests,
but to the interests of others.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

Discussion Questions

What is humility to you

Who in your life has embodied humility, either someone you've known personally or observed in the public eye?

How was it exhibited in their words and actions?

What do you think about the idea that pride is really about trying to measure up to other people's expectations and ideals?

If that's true, whose expectations are we trying to meet when we're humble?

The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts themselves will be humbled, and whoever humbles themselves will be exalted. Matthew 23:12

Humility in the Bible has an element of trust and a recognition of God's magnificent power, but also an aspect of fear of God's potential retribution if we do not aim ourselves toward righteousness. What does it mean to you to have a meek and humble heart? To be a servant leader?

Self-evaluation

What are your strongest attributes (like kindness, encouragement, warmth, friendliness) and talents (like cooking, singing, athletics)?

From whom did you receive them?

What are your weakest?

Where do you see room for potential growth?

If you have trouble answering these questions, imagine what some of the people who know you best might say.

When have you been humbled? What did the experience teach you?

How do you think God sees you?

Humility in the World

Many of us have focused more of our energy and efforts on advancing equality and reducing the forces of oppression in society, more focused on being bold and fearless than advancing and modeling humility. Are these two efforts compatible?

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Do not imagine that if you meet a really humble man he will be what most people call 'humble' nowadays: he will not be a sort of greasy, smarmy person, who is always telling you that, of course, he is nobody. Probably all you will think about him is that he seemed a cheerful, intelligent chap who took a real interest in what you said to him. If you do dislike him it will be because you feel a little envious of anyone who seems to enjoy life so easily. He will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all.

If anyone would like to acquire humility, I can, I think, tell him the first step. The first step is to realise that one is proud. And a biggish step, too. At least, nothing whatever can be done before it. If you think you are not conceited, it means you are very conceited indeed.

Mere Christianity, Book 3, Chapter 8, "The Great Sin,"

Marks of Humility

adapted from "[Thirteen Habits of Humble People](#)," by Jeff Boss, March 1, 2015, [forbes.com](#)

Humility is frequently associated with being too passive, submissive or insecure, but ...instead, humble people are quite the opposite—confident and competent in themselves so much that, as a result, they seek to self-actualize by helping others. Humble people are still self-efficacious; they just don't feel the impetus to boast about themselves but instead, let their actions speak for their ideals. To be humble is not to think less of oneself, but to think of oneself less.

Thinking of others first

Humble people know their self-worth. As a result, they don't feel the need to show them how much they know. Instead, humble people realize that nobody cares how

much they know until those people know how much they're cared for. Humble people share the credit

Listening to others

actively listen to others, not trying to dominate a conversation or talk over people. They're eager to understand others because ...

Practice Curiosity

Humble people seek knowledge because they are perpetual learners and realize that they don't have all the answers. They glean knowledge from the experiences of others and crave more opportunities to learn.

Retain and Maintain Relationships

doing what is required to maintain and nurture them on an ongoing basis.

Say "Thank You" regularly

often, regularly, repeatedly

Think abundantly

They don't have a zero-sum game take on the world, but see that there is plenty of good room for everyone to enjoy

Seek constructive feedback

Humble people are not only receptive to constructive feedback but actively seek it because they know that it is a pathway to improvement.

Take responsibility for their part

Rather than eschewing blame on "the system" or the behaviors of others, humble people assume responsibility by speaking up and owning their part.

Aware of the bigger picture, the larger goal, and what part they have given to play in furthering that goal.

Ask for help

Part of being humble means realizing that you don't have all the answers. No one does. Humble people acknowledge what they do and do not know and enlist help for the latter. Humility displays a willingness to learn and become better.

Closing Prayer

Dear God,

Help us in this Lenten journey to do what is asked in Micah, that we “do what is right, love mercy, and walk humbly” with You. Help us to embody humility as Jesus did, and live in a way that shows that we are here for a greater purpose than just our own gain.

Amen