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“Nobody’s
Going to Push
ME Around!”



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By Dr. Robert A. Cook



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“Nobody’s going to push me around!”

How often have you heard those words ... or said them ... or thought them?

In the back of your mind may be the idea that lowliness is either weakness (which you avoid) or lack of recognition of one’s worth (which you deplore). So you shrink from this concept of lowliness. Most of us do.

But so common is this problem that the Word of God deals with it squarely, for our enlightenment. As the Holy Spirit’s penman Paul instructs us:

... In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. (Phil. 2:3,4)

What is Lowliness?

It is significant that both the dictionary and the Apostle Paul define this characteristic in negative terms. Lowliness is *not* loftiness ... *not* pride ... *not* pretentiousness. In Paul’s words, it is *not* “strife or vainglory.” These picture words give us a good idea of the positive qualities implied.

Lowliness is not strife.

Strife is warfare, yes; but it is also political rivalry. You say, “Certainly politics are not at work in churches!” Sadly, oh yes they are.

Some one wants to be Chairman of the Board. Some one else aspires to the same office. So these two line up on different sides, each trying to get the upper hand of the situation. By campaigning, manipulating, even cajoling, they seek to build influence and garner votes.

In effect, Paul says, “Don’t do it that way.” If you’ll specialize in obeying God, He’ll give you all the leadership you will be able to exercise. He hasn’t called us to win arguments but to win souls.

Lowliness is not vainglory.

Webster defines this word as “excessive pride, especially of one’s achievements; vain display or show; vanity.” “Glory” is the kind of praise that belongs to God alone. When we take it to ourselves it becomes vain-glory, self-praise. What an obnoxious thing that turns out to be!

All of us yearn for credit for our efforts. God is “not unmindful of [our] labor of love.” He keeps books. The trouble is that although we may deserve recognition for something

rightfully earned, if we *ask* for it. .. if we bargain for it. .. people will give it to us, but grudgingly - and they will actually dislike us because of it.

Years ago I began to learn important lessons along this line (and I still need to review them often). I grumbled to God because certain people were getting applause in Christian work while I was fairly breaking my neck to do a good job - and nobody was noticing me.

God spoke to me so sweetly, "My child, you just do what I tell you to do, and I'll take care of the results and the rewards." I've seen Him do this many times. The praise of the crowd is always short-lived. The same crowd that cried "Hosanna" one day demanded "Crucify him" on another day.

All you have to do is look at the record of some outstanding politicians of our time, mark the adulation that was given to them, and see how the tide turned and the crowd turned with it, and you have a picture of the fickleness of fame and fortune.

Lowliness is free of bragging.

Paul says in Romans 12:3:

For I say ... to every man ... not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

"Sober," in this context, is a compound word meaning "a saved mind." And a "saved mind" never forgets Calvary, for that is the source of its being. You and I are what we 'are (if we are God's children) because of Christ's sacrifice of Himself on our behalf. If we *know* that, if we realize that we are dependent upon God's touch upon us every split second' of our lives, then we are not going to strive for credit for ourselves for anything, because He - our blessed Lord - gets it all. Do you really want to be a lowly person?

What Develops Lowliness?

If we want it, there are at least three ways by which lowliness is developed.

We must recognize superiority in others.

Every person, you meet will be better at *something* than you are. For example, go to the wilds of Australia or New Guinea or Papua and you'll discover that many of the nationals there - without the advantages of any formal education - can accomplish feats impossible to you.

Let us say you are traveling in bleak back country. Your guide knows the significance of a bent blade of grass, the importance of broken twigs, and he begins to track an animal so you can

have something to eat. Or he lifts his face to the sun and sniffs the wind and tells you, "Water is there." How does he know? He *knows*! He is superior to you.

You may have gone there with a graduate degree and experience along many lines, but you have met up with some one who is superior to you, in skills that could ultimately save your life.

Everybody you meet has certain areas of superiority greater than yours. Real lowliness always recognizes that fact about the other fellow.

Many years ago my work with Youth for Christ took me south of the border. I found that believers in Central and South America were Singing some of the most beautiful Christian melodies - written by Alfredo Colon, a man who was absolutely tone deaf. He could not hear a note with his physical ears, but he could hear music in his soul, and what was *there* he wrote.

I can still hear, in memory, the duet that two of our group sang, using this dear brother's lovely lines:

*In the morning
I will direct my adulation to You.*

This man had no formal training. He hadn't gone to the university and taken notation, chord structure, harmony and counterpoint. But in his heart was the song the Holy Spirit had given him. He was superior, not only in overcoming his handicap but also in the excellence of his work.

There's an interesting parallel in verses 3 and 4. They are two sides of the same truth. Paul said in effect, don't be given to strife, political machinations, trying to get your own way through your own efforts, grabbing the credit for yourself. Rather, he said, look on other people as being what they really are - superior to you in many ways. "Let each esteem other better than themselves."

There is another way that lowliness is developed.

We must pay more attention to the other fellow than to ourselves.

You probably remember the story of the terribly boresome young man who was wrapped up in his own interests. He was on a date with a patient young lady who sat and suffered through his monologue describing how wonderful he was.

Suddenly there must have come to this lad some intimation of the fact that his girl was tiring of his speech about his greatness.

So he broke off, smiled, and looked at her intently.

"Let's not talk any more about me," he said. "Let's talk about *you*. What do you think about me?"

Many a person is so engrossed with himself that he has no time or inclination to think of other people. The tragedy is that the world is full of folks who ask nothing more than to have somebody interested in them.

Teenagers are often desperately lonely people. They may be taken in cordially by their peers. But inwardly they long for acceptance also from their elders.

The biggest insult you can inflict on your thirteen-to-nineteen-year-olds is to ignore them. They are not too shaken when you disagree with them; they expect that. But they are hurt to the quick when you fail to value them and their opinions. At the same time, when you do show genuine love and concern a young person of this age may often open his or her heart to you, like the blossoming of a rose.

"Thank you for caring."

My sister has told me of an experience she had that emphasizes this truth. She was invited to spend a weekend in the home of friends whose sixteen-year-old daughter was so shy that she scarcely said a word even in family gatherings.

Of her own accord Kay offered her room to this grandmother-age guest.

On a bulletin board in that room was a selection by an unknown writer giving suggestions - some of them very searching - intended to lead to daily effective Christian living.

My sister copied that sheet. When she later distributed her own copies of the "poem" to members of a Bible class she teaches, she wrote to Kay to tell her how her contribution had brought blessings to a group of older people. She received this reply:

Mildred, I wanted to write to tell you how much I appreciated your writing twice, especially the note telling of the experience you had with my little "poem."

Another reason I wanted to write to you is because you seem to me like you really care about people and right now I've been through so much that I really need someone to care and pray for me.

She spoke of her two best friends. In the home of one of them there was "terrible family trouble." In the other home a nine-months-old baby had died. She added, "To top it all off, my boyfriend and I broke up." She ended the letter this way:

Somehow I thought of you and how much you cared and I had to write you. Will you please pray for me and my friends?

I know God is going to work everything out and we are all going to grow from these experiences, but it's just very hard for me right now to thank Him for them ... Thank you again for caring. Please keep in touch.

There you have it: If we “look ... on the things of others” - deeply caring for them - we will not only be the instruments of comfort to hurting hearts but will also be growing in lowliness ourselves.

We might look at one further way by which lowliness is to be developed in us.

We must rid ourselves of a defensive spirit.

You and I have begun to grow up a little when we can ask another person how *he* feels about a controversial issue and then quietly listen without resistance.

The fire of intense objection can flash in words, or it can smolder in the heart wordlessly. My father was a strict disciplinarian, with skilled use of the lecture method. When I got out of line he would stand me up against the wall of our little light-housekeeping room and he would tell me off. I would hotly resent this treatment, but I didn't dare say a word because you didn't talk back to your parents in those days.

Suddenly my father would break off his speech-making. “I don't know why,” he would say, “you're so blooming defensive, boy!”

I hadn't said a word! I was just standing there breathing. But he knew his boy. He could see written in my eyes the story of my resentment.

Every now and then when I find myself getting uptight because somebody disagrees with me, I just lean back and say, “Now Lord, make me relaxed about this. Help me to concentrate on the other person's point of view and think gently of him.”

Such an attitude will help in the family. It will help husbands and wives when they talk together, and it will help parents and children when they must discuss matters in which they differ.

It is possible - yes, it is! - to talk things over with the person you're differing with, and not get uptight, *not* get defensive, all because you are busy looking at the other person's point of view.

A better way.

I heard a speaker give an illustration of this fact recently. He said: Suppose Sonny-boy comes home (let's say he's in the ninth grade) and announces, "I'm going to quit school."

Well, of course, you know that he cannot legally do that. He has to be in school until he's sixteen.

The tendency at this point is for any normal parent to respond in terms of an authoritarian reaction to the boy's declaration, "Over my dead body you're going to quit! What do you want to be, a clod? What do you want to do, live on welfare all your life? All you need is to study harder."

Inevitably, the boy will argue.

But, said this person to whom I was listening, there is a better way. Instead of flying off the handle in a parental tizzy, begin this way: "Hey, you I feel strongly about this, don't you? Want to talk about it?"

With that kind of approach there is no threat, no blame. Pretty soon you get the picture: he thinks the biology teacher treated him unfairly on a test. .. and he, didn't cheat when a lot of other kids did ... and so on and on. As he tells you, realizing that you are interested and that you do want to understand how he feels, some of the steam goes out of the situation even in the telling. Then you begin to ask questions and you find out even more about how he feels. Before the conversation is over he's decided that maybe he'll try school again - one more day.

Value of empathizing.

Let's learn to "get inside" another person's mind (forgetting for the time being our own views). Let's be truly concerned with what other people are concerned about. In the process, lovely lowliness will grow in us.

Carl Rogers, the psychologist, says that a client will get no benefit unless he knows that he is accepted and respected and loved by the one who counsels him.

Let us say that you are trying to help someone - whether it be of your own flesh and blood or an employer or an employee or whoever. That human being must know that you accept him as he is. You may not agree with all that he is, but you accept him and respect him as a human being with a never-dying soul. You love him because Jesus loves him. You've taken a long step toward effective Christian living when you have come to that place.

Paul says, "Look not every man on his own things [what do I get out of it?] but every man

on the things of others.” How does this other person feel? ‘How does he react to this situation? What are his priorities? Where is he hurting? Where could the “balm of Gilead” be applied?

What a beautiful thing it is that we have not only instruction, but also a demonstration of what lowliness is and does.

Christ, Our Pattern Of Lowliness

Our Lord Jesus left us an example, said Simon Peter, that we should follow His steps. This course involves total attitude, total mind-set. Look at Philippians 2:5-11.

The Christ-mind was non-grasping.

... being in the form of God [he] thought it not a thing to be grasped, to be equal with God; i.e., [He did not] demand or cling to his rights as God.

Jesus is and was and always will be God. But He was willing to give up that position in the Godhead during those thirty-three years of travail here on earth, in order that He might save you and me.

Do you guard your religious status? Jesus didn't, though many people do.

The Christ-mind was Identified with the needy.

[He] made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.

At His baptism, Jesus identified with all human sin; He became the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world At the tomb of Lazarus, He related to separation and heartbreak and tears. . .In the Garden of Gethsemane He shared in every human desire to avoid suffering - and went on to walk that rugged way to Calvary's hill to be the Savior of the world.

In some small sense we who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ can - and we must - likewise identify with the woe and testing and heartache of our needy world, so that people around us will know that we care because Jesus cares.

The Christ-mind Is willing to pay any needed cost.

Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.

All of us are not called upon to die for Christ. Some are. This old world of ours has many areas where, to be a Christian, is highly dangerous, where people are actually losing their lives because they are marked as being believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In our own blessed USA, in all of North America and many other favored locations, no one is shot at sunrise because of faith in Christ. The time may come when such testing will be ours.

But there are other prices to be paid. It costs to be snubbed ... to be passed by for a promotion on the job ... to find that one you love is forsaking you for some godless individual who doesn't love the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, these things hurt; there is a price to be paid. But the person who has the Christ-mind says, "I won't shrink from paying any price in order to be true to God. I am going to obey Him, come what will."

If that is your decision, dear friend, you will find that those you meet will be drawn to your Savior. Oh, you may not know how many or to what extent they follow Him. That is a matter for heaven's records.

Meanwhile your own ideas about lowliness may be vastly altered as you think of Christ. When some one says, perhaps derisively, "Lowliness - who wants it?" you will respond, "I do!" because with a "meek and quiet spirit" my blessed Lord is "well pleased."

