

Stewardship of Humility

God's Plan for Stewardship

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Bible Text: 1 Peter 5:5

Preached On: Sunday, November 10, 2013

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I am Rachel Heffener and I am a junior doubt majoring in photography and ceramics at Purdue University. This December I will have been a member at Faith for a year and have been involved with the college ministry for 18 months. I was saved at the age of 14 but wasn't taught what it meant to walk the Christian lifestyle. I went about being my own boss of my life until my senior year of high school. My father and ultimate idol in my life, suddenly passed away on March 24, 2011. My role that had been built upon him instead of Christ went to pieces until I transferred to Purdue and got involved with Faith.

I immediately started attending a Bible study and PBF every Friday night. Not many people know of the girl I was two years ago before really coming into my faith but those who did, wouldn't use the character traits of kind, loving or leader to describe me. God has grown me in such a short amount of time since coming to Faith Church and there has been one woman in particular who has been instrumental in my growth, even loving me enough to include me in their family and have me live with them over the summer. I have gained three little brothers and a sister because this woman decided to give up her time, treasures and talents to mentor me. She has set the example for me to disciple the younger generation of girls who are in the college class.

Since living at Faith West in August, God has presented me with a multitude of opportunities to grow my faith in others. He put me in an apartment with all freshman girls that I had never met before moving day. I have been so blessed to be able to pour into their lives and even had the opportunity to disciple them but not only do I get to pour into the lives of my roommates, I get to lead other girls to grow their faith and strengthen their own walks with Christ through Bible studies and other avenues. I hope co-lead a Bible study on Monday nights that is held in one of the apartments at Faith West and I regularly meet with younger girls for discipleship either in the study rooms or at Café Literato.

God has used Faith West in my life to help me to grow my personal ministry but not only do I get to pour into those lives around Faith West, I get to witness to people all over Purdue's campus. People in my classes have asked when I share that I live at Faith West, "What the heck is that giant building?" and I get to joyfully explain to them. Or people will ask what the big FE sculpture out front is; someone told me they thought it stood for

Faith Enterprises. But God gives me these opportunities to show that I am not ashamed of the gospel and explain how iron sharpens iron in the Christian walk and why this is important. Never before in my walk with Christ have I had so many opportunities to proclaim his name and his kingdom than I have this semester of college at Purdue.

Faith West isn't just a building over on Northwestern that I've cleaned more times than I can count, it's the place I call home. I've renewed my lease for next year and can't wait to continue expanding my ministry and continue help growing the younger generation of girls to be godly women. Thank you.

Isn't that a tremendous story? Thank you, Rachel, for sharing with us and so many stewardship themes just dovetail in her story. Think about the stewardship of suffering and all that we've been studying this fall in 1 Peter and then the stewardship of growth in Christ and simultaneously serving and mentoring others as she continues to grow in the Lord. What a great, great story, Rachel, and we're so excited about what God is doing in your life and also, thankful for your willingness to stand up before our church family and talk about what God is doing.

Most of us probably recognize the cruise ship in this picture: it's the Costa Concordia after it ran aground and partially sank on January 13, 2012. It was a terrible tragedy that resulted in 32 persons losing their lives. What's almost beyond belief is why this accident occurred. The ship's captain, Francesco Schettino was performing "an unofficial, near shore salute to the local islanders" which back in junior high was known as showing off. So he deviated from the ship's computer programmed route claiming that he was "familiar with the local seabed." Yeah, it looks like it.

Familiar with the local seabed. Think about that: all the captain has to do is follow the route that is designed and programmed by his superiors and everything would be fine unless his heart was filled with pride and he believes he's better at navigating his ship than those who owned and managed it. The ship was declared a total loss by the insurance company. Think about that: you totaled your ship. That's a whole lot worse than totaling your Toyota, by the way, from a finance perspective but still, it's not just that, it had to be removed from that sensitive reef which is no small feat in and of itself. That work began on September 16th of this year. The plan is to refloat it, to tow it away and then cut it up for scrap. Cut it up for scrap. The lesson here in part is that pride is an incredibly expensive and destructive force. Deviating from the ship's programmed route because he was "familiar with the local seabed."

Compare that to an illustration C. J. Mahaney used in his book "Humility: True Greatness." It's a marvelous book if you've not read it. In this book he spoke of another well-known book, "Good to Great" by Jim Collins. I've mentioned this one before and you probably read "Good to Great," many of you, at least. But Mahaney said this: "Can a good company become a great company and if so, how?" To find the answer, Collins and a team of researchers spent five years studying 11 corporations that had made the leap

from being merely good companies to being great ones. Collins identified two specific character qualities shared by the CEOs of good to great companies.

The first was no surprise: these men and women possessed incredible professional will; they were driven, willing to endure anything to make their company a success. But the second trait these leaders had in common wasn't something the researchers expected to find. These driven leaders were self-effacing and modest; they consistently pointed to the contribution of others and didn't like drawing attention to themselves. "The good to great leaders never wanted to become larger than life heroes," Collins writes, "they never aspired to be put on a pedestal or become unreachable icons. They were seemingly ordinary people quietly producing extraordinary results."

When Collins interviewed people who worked for these leaders, he says they continually used words like "quiet, humble, modest, reserved, shy, gracious, mild-mannered, self-effacing, understated, did not believe his own clippings," and so forth to describe them. Well, what's the principle? Here it is: pride makes your ship run aground, humility makes your ship function well. And, of course, that wouldn't be a hard case to make from the word of God, would it? Like Proverbs 29:23, "A man's pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor." Or Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling."

I think for most of us when we hear verses like that it's not long before we stop thinking about Captain Schettino and start thinking about ourselves. How many of our conversations have ended up like the ship on its side because of our pride? How many of our decisions resulted in ship on the side consequences simply because of our pride? How many marriages ended up like the ship on its side because of pride? How many of us have deviated from the route programmed for us in God's word because we thought we knew a better way? We were familiar with the local seabed, we told ourselves. Am I the only one who can think of a painful number of examples in my own life of all of that?

Mahaney went on to say, "The sad fact is that none of us are immune to the logic defying, blinding effects of pride. Though it shows up in different forms and to differing degrees, it infects us all. The real issue here is not if pride exists in your heart, it's where pride exists and how pride is being expressed in your life. Scripture shows us that pride is strongly and dangerously routed in all of our lives far more than most of us care to admit or even think about."

Now, on the other hand, and aren't you glad there's another hand to this discussion? On the other hand is the power and the example of our merciful Savior who said in Matthew 11:29, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and," what? "Humble in heart, and you will find," if you'll do that, "rest for your souls." Why is that? Well, it's because pride is exhausting. Did you know that? That pride is exhausting because we're trying to fulfill a role, namely God's, that we were never designed to accomplish. But Jesus calls us to take his yoke and to learn from him because he is gentle and humble in heart. We all know people like that, whose lives are like the ship on the right and the fact of the matter is that that humility that somehow they have been able to

develop, that is so contrary to this culture in which we live and is so allusive, persons like that who have been able to follow the Lord and become gentle and humble in heart, it positively impacts everything else about them.

So, the question I think is: how can we take steps to conquer this beastly sin of pride and replace it with the life of humility? With that in mind, open your Bible, if you would, to 1 Peter 5. That's on page 183 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you if you need that this morning.

We are in the process of landing the plane, so to speak, on this verse-by-verse study that we have been doing all fall on the book of 1 Peter. I had somebody make a comment to me last week I thought was humorous about Peter. He said, "You know, I'd like to have a DNA test done because I might be a distant relative to the Apostle Peter. In other words, so much of what he did, I find myself doing." I think many of us would say the same thing. It's just so easy to relate to the writer of this book because the Bible is not just honest about his strengths but it's also honest about his weaknesses and his failures and we can so easily relate to him. By the way, when you stop and think about that, I think that's another proof of the authenticity of Scripture. If the Bible was ultimately the product of human beings, you'd better believe they would have air-brushed all of their failures out of the book. But the word of God puts Peter's life, along with that of other biblical characters, out there in living Technicolor that that good, the bad, the ugly, that's why it's so easy for us to relate to what it is that we have been studying this fall.

We're also, simultaneously, in the middle of our Stewardship Month which is our churches annual emphasis the few weeks before Thanksgiving to think about all that God has entrusted to us and whether we're being faithful to the trust. As I was laying all this out about a year ago, I realized I was going to have a challenge because there is no way I was going to be able to deal with all that's in 1 Peter comprehensively and still be done before the beginning of Stewardship Month. So I thought I'd try something different this year and that is to actually continue the verse-by-verse study we were doing right through Stewardship Month and use those themes that actually become a foundation on which we talk about stewardship. And especially as I looked at the kind of things that were emphasized at the end of the book in chapter 5, I thought, "You know, that just might actually work this year," and I think that's going to be especially apparent for what we're talking about this morning. This really is a foundation for this whole matter of stewardship.

What we're going to do, we're only talking about one verse. You say, "Is church getting out early?" You must be new. We're just going to talk about 1 Peter 5:5 but let's take a running start by looking at the verses we studied last week. So, let's begin in 1 Peter 5:1, Peter says,

"1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of

God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

That’s what we talked about last Sunday. Now, add the rest of the argument in verse 5,

“5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

We’re talking this morning about the stewardship of your humility and with the time we have remaining, let’s just work on this verse now and think about three truths to help us become more like our humble Savior. You want that, don’t you? Absolutely, and so do I. I need it. I need this sermon four times today. No question about that so come along for the ride. Three truths to help us become more like our humble Savior.

Now, follow the argument of the text and you find this: first of all, humility is built on a foundation of proper submission. And even though we’re only talking about one verse, we actually have an exegetical and interpretive decision to make about one aspect of this verse and that is: who are the younger men that Paul talks about? And who are the elders that are being addressed in verse 5? I think we would have to conclude that the identity of the elders in verse 5 is connected to the previous discussion in verses 1-4. That’s a very important principle of Bible study, by the way, or a principle of hermeneutics and that is: always try to understand a verse of Scripture in its content. So, if you want to understand it, look at the verses before, look at the verses after and you’re more likely to have a better interpretation instead of just ripping a verse of Scripture out of its content.

There are few places in the Bible where what is said in one verse has nothing to do with what was said before or after. That happens occasionally like in the book of Proverbs, some of them anyway. But generally speaking, that is not the case. There are also times, and it’s somewhat true here, where you start with a specific principle and then it gets extrapolated out and all of you, in other words, if this is true then apply it to a greater group.

But at least at the first half of 1 Peter 5:5, it would appear that Peter is still talking about the specific office of elder/bishop/pastor that we studied last week. And since pastors were generally older, he’s reminding those when he says, “you younger men likewise be subject to your elders,” he’s reminding those who are younger in the church to submit themselves to the leadership that God had given them. Having said that, there is also the issue of principlizing the Scripture. In other words, if that’s the case in this particular relationship spoken of here, it may also be true of other relationships as well. Now, be careful. We do not believe that Scripture has multiple meanings. Frankly, that gets you to a very bad place and so we would only take the position that: if that’s true of younger people and the office of elder in the church but if it’s true of others, we want to see that demonstrated in other places in the Bible. That’s what I want to do right now.

So, just think about this: this principle of submitting ourselves to those who are older is consistent with what the Scripture teaches in general about submission to other older people in our life. For example, Scripture teaches that age is often a sign of wisdom. Is that right? Here you go, Proverbs 16:31, “A gray head is a crown of glory.” Some of us are wearing our crowns today, huh? There it is, right in the Bible, stop fussing about it. “A gray head is a crown of glory; It is found in the way of righteousness.” The point is, remember we’re getting to humility, but the argument of this text is that humility is always built on a foundation of submission. So, learning to submit yourselves to such persons in your life, that’s what’s going to help you grow in proper humility. Let me just throw the caveat in, I mean, are all older people automatically wise? Nope. Some people are born fools and they die fools and there’s not a lot of change in between. I understand that, so age is not an automatic reason to give honor but generally speaking, with age comes wisdom at least for those who know God and are committed to growing in him.

We also know this: children are to honor their parents. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with a promise.” You see, God is the one who has ordained authority in life. Do you believe that? Some people who will struggle with submission all of their days don’t ever get that in their brain and, therefore, they are prideful as a result. God is the one who has ordained authority and people who learn submission as children will be much better positioned to rightly submit to those in position over them as adults and, therefore, be humble individuals.

The Bible also tells us, in fact we just saw a great example of it, that older people are to teach younger people in the church. We won’t take time to look at Titus 2, but it’s a delightful passage in the word of God and the idea is that older people have been growing in Christ all of their days and they’re building relationships pro-actively with those who are younger that are specifically designed to teach and to model truth. And the corollary to that is: young people in the church open themselves up for those kinds of relationships; they want to submit to those who are older and in so doing, they are being humble.

My wife, Chris, and I and our son, Drew, were over at Literato Friday night for dinner. By the way, try the fig and pear pizza. I mean, it’s really good. Anyway, my wife thought that was a good idea and I thought it was terrible but I finished it off. We were over there Friday night and just walking through while they were having their Purdue Bible fellowship and Chris made an interesting comment. She said, “You know, this is doing exactly what we had hoped it would do.” What we were seeing was table after table after table of college students with either an older college student or with an adult from this church and they were studying the word of God. It was fabulous because that older person had developed the kind of wisdom and the kind of maturity and then was opening up their heart and their schedule to work with college students. And it was also interesting to see those college students on a Friday night doing what? Submitting themselves, saying I want to learn from someone who is older. Do you see the relationship? Submission breeds humility. It was a very humble thing for those college students to do and we’re so very, very thankful for that spirit.

The Bible also tells us this: that younger people who ignore the wisdom of those who are older are condemned in God's word. You may remember the story of King Rehoboam in 1 Kings 12 who as a young king, and for those who have been around our church you know this is what I spoke on the first Sunday I was elected to become the Senior Pastor of this church. He was condemned because he forsook the counsel of the old men in which they had given him and he consulted with the young men who were grown up with him who stood before him. If you know that story, that prideful approach on the part of this young king and this is what our culture is, the glorification of youth. That is a bad thing. This young king who forsook the counsel of the older men and just found out what those he had grown up with thought put them in a very bad place for sure. So I'm saying: no question, it's a general principle in the Scripture that younger people are to honor older people in their lives and that becomes the foundation on which a lifestyle of humility is built. That's why you have the argument in this text, "be subject to your elders." Be subject to and "clothe yourselves with humility." It all fits together.

Here's another reason why Peter begins this discussion about humility with a reminder about the importance of submission: it's because and I hope you believe this and I hope your lifestyle reflects that you understand this, rebellion should be one of our greatest enemies. The fact of the matter is, you have a rebellious stream running through your heart just like I do and it has to be tamed if we're going to grow in humility. Understand, rebellion was the essence of Satan's fall. By the way, I do believe in Satan as a real, literal being and I believe in a passage of Scripture like Isaiah 14 which would explain Satan's fall, "How have you fallen from heaven O star of the morning, son of the dawn, you have been cut down to the earth you who have weakened the nations," and that's what he does. "You said in your heart I will ascend to heaven, I will raise my throne above the stars of God, I will sit on the mountain of assembly and the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will make myself like the most high." You see, our adversary wasn't satisfied with his position. He wasn't satisfied being a creature, he wanted to be the creator and he actually thought in his pride that he was qualified for that position.

Rebellion was also the core issue in the fall of man. Again, we take the first 11 chapters of the book of Genesis literally. If the plain sense makes good sense, seek no other sense. That, too, is a hermeneutical principle that we apply around here. So, we believe that you can learn a lot in the early chapters of the book of Genesis about this matter of pride and humility and we think, by the way, to somehow take that out of our Bibles because we think we know better than God or we're embarrassed about something in Scripture. That, in and of itself, would be an incredible act of rebellion and pride. How could the church ever ignore Scripture? Unless it was filled with pride.

So, you read about Satan coming to Adam and Eve and the point of that discussion is: God created you, he placed you in this beautiful environment, he made it possible for you to glorify him, to have a personal relationship with him and there's only one rule. So don't be saying, "Well, I rebel against God today because he's got too many rules." If he had one, in your own flesh, you'd rebel against it. All of God's people got that? One rule:

you can't eat of that tree and if you do you'll die; you'll face the consequence of being separated from me. So, what did Satan, the one who had already succumbed to his own pride and rebellion say? You won't die. He's a liar. God's keeping something from you, you can be your own god, you can make your own rules, there won't be any consequences, just rebel against him which is exactly what they did. Rebellion and pride go hand in hand.

Rebellion is a central building block in human civilization. We're not going to take the time to look at the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 but I hope you know your Bible well. Do you? Please tell me you know these stories better than you know the current dancing with stars people? Please. One of the reasons that some of us struggle with pride is because we don't have the Bible in our hearts to help guide us when we're trying to make daily decisions. So, less goofiness on the idiot box and more truth from the word will certainly help us grow in humility. I'm sorry but I'm off my notes, but I hope that came through clear.

Rebellion. What did they say in the Tower of Babel? They wanted to make a name for themselves by building a tower that would reach to the heavens. Paul later commented on that progression when he said, "Even when they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks but they became futile in their speculations." It's fascinating how that is playing out on our world stage, on our state's stage, on our local stage. So, we have all these business leaders making these moral pronouncements right now; we have all of these educators making all of these moral pronouncements right now and it is that verse fulfilled. "Even though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks but they became," note this, "futile in their speculations and their foolish heart was darkened." Here's the point: you cannot be simultaneously rebellious and humble. You just can't. Peter knew that.

This is especially prevalent during the End Times. Paul said, "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant," as if, by the way, the leaders of business ought to help our state make moral decisions. Seriously? Lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid," there it is, "avoid such men as these." That is the day and age in which we live, friends. In the US and in many other countries as well.

Not only do we struggle with rebellion, we proudly celebrate it. Now we've gotten to the place where we even have religious teachers saying, "Just be true to yourself." There it is. Just be true to yourself. Just do what comes natural to you and whenever your desires contradict what is taught in Scripture, that's okay. Religious teachers are saying that, "that's okay." Here's the new mantra: the Bible is the word of God but the Bible is not the words of God. Seriously, tell me about that? Well, you see, the Holy Spirit may be leading you and us into a deeper understanding of the things of God," which, surprise, surprise, match what we already naturally wanted to do anyway and that becomes the

new word of God even if it contradicts what he has given us in Scripture. That's what we're being told. Even in this town. Make no mistake about that, my friends, that is called heresy and anybody who speaks like that is a heretic and you can bake it, fry it, put brown gravy on it, it is what it is: it's rebellion against the revealed word of God, fueling hearts that are increasingly and incredibly proud. That will topple whatever ship you're on and it's my job as your pastor to warn you of that.

I realize you might say, "Boy, you got up on the wrong side of the theological bed, dude." Well, there is hope in all of this because in this rather bleak picture steps our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. God's word says submission is a central attribute of Jesus. Here's a great passage. I hope you know it, "Have this attitude in yourselves," Paul says in Philippians 2, "which was also in Christ Jesus." It's a great text and we can't talk about it all but it says of Jesus, "He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Which is why he could say, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am," what did he say? "I am gentle and humble in heart. You'll find rest for your souls if you follow me."

We've got a clear contrast, don't we? On the one hand we have an adversary and we have culture. We have a world system that promotes rebellion and glorifies rebellion. On the other hand, we have a Savior who has modeled for us a life of submission to the heavenly Father that results in the life of humility. Which route do you want to be on? That's why, by the way, that submission is a starting point in establishing a personal relationship with God. What I'm talking to you about this morning is clearly part of the gospel and Paul said that "if you confess with your mouth," what? "Jesus as Lord." That means, in coming to Christ, we are choosing to submit ourselves to him. "And believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved."

The Scripture is clear: we are born in sin; we are born in rebellion. And there has to be a decision made at a point in time to lay down our rebellious hearts and to repent, to turn around and to place our faith and trust in Christ as our rightful Savior and our rightful Lord. If you've never made that decision, I would encourage you to do that today. There is no such thing as salvation without submission to God.

A question I think when you think about everything that we've talked about thus far: how am I doing at the matter of submitting? How am I doing at the matter of submitting to whatever rightful authority my God has placed in my life? Because I get it: there is a direct relationship between that and humility which is why Peter said in our key verse, "be subject to your elders and clothe yourselves with humility." You can't have one, humility, without having the other, submission.

What does that tell us then? It tells us that humility is a job for all of us. I mean, Peter is really clear about that, "all of you." Nobody can hear this message this morning and say, "Well, that doesn't apply to me." No, all of you including the guy on this side of the pulpit who apparently needs to hear this sermon four times today. There is probably a lesson right there. To do what? Well, to clothe yourselves. Fascinating metaphor: to clothe yourselves. It's like standing at your closet in the morning and asking, "Do I want

to wear the proud thoughts today or the humble thoughts before I leave the house? I like to match that up with some proud desires or some humble desires? Should I select some proud words for this conversation or humble ones? How about the accessory of proud actions or humble ones? What am I going to wear?" Clothe yourselves. "What am I going to wear?"

Is anyone here even old enough to remember this day when your Mom or your Dad would look at the outfit that you had selected and said something like, "You are not going out of the house dressed like this." Do we even say that anymore? Have you ever been at Wal-Mart and looked at somebody and said, "Does your Mom know you're dressed like this?" It's why you don't want to come to Wal-Mart with me, by the way. I wonder if we ought to have that talk with ourselves? Before walking into that conversation, before walking into that meeting, before walking into that discussion, just asking, "What are you wearing right now? What are you wearing right now in your heart? What are you wearing right now in your mind? What are you wearing right now on your lips? What are you wearing right now on your hands? Do you really want to go out into public looking like that?"

Clothe yourselves with what? Clothe yourselves with humility. The word of humility is actually one of the longer words in the entire Greek New Testament, tapeinophrosyne, and it literally means "of low position; lowly; undistinguished; of no account." Now, here's the important distinction here: Hebert helps us understand that the term does not involve an attitude of self-disparagement or servility. That's not the point. The point is this: a willingness to assume a lowly position in order to serve others. You might be really smart, you don't have to ignore the fact that you're smart but you can still be humble. You might be very wealthy, you don't have to ignore that fact but you can still be humble. It's a matter of willingness to assume a lowly position in that particular situation in order to serve others. It's the opposite of self-exaltation. That's so crucial: it's the opposite of self-exaltation which is the very essence of sin which is the very essence, in this case, of pride.

R. C. Trench in his "Synonyms of the New Testament" says this, it's very important: "It is itself a fruit of the gospel." You say, "What do you mean by that?" Listen, "No Greek writer employed humility before the Christian era." This is not a fruit that the world would elevate as being necessary or valuable. It's a fruit of the gospel. No Greek writer, none, employed it before the Christian era nor apart from the influence of Christian writers afterward. I understand what I'm talking to you about this morning, it's counter-intuitive. I know that. Christianity, many times, is counter-intuitive. That's why it's so important that you acknowledge Jesus as your Lord.

Clothe yourselves with humility to whom? To whom? Well, to one another. I would encourage you right now to think about the one another in your life and ask yourself, "Am I clothing myself with humility." Here's the point: it's really easy to be humble with yourself. I'm incredibly humble when I'm by myself because I agree with myself all the time. And because I'm so humble with myself, I frequently commend myself for my humility. It's a fascinating conversation of self-exaltation when it's just me. But it's

amazing when I get around people who don't seem to be quite so impressed. And what does Scripture say? Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another. I would encourage you right now to think about all the one anothers in your life: think about your spouse, do you clothe yourself with humility toward them? Think about your kids, think about your friends, think about your co-workers, think about your neighbors, think about your extended family. In fact, you're going to be going off for Thanksgiving in a little bit, clothe yourself with humility toward your mother-in-law. Clothe yourself with humility toward Aunt So-and-so. It's not always an easy thing to do and yet that is what Scripture calls us to do.

Think how that dovetails with stewardship. I want to ask you to pull this out for a minute, this brochure that's in your program. Let's think about how humility dovetails with stewardship. Oh, my, my, my, my. By the way, what did we learn last week that I am to you? A shepherd, right? Some of you are saying, "I'm not going down this trail with you." Yes, you are so just come along joyfully. Baa. I'm to be your shepherd, I'm just doing my job. We're all sheep of God. It doesn't offend you for me to ask you, does it, what would humility look like in terms of the stewardship commitments that we're all trying to make together? That's the point.

Look at the top where it says "Personal Growth." What we're encouraging you to do is to think about whether or not you ought to be a better steward of the opportunities to spend time with God every day. When you in the morning, before you even leave your house, take time in the word and take time praying, what are you saying? You're humbling yourself before the Lord and saying, "I'm not even gonna walk out of this house in my own strength. I'm gonna commit myself to the Lord even that means that I have to spend a little less time primping, for crying out loud." That's a humble thing to do. People who just blast out the door in their own strength are behaving in a way that is proud.

Look on the back. We have all these opportunities for serving. Well, people who serve have humbled themselves before the Lord and said, "Lord, my gifts and my abilities and my time, they belong to you. I want to humble myself in service." We saw, by the way, a great example of that yesterday with a couple of our young men from Faith Christian School interviewed by the newspaper and they were quoted in that article about R rated movies. Why in the world would high school teenagers talk about the importance of purity? It's because they are submitting themselves to their Lord. They came off as very humble young men yesterday and I was so thankful for them. So thankful. What they saw that as: an opportunity to serve.

I was around the church a little bit yesterday as I frequently am. It's amazing how many people were around here serving, serving, serving, serving. The only way you can have a church that serves is if you have people whose hearts are filled with humility. Then there is the issue of giving. I don't talk a lot about giving around here but the fact of the matter is, it's not your church needs your money, it's that you need to give. And the reason you need to give is because it humbles yourself before the Lord. You're saying to God, "I recognize that all I have belongs to you, even my ability to earn a living and I want to

give of my firstfruits to you because I want to humble myself. And then I want to ask you to bless me as I would seek to use all that you have entrusted in a way that honors you.”

When we were at Faith West the other night, in our hearts, we’re able to say, “Thank you, God. Thank you, God, for giving us the privilege to be involved in this kind of a ministry.” It’s a whole lot better than a new couch. It’s a whole lot better than a shiny car, blah, blah, blah. It’s a humbling thing to be able to participate in the work of God. Tim and Becky Cohen are in the Philippines. Don’t you want them to be well funded today? What an incredible opportunity they’re going to have for ministry in these coming days and much of our money goes right out into ministry around the world. People who are humble want to joyfully give and eventually that’s what you end up loving. Where your treasure is, that’s where your heart is going to be.

You might say, “Well, Pastor Viars, you’re kind of being pushy with us, this whole humbling, humility thing.” Well, one of the reasons is because of the consequences. I mean, what does the Scripture say about the consequences? Here it is: “God opposes the proud.” If you’re a proud person and you walk out those doors without repenting, you are asking for God to oppose you. That’s a really bad place to be. Do we get that? “Hey, put up your dukes, God.” Yeah, smart, we’ll see you on your back. “God opposes the proud but he gives grace to the humble.”

I hope we’ll pray for this in our individual lives but I hope also we’ll pray for this as a church. God has blessed us in some incredible ways. It would be very easy for us to get way too big for our ministerial britches, do you know that? And God would take care of that in a heartbeat. Let’s ask the Lord to help us be submissive people who are, therefore, growing in humility.