



Scripture Story: John 3:22-36.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 18.

it's your turn



Photo by Jacqui Janetzko

flashlight

“John had by nature the faults and weaknesses common to humanity, but the touch of divine love had transformed him. He dwelt in an atmosphere uncontaminated with selfishness and ambition, and far above the miasma of jealousy. He manifested no sympathy with the dissatisfaction of his disciples, but showed how clearly he understood his relation to the Messiah, and how gladly he welcomed the One for whom he had prepared the way” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 179).

keytext

“That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less.”

(John 3:29, 30, NIV)

what do you think?

Rank the following people in the order of who you think should be the most humble.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Politicians | <input type="checkbox"/> Wal-Mart cashiers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parents | <input type="checkbox"/> Movie stars |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports stars | <input type="checkbox"/> Business people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teenagers | <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pastors | <input type="checkbox"/> Prisoners |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth leaders | <input type="checkbox"/> Astronauts |

did you know?

Which of the following characteristics matter most to you in another person: compassion, consideration, friendliness, generosity, honesty, humbleness, humorous, integrity, intelligence, sensitivity, or thoughtfulness?

A survey was recently taken at Ekamai International School in Bangkok, Thailand. The majority of students at this school are Buddhist. On the survey, students from grades 9-12 had to rank 11 characteristics they most desired in another person. Humility was one of those characteristics. Across the board—whether Buddhist, Sikh, Hindu, or Christian—humility ranked low on the desirable characteristics. Only 10 people ranked it as number one. That's only 0.032 percent of the respondents. The score is only marginally better for those who put humility in the top five – 0.43 percent.

One respondent wrote: "A humble person is charming . . . and that's what I would like to be like.

This kind of person is really hard to find." Another one commented, "To be humble is the beginning of everything."

Interesting is that the number one choice was honesty. Forty-three percent of respondents chose honesty as the most desirable characteristic.

INTO THE STORY

"After [Jesus had met with Nicodemus, he] and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized. (This was before John was put in prison.) An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. They came to John and said to him, 'Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—well, he is baptizing and everyone is going to him.'

"To this John replied, 'A man can receive only what is given

him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, "I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him." The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less.

"The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the spirit without limit. The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

(John 3:22-36, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Why do you think the people were constantly coming to John to be baptized?

What do you think was the real reason behind John the Baptist's disciples complaining about more people listening to Jesus than to John?

What does John's illustration about the bridegroom tell us about John the Baptist?

What is the main point John is trying to make?

How does this message impact how I am to live?

How can I "testify to what I have seen and heard"?

punch lines

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (**Matthew 5:5-9, NIV**).

"The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (**Matthew 23:11, 12, NIV**).

"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires" (**James 1:19, 20, NIV**).

"Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord" (**Leviticus 19:18, NIV**).

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. . . . Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (**Matthew 5:43-45, 48, NIV**).

other eyes

"I claim to be a simple individual liable to err like any other fellow mortal. I own, however, that I have humility enough to confess my errors and to retrace my steps."—Mahatma Gandhi,

20th-century Indian philosopher, internationally known for his doctrine of nonviolent protest.

"Pride makes us artificial and humility makes us real."—Thomas Merton, 20th-century American Trappist monk.

Sabbath

In the *What Do You Think?* section you were asked to rank a list of people as to who should be the most humble. Unfortunately, humility is not a characteristic that we show too often. We are quick to anger when things do not go our way. Think about the people you encounter on a daily basis: teachers, parents, teenagers, cashiers. In the last year, which one has shown the most humility? Briefly write the circumstances and why it stands out in your memory.

Sunday

Look back through the *Into the Story* and *Out of the Story* sections. Notice that John's disciples and Jesus' disciples argued over baptism—even about the language that should be used at a baptism. Jealousy and anger are contrary to humility. As John's disciples complained to him about the popularity of Jesus and baptism, John had a choice to make: get angry or be humble. John chose the latter because he knew that anger and jealousy were not the answer. When was the last time you got angry, when humility would have been a better option? What can you do not to let anger overtake you the next time, and let humility be the answer?

Monday

"He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30, KJV). Too often people don't do the decreasing part. We want to stand out and be applauded for what we have done—that's human nature. Even those who stand in the background want to be recognized for their contribution. In fact, we are taught to give recognition to work done well—we even expect it. But what

does it really mean, "I must decrease"? In what ways can you do this today?

Tuesday

In the *Flashlight* section we see that John's task was to prepare the way for Jesus Christ. That was the only task that God called John to do. John delighted in the task and was a witness to its successfulness as people flocked to Jesus. John had a deeper understanding. Surrounded as he was by human nature, he understood his part in God's work. And it was time for his job to be over. Instead of letting his disciples pull him in to hindering Jesus' work, he expressed his joy at working with Jesus, and then slowly step back and let Jesus take over completely.

Wednesday

Being meek and merciful is closely related to being humble. But people often mistake a meek or merciful person for someone who is submissive to others. What do you think? Read through the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 and write what you think meek, merciful, peacemaker, and pure in heart really mean.

Thursday

Take another look at Mahatma Gandhi's quote in the *Other Eyes* section. In nearly all Asian countries, including India where Mahatma Gandhi lived, saving face is most important. To admit that you made an error would be to lose face. For Gandhi to admit to errors was a big thing in Asia. Because of his humbleness he was instrumental in bringing India into its own country.

People in other countries are not that different. While they may not have the same saving/losing face philosophy, no one likes to admit they make mistakes. But admitting to

mistakes and stepping back to correct or apologize is a form of humility. Someone who can admit their errors shows true character, and is often well thought of. What can you admit to today that will allow you to become a more humble person?

Friday

John experienced joy when he allowed Christ to be in charge of his life.

Read Romans 12:10 and Ephesians 4:29. Post those verses somewhere where you will see them every day. Building others up and honoring them above yourself is part of decreasing yourself. This week pray for humility to become second nature to you. Find ways to show humility to those you meet on a daily basis. Encourage your friends to show humility. You never know what may happen. Your classroom may become a better place.

*A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages* has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

insight

At www.insightmagazine.org you can join the Web forum and help shape the future. Discuss the Sabbath School lessons in a virtual community.

Insight has stories of people today from which you can learn practical ideas for reality living.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages, chapter 18.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.