

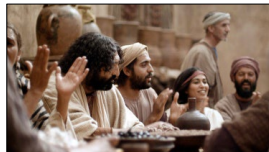
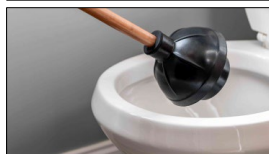


Unclogged

The Powerful Drano of Humility

March 2, 2025

Today we're talking about unleashing the ultimate power of God in our lives.



Ever get **caught naked**? Share. No don't. Cuz, ever since Eve's leaves, those are some of our most *humiliating stories*. Second *only*, perhaps, to clogging a toilet at someone *else's house*. What's more *distressing* than watching that water rise?! And **what's more humbling than having to ask for a plunger?** There's a *common experience shared by pastors*. When you *don't think* your message has much power, God always seems to use it in a *powerful way*. And when you *think* you've got a powerful sermon, it always seems to *fall flat*. And it *might* be, that: **God's power is diminished by even a hint of vanity**. Just as in *life: arrogance lessens the impact of a good lesson*. Whatever the case, I'm sure this'll be my worst sermon ever ... [wink]. I told you about the time I *made* myself speak at an event, after *messing* my white pants. And how **so many were so touched by the power of my humility**. But, it *almost* didn't happen. Because **my fear of humiliation was convincingly begging me to flee**. There's a *fine line* between *humility* and *humiliation*. little Jesus grew up with OT Scriptures on *humility*, like this proverb:

Do not *exalt* yourself in the *king's presence*, and do not *claim* a place among *great men*; [because] it is *better* for *him* to say to you, "Come up here," than for him to humiliate you before a nobleman. – Proverbs 25:6-7 NIV

[After all, as *Isaiah* writes] The *arrogance* of man will be brought low and the *pride* of men humbled – Isaiah 2:18 NIV

And, years later, big Jesus turned these into a *parable*, at a party:

When He *noticed* how the [most honorable, powerful, and distinguished] guests picked the *places of honor* at the table, [and] He told them this parable: "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the *place of honor*, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the *host* who invited *both* of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the *least important place*. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then [due to humility] you will be honored publically in the presence of all your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." – Luke 14:7-11 NIV

Great advice. But why's He giving these ego-driven guests a better way to get recognition? Cuz they won't do it. Know why? Fear of the potential public humiliation of not being asked to move up. So, to those who aren't humility-driven, it's still every man for himself. You see: **the fear of humiliation is a direct result of a hunger for acceptance, attention, approval, and admiration.**



So, how do we “take the lowest place” that Jesus is actually getting at?

[Well] By the *grace* given me [says Paul] I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more *highly* than you *ought*, but rather *think of yourself with sober judgment*, in accordance with the *measure of faith [and grace that] God has given you.* – Romans 12:3 NIV



Now, *humility isn't: thinking poorly of yourself. It's: thinking rightly of yourself.* And the more *mature* the *measure* of your *faith*, the more *accurate* and *unpretentious* you'll become. Because, it's *all* about *taking a fearless inventory of the faults and flaws and failures of our flesh.* And then *taking them daily, boldly before the Lord.* Because *that's* how we:



Hold firmly to the faith we profess. For [what's the big deal?] we do not have a high priest who is *unable to sympathize with our weaknesses*, but we have *One* who has been *tempted in every way, just as we are ...* [So] Let us then *approach the throne of grace with confidence*, so that we may receive [the] *mercy [we need]* – Hebrews 4:14-16 NIV

True humility continues to strengthen our relationship with the Lord by forcing us to face our ongoing need to seek the glory and honor of His grace and mercy and generous forgiveness.

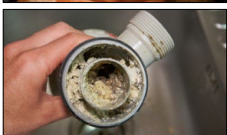
So to seek one's own *glory is not glory.* – Proverbs 25:27 NKJ

Nor [as it has it the NIV] is it *honorable* to seek one's own *honor.* – Proverbs 25:27 NIV

[But] When you *bow down before the Lord [in humility]* and *admit your dependence on Him*, He will *lift you up and give you honor.* – James 4:10 NLT



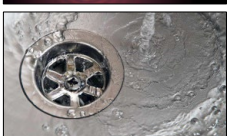
Because, *greatness in the eyes of God is very different than it is in the eyes of man. We can only be exalted by God by facing and admitting the parts of our lives that remain under the influence of sin.* To which we're so often so *blind.*



As C.S. Lewis writes (in Mere Christianity): *If you think that you're not conceited, it means that you are very conceited indeed.* But, as he also writes (in The Letters): *As long as one knows one is proud, one is safe from the worst form of pride.* We have a *pipeline* to God that *sin corrodes* and *arrogance clogs.*



Psalm 119:70 says the *heart of the proud is as fat as grease.* And the *only way to flush it out and keep it flowing free and clear* is to *daily, diligently maintain open communication.* And in *this analogy, humility is the Drano that scours our encrusted soul.*



And *each treatment removes another layer of crud and filth*, providing a *shiny, stainless-steel relationship with our Savior* – which *releases the true power of God in our lives.* And *here's today's message in eight words: The power of God is released through humility.* Know why?

Because, “God *opposes the proud* but *gives grace to the humble.*” – 1 Peter 5:5b NIV

[So] *All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another* – 1 Peter 5:5a NIV

Well, I *certainly don't* want to *oppose* God. And I *do* want God's *grace.* So I *guess* I'll take a *crack* at *clothing* myself with *humility toward you all* right now. Hmm. *Plunger story or naked story?*

One very *hot day*, all *alone*, after *work*, long before the *church* had *air conditioning*, when I *lived* only *three minutes* away, on a *whim*, I *jumped* in the *pool* in the *shorts* I was *wearing*. No *towel*. No *extra* clothes. Then I *got* in my *Taurus*, without *touching* the *seat*, and *pulled* my *lower apparel* to my *knees*, and *drove home*. But I needed *one leg free*. I'm not *much* of an *exhibitionist*. So I start *anxiously* imagining being *pulled over*, or getting in a *wreck* and being *unconscious*. What would people *think?! And I glance* in my *mirror* and see *flashing police lights* on my *bumper! Adrenalin rips* through me as I *pull over*, while *pulling* at a *tangle of wet shorts and skivvies*. And then ... they *drive past*. But, my *heart is hammering*. And I *notice a metallic taste* – like *copper*. Turns out, “a *metallic, coppery taste* during *extreme fear or anxiety* is a *common physiological response*”. I **literally tasted the fear of humiliation**. And yet, here I am, *openly sharing it*. Which is *still* a bit *uncomfortable*. Because, **humility feels a lot like humiliation**. But it's *not*. It's the *opposite*. It's *pure power*. Sure, **humility opens us up to embarrassment**. But, **nothing opens up those around us like our humility**. I can't *tell* you how *many* of you have *shared your own story* of *messing your pants*. Enough already.



Even the *tiniest threat* of *trivial humiliation* can *trigger a fearful reflexive reaction*. Because, **humiliation terrifies us**. Because **it leaves us powerless and exposed**. Whereas, **arrogance and vanity comfort us**. Because **their power (like Eve's leaves) covers us and protects our pride**. Which is *why* so many *believers* are so *attracted* to the *idea* of **the power of God**, as *opposed* to **the humility of God**. Not *realizing* that **humility is the power of God**. Which is *why* the *three words* I always use to *describe the fearless folks* of His Place, are: **sincerity** and **transparency** and **authenticity**. It's *true*. I *do*.

So, *humble yourselves* **[toward others]** under the **[protection of the]** *mighty power of God*, and in *His good time* He will honor you. – 1 Peter 5:6 NLT

After Jesus' *resurrection*, the *Apostles* met *Simon the magician*, whose *stage name* was: **The Great Power**. But this *sorcerer's sleight of hand* was *upstaged* by their *laying on of hands*.

[When the crowds] *saw the miraculous signs* ... they all *paid close attention* ... [But] *Simon* had *practiced sorcery* ... and *amazed* all the *people* ... He *boasted* that he was *someone great*, and *all the people* ... gave *him their attention* and *exclaimed*, “This *man* is the *divine power* known as *the Great Power*.” ... [Now] *Simon himself believed* and was *baptized* ... *astonished* by the *great signs and miracles* ... [And] *Simon offered* them *money* and said, “Give *me* also this *ability* so that *everyone* on whom I lay *my hands* may receive the *Holy Spirit*.” Peter answered: “May your *money perish* with you, because you thought you could *buy the gift of God* ... because your *heart is not right* before *God*. *Repent* of this *wickedness* ... [for] you are *full of bitterness* and *captive to sin*.” – Acts 8:5-24 NIV

And we can *fall* into the *same trap*. **Buying books or attending studies to learn how to tap into the power of God's Spirit**. Christian *conferences* and *crusades* often use the word *power* in their *advertising*; because, let's *face it*, **who's going to attend: Exposing Your Weakness!** But, if you *really, truly* want *God's power* to *transform your life*, then *get out the Drano!* And:

Let the *same mind* be in *you* that was in *Christ Jesus*, who ... **humbled himself** and became *obedient* to the *point of death* – even *death* on a *cross*. – Philippians 2:5-8 NRS

Because, more *often* than *not*, **we're not even willing to die of embarrassment**.

But, **if you want to save a wounded relationship**; or, **if you want your kids to grow to respect you**; or, **if you want to affect those around you with your faith**; don't quote Scripture at 'em, or try to *manipulate* 'em with prayer. Just **clothe yourself in the uncomfortable, transparent, apparel of humility**. And *force* yourself to *openly* and *readily* admit your *fleshly* faults and *flaws* and *failures*. And *humble* yourself and *apologize* for *inappropriate* or *insensitive* words and *actions* on your part. Just, **take responsibility**. And **make a plan to change bad habits**. And *ask* for *input* and *help*. And *watch* the *true* power of God's Spirit begin to *exponentially* change your world! Acts of faith are very important, but they're rendered *impotent* without *selfless* love.

[For instance] If I have a *faith* that can move mountains, but have not *love*, I am *nothing*.

[Or] If I give *all* I possess to the *poor* ... but have not *love*, I *gain* nothing. Love is *patient*, love is *kind*. ... It does not *boast*, [and] it is not *proud*. – 1 Corinthians 13:2-4 NIV

But it *sure* is *powerful*! Cuz it's *humility*. **Love is simply humility aimed at others**. Just as **character is humility aimed at yourself**. And, **righteousness is humility aimed at God**. Paul's prayers for his own healing went *unanswered* so that he could *benefit* from *ongoing* suffering. Which he *did*.

[Saying] I *begged* the Lord to *take* it away. [But] Each *time* He said ... "*My power works best in your weakness*." So now [unlike that sorcerer] I am *glad* to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may work through me. – 2 Corinthians 12:8-9 NLT



God's power works *best* in our *weakness* because *that's* when we gotta depend on His *grace*. And **God's grace is power in its purest form**. But, **we can only share it if we've got it**. And, **He only gives it to the humble**. So, what is "the lowest place" at the table? *Washing feet*, of course.

"Now that I ... have *washed* your *feet*, you *also* should wash *one another's* feet. I have set you an *example* that *you* should *do* as I have *done* for you." – John 13:12-15 NIV

And *in* that way He *serves* as an *example* of the *lowest* place wherein *is* found the *greatest* power.

"For *who* is [actually] *greater*, the one who is *at* the table [trying to secure the most impressive seat] or the one who *serves*? Is it not [according to the world] the one who is *at* the table? But [here] I *am* among you as One who serves." – Luke 22:27 NIV

Forcing us to see that *greatness* to Him *knocks* our *definition* off its *seat*. Because:

"The *greatest* among you will [gladly] be your [humble] servant. For [they're in on the big secret of true love and life-giving power] whoever *exalts* himself will be *humbled*, and whoever *humbles* himself will be *exalted*." – Matthew 23:11-12 NIV

The *purest* power of God, is *released* through *humility* – not some *spiritual* sorcery. Because **it's the power to overcome and the power to change, first yourself, and then those around you, who desperately need you to serve as their example**. Because *those* who've *never* seen the *full* power of God, have *simply* never seen the *full* power of *humility* in the *believers* they *know*. So, maybe **make a fresh list of all your sins**. And *look* at 'em. And then *get* out the *Drano* and **take them boldly to the throne of grace**. And *confess* 'em *afresh*. **And admit to yourself your dependence on Him**: the *One* and *only* Savior who *thoroughly* *sympathizes* with *all* your *sin*. And just *flush* the *flesh* away.

Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.