

How much are you worth?

How much are you worth? If you asked Donald Trump or Michael Bloomberg that question, I bet that they would answer you in terms of wealth. *“I’m worth billions of dollars,”* they might proudly tell you. But if you were to ask someone else that question, they might not necessarily think of money as a means to measure their self-worth. They might tend to do it in terms of how they view their personal esteem—in other words, what they think of *themselves*. And you might get a whole range of answers. If you happened to ask someone whose personality was more like Eeyore on *Winnie the Pooh*, they’d likely tell you in a slow, sad voice, *“I’m hardly worth anything at all.”* But if you had approached Mohammed Ali during his heyday in the ring, he would have told you without hesitating, *“Man, I’m the greatest.”* And that’s pretty much the range of the spectrum of answers. On one end of the scale, some would say, *“I’m not worth much at all.”* And, on the opposite end, others might boast that they are *“are worth everything.”* Which of those two statements are true?—*“You are not worth much at all?”* vs. *“You are worth everything?”* Well, the question of your self-worth can never be truly answered unless we make that assessment from a biblical perspective. So, this morning, let’s explore how God’s Word sheds light upon this important topic.

Do you know what the biblical term is that covers much of this subject?—this topic of *self-worth*? It’s not some high-falootin’ theological term. No, it is simply the word *“HUMILITY”*, or the state of being *“HUMBLE”*. And it is one of the most important concepts that we need to understand and apply to our lives as Christians. So how do we define *humility*? Well, a good definition is found in the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* which defines humility this way: Humility is *“the personal quality of being free from arrogance and pride and having an accurate estimate of one’s worth.”* That’s a good definition because some people tend to view humility as if it’s some kind of a weakness. But, the biblical concept of humility eliminates any concept of a humble person being a cowering, brow-beaten sort of individual—because you don’t have to walk around like some man-shy dog with its tail between its legs in order to show *humility*. In fact, humility is actually a trait that requires great personal strength and high moral character.

To better get a grasp on what humility is all about, let’s consider some biblical characters who can shed light on the concept of humility by the way that they lived their lives. Now you might think that someone who ever adopts a prideful demeanor could never change—that they would never be able to develop a humble character. But, that is not the case. Take Naaman for example. Naaman was a

highly decorated Syrian general—one of the most successful military leaders of his day. And he was well aware of his high status and, as a consequence, was anything but humble. The only humility that he wanted to see was in the eyes of those soldiers that he might defeat in battle. But Naaman had a problem—he had the dreaded skin disease of leprosy and as far as he knew there was no cure. Until one day he heard about a prophet of God down in Israel by the name of Elisha who could heal him. So he decided to give him a try. Naaman traveled a great distance just to get to Elisha's house. Now, in the ancient Middle East, if someone famous visited a house, then the most important person in that house was supposed to come to the door and personally greet them. If they sent some lesser person to open the door, then it was considered a great affront to the visiting dignitary. So when Naaman knocked on the door, he expected Elisha himself to greet him. But, Elisha deliberately sent a lowly servant to answer the door instead. What little humility Naaman had mustered to even visit this prophet of Israel pretty much evaporated. But what happened next was more than Naaman could stand. The servant told him that all Elisha had to say was this: ¹⁰ **Go and wash yourself seven times in the Jordan River. Then your skin will be restored, and you will be healed of your leprosy.** 2 Kings 5:10 (NLT2) 2nd Kings 5 goes on to say: ¹¹ **But Naaman became angry and stalked away. 'I thought he would certainly come out to meet me!' he said. 'I expected him to wave his hand over the leprosy and call on the name of the LORD his God and heal me!'** ¹² **Aren't the rivers of Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, better than any of the rivers of Israel? Why shouldn't I wash in them and be healed?" So Naaman turned and went away in a rage.** ¹³ **But his officers tried to reason with him and said, "Sir, if the prophet had told you to do something very difficult, wouldn't you have done it? So you should certainly obey him when he says simply, 'Go and wash and be cured!'"** 2 Kings 5:11-13 (NLT2)

Now to Naaman's credit, he swallowed his pride, and humbly submitted himself to following Elisha's instructions. And, the scripture continues on: ¹⁴ **So Naaman went down to the Jordan River and dipped himself seven times, as the man of God had instructed him. And his skin became as healthy as the skin of a young child's, and he was healed!** 2 Kings 5:9-14 (NLT2) It was a double healing, in fact. Naaman had been cured of that terrible scaly disease that had covered his skin and had also shed that awful pride that had dominated his character. This proud general came to understand the healing effects of humility both physically and *spiritually*—for we are told that he confessed his faith in the God of Israel and actually took with him enough of the soil from Canaan to be able to construct an altar to God once he arrived back in Syria.¹

You see, showing humility and humbleness isn't a sign of a weak person or someone without a strong personality. Naaman was a fierce military commander, yet he learned the value of humility. And

think of Moses—what greater Old Testament leader could there be! And yet the Bible tells us that **“Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.”** Numbers 12:3 (NIV) And so we can begin to see that humility is a sign of strength, not weakness when it comes to desirable character traits.

And this carries forward in the New Testament as well. For example, among the Romans, you could find no better example of a person who required great leadership, strength of character and boldness than a Roman centurion. Centurions were the backbone of a Roman legion where they served as the commanders of units comprised of 100 soldiers. They were responsible for drilling their men and leading them in battle. They were held in tremendous awe and respect by civilians and soldiers alike. And yet, from the ones encountered in the Gospel, some of them seemed endowed with ample humility. For example, in Matthew’s Gospel, the servant of a centurion became paralyzed and was suffering in great pain. And so, this centurion approached Jesus and asked Him to help his servant. Matthew tells us: ⁷ **“Jesus said to him, ‘I will go and heal him.’”** ⁸ **The centurion replied, ‘Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. [Now that’s a fairly humble statement—the centurion goes on to say:] But just say the word, and my servant will be healed.’** ⁹ **For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.’** ¹⁰ **When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, ‘I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.’** . . . ¹³ **Then Jesus said to the centurion, ‘Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.’ And his servant was healed at that very hour.”** Matthew 8:7-13 (NIV)

And then finally, let me give you the most outstanding example of humility in the entire Bible. Now who would that be? Well, no one comes even close to the humility demonstrated by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus had no hesitation in identifying Himself with humility. In calling us, Jesus says: **“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and HUMBLE IN HEART, and you will find rest for your souls.”** Matthew 11:29 (NIV) And Jesus showed this again and again throughout His earthly ministry. But, perhaps in His final hours, He gave His disciples, and us, one of the greatest lessons in humility ever offered. Jesus did this at the conclusion of the first Lord’s Supper. He took a bowl of water and a towel, and He knelt down and washed the dirt and grime from His disciples’ feet. Only servants were given such a lowly, humble task. But, Jesus turned to His disciples and explained: ¹⁴ **Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.** ¹⁵ **I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.** ¹⁶ **I tell you the truth, no servant is**

greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ **Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.**” John 13:14-17 (NIV)

Now was Jesus giving this example just to His Twelve Disciples, or is this example applicable to us as well. Paul tells us to make no mistake about it—this definitely applies to us today. Paul writes: ⁵ **“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made Himself nothing, taking the VERY NATURE OF A SERVANT, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, HE HUMBLED HIMSELF and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!”** Philippians 2:5-8 (NIV) Peter joins in to confirm our need to take on a humble spirit and writes to us: **“All of you, CLOTHE YOURSELVES WITH HUMILITY toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’”** 1 Peter 5:5 (NIV) And Jesus amplifies upon this saying: **“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”** Luke 14:11 (NIV) And so, humility is the hallmark of what our relationship with others should be. It is a servant relationship directed by a humble spirit.

And the Christian characteristic of humility is also crucial to our relationship with other people on another basis as well. Paul in his letter to the church in Ephesus writes: **“Always be HUMBLE AND GENTLE. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love.”** Ephesians 4:2 (NLT2) When Paul says that we are to make **“allowance of each other’s faults”**, he is touching upon something that many of us find hard to do. Because what he is really talking about is the ability to forgive other people who have either intentionally, or sometimes even mistakenly, committed some wrong against us. Humility equips us to offer forgiveness—or in some instances for us to even ask for forgiveness—when pride would otherwise be a barrier to the healing that forgiveness offers to both the victim and the offender. Let me give you an example.

I don’t know how many of you may be Detroit Tigers fans, but if you happen to be then you may have heard of a man named **Armando Galarraga** who was a pitcher for the Tigers. And all baseball fans know that if a pitcher pitches a **“perfect game”** that is a real big deal. In order to pitch a perfect game, you have to get every batter out over the course of nine innings. No opposing batter can get on base for any reason. The pitcher can’t walk any batter, and you can’t accidentally hit a batter with a pitch—i.e., nobody can get on base even if by another player’s fielding error. 27 batters up, 27 batters down—it is incredibly hard to do and is an extremely rare feat. In fact, in the 150 years of major league history, with over 218,000 games having been played, there have been only 23 perfect games ever pitched.²

And on June 2, 2010, Armando Galarraga had a perfect game all but in the bag. There he was with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inner, pitching to that final 27th batter—just one more out and he'd go down in baseball history as one of those rarest of pitchers to achieve such an elusive feat. The batter hit the ball, the Tiger fielder threw it to first and the runner was clearly out. But, Umpire Jim Joyce made one of those **“faults”** that Paul alluded to and called the runner safe. Nobody could believe it! The instant replay confirmed without question that the runner was out—but, back then, they didn't overturn an umpire's call once it was made and the perfect game that should have been evaporated into thin air. Now, I don't know how Donald Trump, or Mike Bloomberg or even Mohammed Ali would have reacted to such an injustice. In all honesty, I am not even certain how well I would have handled something like that. But, let me tell you how Armando Galarraga, the pitcher, and Jim Joyce, the umpire, handled this—because in God's eyes, I suspect that both of them played **“perfect games.”**

After the game, Jim Joyce did something that umpires almost never do. He went over to Armando and admitted that he had totally blown the call and then he apologized. When Armando was asked about this later, he said, **“You don't see an umpire after the game come out and say, ‘Hey, let me tell you I'm sorry.’ He felt really bad. He didn't even shower.”** Later, Jim Joyce dejectedly told reporters: **“It was the biggest call of my career, and I [just blew it]. I just cost that kid a perfect game.”** It takes a humble man to admit something like that and then offer an apology for it. We live in a time that we rarely, if ever, hear the words **“I'm sorry”** or **“please forgive me”** from professional athletes, celebrities, politicians, or anyone else for that matter. Or, if they say such things, they add about a million qualifiers or justifications to excuse their mistakes. Not so with Umpire Jim Joyce. One reporter upon hearing about this umpire's genuine contriteness commented, **“A good, humble apology is good and refreshing for our culture”**³—and how very right he is.

And what about Armando? How did he react to having such a prized accomplishment ripped from his reach due to the umpire's mistake? How did he react?—in a word, with **humility**. He could have moaned and groaned about how unfair all of this was—but that wasn't his response at all. No jumping up and down on the pitcher's mound in protest. In fact, after the blown call, Armando turned right around and got the next batter out to end the game. He just seemed to acknowledge that we live in an imperfect world—one in which he, and umpires and everyone else make mistakes. And so rather than finding fault with the umpire, he forgave him instead. It takes a humble man to do that too. But, do you know what else Armando did the next day just before the ballgame started? When it was time for the Tigers to do the little pre-game tradition of taking the team's lineup card out to the umpire, it was Armando who volunteered to do so. And he went out there and gave the lineup card to Jim Joyce

and shook his hand to reconfirm his grant of forgiveness. The reporters couldn't help but notice the tears in all of the umpires' eyes as they watched something that they'd never seen before.

You know there is a Hall of Fame for men and women like Armando Galarraga and Jim Joyce—but it isn't in Cooperstown, New York. It's in a more permanent venue in a place called Heaven. Jesus said: ***"Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."*** Matthew 18:4 (NIV) And, referring to the humble of heart, Jesus also said, ***"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."*** Matthew 5:5 (KJV) They surely will.

So, if someone asks you how much are you worth, you won't have to answer that question on the same basis as some billionaires might do—those who take pride in describing their self-worth in terms of dollars and cents. The Trump's and Bloomberg's of the world—they might be surprised to find out that they are not worth as much as they may think if they derive their value in life solely by the treasures of this world. To them, Jesus issues the following warning: ¹⁹ ***"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*** Matthew 6:19-21 (NASB) And so, we'd do well to once again consider that definition of humility that I read earlier—the one that tells us that humbleness in spirit and humility of the heart frees us from our sinful pride and allows us to appreciate our true, unique value. Jesus assures us of that value when He said: ⁶ ***"What is the price of five sparrows? A couple of pennies? Not much more than that. Yet God does not forget a single one of them. ⁷ And he knows the number of hairs on your head! Never fear, you are far more valuable to him than a whole flock of sparrows."*** Luke 12:6-7 (TLB) So, wherein does that value lie? Why is it that we can claim a self-worth that far exceeds the value of the bank accounts of Trump and Bloomberg combined? Why?—because as the Bible says, ***"You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus."*** Galatians 3:26 (NLT2) How did God acknowledge your great value—your great worth? It is found in something that Paul wrote to the Church in Rome—Paul says: ⁸ ***"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*** Romans 5:8 (NIV) And so, in the final analysis, humbleness remains as one of the keys to our salvation. For as the Prophet Micah noted: ***"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and [last but certainly not least] to WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD."*** Micah 6:8 (NIV)

Let us pray.

Forest Hill Baptist Church
March 8, 2020
Darvin Satterwhite, Pastor
©2020 All Rights Reserved

¹ 2 Kings 5:17 ¹⁷ Then Naaman said, “All right, but please allow me to load two of my mules with earth from this place, and I will take it back home with me. From now on I will never again offer burnt offerings or sacrifices to any other god except the LORD.” (NLT2)

² “List of Major League Baseball perfect games,” Wikipedia.

³ Erik Raymond, “Jim Joyce & Armando Galarraga: Learning Contrition, Mercy & Forgiveness on the Baseball Field,” www.thegospelcoalition.org (June 3, 2010).