

I Love Me, I Love Me Not

1. What's something about yourself that you're proud of? What's something about yourself that you're not proud of?

2. As we continue our study of Jennie Allen's book *Get Out of Your Head: Stopping the Spiral of Toxic Thoughts*, we're exploring seven great truths that anchored Jesus' perspective on life, so that we too can "have the mind of Christ." Our focus this week is on the importance of humility, without which we can never live into the fullness of our God-given destiny. Jesus said, "Unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:3. Humility lies at the heart of authentic spiritual life. Some people think humility means denying that there's anything about yourself to be proud of – seeing yourself as ordinary, insignificant, and unimportant.
 - a. In her book, Jennie Allen seems to lean in that direction. She says, "One of the enemies of our minds especially rampant in this generation is the inflated view of self being handed to us over social media, in the shows and movies we watch, and even in the self-help books we read. We're fed a continuous message of how much we matter, how very important we are – and we believe every word of the deceiver." How do you feel about this statement? Do you think we are deceived if we think that we are important and our lives matter? Why or why not?
 - b. Allen criticizes the idea that, "The more self-esteem I have, the better life will go for me." She calls that a lie. Do you think it's a lie? Why or why not?
 - c. Allen says, "If I had to name *the* most destructive line of thinking in our 21st century culture, it's our incessant quest to be great. We spend a lot of effort trying to become distinct, successful, smarter, stronger, thinner. . . . We love being great. . . . We convince ourselves that God wants us to be amazing. We're all about empowerment." Your thoughts? Is saying that God wants us to be empowered people who do amazing things inconsistent with being humble?
 - d. Clearly we all do bad things often. The Bible says, "There is none righteous" and "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10, 23. Name something you've done recently that you regret and regard as a sin.
 - e. Is it important that we own our tendency to sin? Why or why not? Is it possible, on the one hand, to acknowledge that we often do wrong and, on the other hand, to also believe that we're awesome creatures with the power to do great things?

3. Jeff expressed discomfort with Allen's definition of humility, arguing that she was ignoring the fact that the Bible affirms that each of us is "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14) and that God's Spirit is breathed into every human being (Genesis 2:7). Although though that Spirit may lay dormant within us until awakened by Christ,

once that Spirit is awakened within us, the Bible says we are powerful creatures who can do amazing things (Philippians 4:13, II Timothy 1:7).

- a. If those Bible verses are true, that means you do matter! You are important! You are awesome! Do you feel that way about yourself? Why or why not?
 - b. Read the Marianne Williamson quote on p. 3, then answer this question: Does Williamson's statement ring true to you? Why or why not?
 - c. What's one of the most awesome things you've ever done?
4. Given the foregoing, Jeff suggested that humility doesn't mean denying the importance of who we are or the magnitude of our potential. So what does it mean? The answer is found in the example of Jesus. Read Philippians 2:3-11, as printed on p. 3.
- a. Describe what you think it was like for Jesus to be the Son of God in heaven before he came to earth. What kind of powers, capacities, and experiences do you think he had access to?
 - b. Verse 7 tells us that Jesus "emptied" himself when he came to earth to be born as a human. What do you think that means? Emptied himself of what?
 - c. Jeff compared Jesus' decision to become a human to what it would be like for us to voluntarily become a dog. If you were to become a dog, what human power or prerogative would you most miss? What aspect of being a dog would you find most disgusting? Could love dogs enough to become one of them?
5. In Jesus we see the true definition of humility. Jesus was and is AWESOME, but didn't view his awesome gifts and powers as something to be "exploited," but rather as some-thing to be used to serve others. He saw himself not as a ruler who lords his power over people, but as a servant of humanity. Philippians 2:5 says, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." Thus, being humble is not about denying your greatness and power and potential. It's about claiming it and using it, not for your own selfish purposes, but for the sake of others.
- a. Have you ever known someone who exhibited that kind of Christ-like humility? Tell us about them.
 - b. Philippians 2 tells us that by becoming our servant Jesus didn't diminish himself. Instead it freed him to live into his true greatness. Think about the person you described in the prior question. Was that person's life made better or worse by their Christ-like humility? If it made their life better, how?
 - c. Are you at a place in your life yet where you see your highest and best purpose being to pour yourself into the service of others? If not yet there, how far along that path do you think you are? Explain your answer.

Marianne Williamson

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be? We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same."

Philippians 2:3-11

³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,

⁷ but emptied himself,
taking the form of a servant,
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

⁸ he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.