

WEEKLY LEADERSHIP DEVOTIONAL

May 17, 2026

Humility Is Not Weakness

Discovering Why the Humble Leader Is the Most Powerful Leader of All

“The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Matthew 23:11–12 (NIV)

Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less. It is the posture of a leader who has discovered that the greatest power available to them flows not from their position, but from their surrender.

— Inspiring Biblical Leadership

INTRODUCTION

In the world’s leadership culture, humility is frequently misunderstood, undervalued, and even looked upon with suspicion. The prevailing narrative glorifies the bold, the dominant, the unshakeable, leaders who project an aura of invincibility and never appear to doubt, never admit limitation, and never yield ground. In that framework, humility is often mistaken for timidity, indecisiveness, or a lack of confidence. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Biblical humility is not the absence of strength; it is strength under the sovereign authority of God. It is the deliberate, courageous choice to subordinate personal pride, personal agenda, and personal recognition to the greater purposes of God and the genuine good of the people you lead. Far from being passive, humility is one of the most active, demanding, and transformative postures a leader can adopt. It requires the daily crucifixion of the ego, and that is never easy.

At Inspiring Biblical Leadership, we consistently teach that the leaders who have left the most enduring legacies in both Scripture and history were not the most gifted or the most celebrated — they were the most surrendered. They understood that true greatness flows downward, not

upward. That the path to lasting influence runs through service, not self-promotion. And that the leader who kneels before God is far more powerful than the leader who merely stands before people. This week, we explore what it truly means to lead from a posture of humility, and why it is the most powerful leadership posture of all.

SCRIPTURE FOUNDATION

Scripture does not merely suggest humility as a helpful personality trait, it commands it, models it in Christ, and promises extraordinary results to those who embrace it. These passages form the foundation of this week's devotional:

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!”

Philippians 2:3–8 (NIV)

Paul presents the most breathtaking model of humility in all of Scripture: Jesus Christ, who possessed all the glory and authority of God, voluntarily laid it aside to take on the nature of a servant. This is the standard God sets before every leader. Not merely politeness or modesty, but a radical, self-emptying orientation toward the good of others. If the Son of God led through humility, no leader can afford to lead without it.

“But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: ‘God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.’”

James 4:6 (NIV)

These eleven words contain one of the most sobering and one of the most encouraging truths in all of God's Word. God actively opposes the proud leader, and if God is opposing you, no strategy, talent, or network can sustain your leadership for long. But the humble leader has access to something far greater than human resources: they have the favor of God. Grace is God's supernatural empowerment flowing into natural circumstances. Humble leaders lead with an advantage that pride can never manufacture.

“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

Micah 6:8 (NIV)

Micah’s timeless summary of what God requires from His people places humility alongside justice and mercy as a non-negotiable expression of covenant faithfulness. Walking humbly with God is not a spiritual add-on for leaders who have the time for it, it is a core requirement of those who wish to lead in alignment with God’s heart. It is the posture that keeps a leader dependent, teachable, and consistently connected to the One who is the true source of all wisdom and strength.

“All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.”

1 Peter 5:5–6 (NIV)

Peter’s use of the word “clothe” is deeply instructive. Clothing is a daily, intentional choice. Humility is not a personality trait that some leaders naturally possess and others do not, it is a garment that every leader must choose to put on deliberately, consistently, and daily. And the promise attached to this choice is extraordinary: God Himself will lift up the leader who humbles themselves under His mighty hand. The most accelerated path to genuine, lasting elevation is always the path of humility.

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Moses is described in Numbers 12:3 as “a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.” Yet this same humble man stood before Pharaoh with extraordinary boldness, parted the Red Sea by faith, and led over two million people through a wilderness for forty years. His humility was not a limitation on his leadership — it was the very engine of it. Because Moses did not trust in his own understanding, he remained perpetually dependent on God’s guidance. And a leader who walks in step with God is a leader who walks in power that far exceeds their own natural capacity.

Consider also the Apostle Paul, a man of towering intellect, extraordinary courage, and unmatched apostolic authority. Yet he described himself as the “least of the apostles” (1 Corinthians 15:9), and later as “less than the least of all the Lord’s people” (Ephesians 3:8). This

was not false modesty or performative self-deprecation; it was the genuine posture of a man who had encountered the risen Christ and never recovered from the magnitude of that grace. Paul's humility was the overflow of his awe of God, and it made him one of the most fruitful leaders in the history of the Church.

The world's most celebrated leaders often rise quickly and fall hard, because pride is an unstable foundation. But leaders who embrace humility build something far more durable than a career — they build a legacy. They create cultures where people feel seen, valued, and safe to contribute their best. They attract the grace of God into every endeavor. They are quick to acknowledge mistakes, which paradoxically builds more trust than pretending to be infallible. They give credit generously, which multiplies the loyalty and dedication of those around them.

As Inspiring Biblical Leadership teaches, true humility is not a posture adopted for strategic effect — it is the natural fruit of a leader who spends time in the presence of a holy God. When Isaiah encountered God in His glory (Isaiah 6:1–5), his immediate response was not confidence or pride — it was a profound awareness of his own unworthiness. Every leader who genuinely encounters God in prayer and in Scripture will find that humility is not something they have to manufacture — it becomes the inevitable response to beholding His greatness.

The humble leader is not the one who thinks least of themselves. They are the one who thinks most clearly about who God is — and leads from that perspective.

— **Inspiring Biblical Leadership**

Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues; hence, in the soul in which this virtue does not exist, there cannot be any other virtue except in mere appearance.

— **Saint Augustine**

The true test of humility is not how low you bow, but how genuinely you lift others.

— **John C. Maxwell**

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to move you beneath the surface. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas where pride may have taken root, and where genuine humility is waiting to flourish.

- 1** In what areas of your leadership are you most tempted toward pride — your gifting, your title, your track record, your knowledge, or your network? How does that pride currently show up in the way you lead and relate to others?
 - 2** Philippians 2:3 instructs us to “value others above yourselves.” Who on your team or in your life are you genuinely prioritizing above your own interests and preferences? Who have you been overlooking, undervaluing, or taking for granted?
 - 3** When was the last time you openly admitted a mistake or acknowledged a limitation to your team? What was the response? What does your pattern of handling failure and imperfection reveal about your level of humility?
 - 4** James 4:6 tells us God opposes the proud. As you honestly assess your leadership right now, are there any areas where you sense God’s resistance rather than His favor? Could pride be a contributing factor?
 - 5** Moses’ humility kept him consistently dependent on God’s direction. How dependent are you on God’s guidance in your day-to-day leadership decisions? Do you tend to consult God first, or primarily when your own wisdom runs out?
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PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Humility is not simply a disposition, it is a discipline practiced through intentional, daily choices. Here are five concrete steps to cultivate humble leadership this week:

1 Publicly Acknowledge One Mistake or Limitation

This week, identify one area where you fell short, made an error, or simply do not have the answer — and acknowledge it openly to your team or a trusted colleague. Do not qualify it excessively or immediately pivot to what you did right. Simply own it with grace and without defensiveness. Nothing builds trust more quickly than a leader who can say, ‘I was wrong,’ or ‘I don’t know, but I will find out.’ This is not weakness — it is the courage that humility produces.

2 Serve Someone Below Your Pay Grade

Jesus washed His disciples’ feet — a task reserved for the lowest servant in the household. This week, do something intentionally and visibly that is below your title or position. Cover for a colleague. Clean up after a team meeting. Carry someone’s load. Greet the person everyone else overlooks. Servant acts performed by leaders send a message to an entire organization that no memo or mission statement ever could: our culture values people over position.

3 Ask for Feedback and Truly Receive It

Identify one trusted colleague, team member, or mentor and sincerely ask them: ‘What is one area of my leadership where you think I could grow?’ Then listen without defending, explaining, or dismissing. Receive what they share as a gift. Proverbs 19:20 reminds us: ‘Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise.’ A leader who actively seeks feedback is a leader who is actively growing. A leader who resists feedback is a leader who has stopped.

4 Replace Self-Promotion With Sincere Credit-Giving

For the next seven days, practice a deliberate fast from self-promotion. Resist the urge to highlight your contributions, your ideas, or your achievements. Instead, go out of your way to publicly and specifically credit the contributions of others. In your next meeting, presentation, or conversation, make it a point to name and honor someone whose effort made a difference. Generosity with credit is one of the most practical and powerful expressions of humble leadership.

5 Begin Each Morning With a Surrender Prayer

Before you engage the demands of your leadership day, spend five intentional minutes in a posture of surrender. Kneel if you are able. Speak aloud: ‘Lord, this day is not mine. These people are not mine. This platform is not mine. It is all Yours. Lead me so I can lead them well.’ This daily act of consecration is the practice that keeps humility alive in the heart of a busy, successful leader. Visit InspiringBiblicalLeadership.org for additional devotionals and resources on servant leadership and spiritual formation.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I confess that pride is never far from my heart. The desire to be seen, to be praised, to be the most capable person in the room — these temptations are real, and I cannot overcome them in my own strength. Today I choose to humble myself under Your mighty hand, trusting that Your timing and Your way of lifting up is always better than anything my ambition could produce.

Clothe me with humility, Lord. Let me look at the people I lead and genuinely value them above myself. Let me be quicker to serve than to be served, quicker to listen than to speak, quicker to give credit than to receive it. Teach me the strength that flows from surrender, and the power that is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

May my leadership carry the unmistakable fragrance of Christ — the One who, though He was God, made Himself nothing for the sake of those He loved. Let that same love be the foundation of everything I do as a leader. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”

James 4:10 (NIV)

