

Book Review: “Humility: True Greatness”

By Kevin Scheid

C. J. Mahaney addresses the critical, yet little understood, topic of humility in a powerful and compelling way. As important as the topic of humility is, little seems to be written about it. Humility is a difficult topic to address as Mahaney recognizes, since a writer implicitly assumes the title of expert on a topic that appears antithetical to such claims. Realizing he is on shaky ground discussing this difficult topic, Mahaney immediately establishes the Bible as the foundation for the book. Citing Isaiah 66:2 “This is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word,” he provides motivation for humility in our lives.

He builds on our motivation for seeking humility by pointing out a few reasons why pride, the opposite of humility, is something we should avoid. Mahaney asserts that pride is the source of the first sin and may very well fuel the source of our sinful nature. He points out God’s passionate dislike for pride with Proverbs 16:5: “Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD; be assured, he will not go unpunished.” Pride, Mahaney asserts, “is when sinful human beings aspire to the status and position of God and refuse to acknowledge their dependence upon Him.”

After bringing to our attention all the Biblical texts supporting humility and condemning pride, Mahaney goes on to show that the battle between pride and humility is largely beneath the radar in Christian literature and life. Providing a framework for understanding humility with “the twin reality that all genuine humility is rooted in: God’s holiness and our sinfulness. (p.22)”, Mahaney proceeds to give us the formula for attaining humility. This formula is strikingly familiar and amazingly simple and might be summed up as “praying constantly.” But, Mahaney gets more specific with suggestions of beginning your day with prayer, acknowledging your dependence on God, express your gratefulness to God and practice the spiritual disciplines.

For those of you thinking, I already do those things so I must be humble, you might want to think again. Mahaney has slipped a few self-assessments into the text including; if you have worries in your life, if you have problems with relationships, if you have difficulty laughing or laugh rarely, or if you ever say a discouraging word you are likely dealing with pride. Meeting with accountability groups who speak truth to you when you confess your sins is a practical means for keeping your pride in check and monitoring the honesty of your spiritual walk.

It is difficult to read *Humility; True Greatness* without a conviction that the battle between humility and pride needs more attention in your own life. Ostensively this book is not a book on management, however, this may be the most important book on Christian management written in years. And, in fact, Mahaney uses a qualitative example of a failing church equipped with all the management tools imaginable except for humility in the leaders to illustrate his point.

