

Seeking the Faith Quotient

Humility

Take another look at the Bible verse. Humility presupposes that we are willing to be lead. Humility means allowing someone else to go first, which is hard for students to do! Humility does not make a very good secular idea in the world of psychology. The secular view self-perception would encourage children to brag about themselves. While it is true that children with healthy self-perceptions are more successful learners it is not true that children who brag about their accomplishments have a healthy self-perception. In fact, as teachers we know that these children are in often insecure.

However, it is also true that as Christians we often have an equally misguided view of humility. We feel we are being humble when we put ourselves down or we do not value the work we do. But, if you criticize yourself and show you do not value your ministry will you do much to encourage your students to consider church work? If you are asked to try leading something new at church and you respond "humbly" by insisting that you are not skilled enough for that leadership role, are you really being humble? If God wants you to do the job He will give you the skills necessary. If you insist on displaying this type of "humility" then, you are being arrogant in defying Him. If God has given you this ministry and you know you are doing His work, then you are right to feel good about what God is accomplishing. If you are humble, you will allow God to lead you where He sees fit.

True humility is not about putting yourself first. It is not about being first in line, first to give your opinion, or first to brag. But, true humility is not about putting yourself last, either. True humility is about not having to think about yourself because you are being led by God. This is a unique freedom that faith offers us and the students in our classes. We do not need to worry about our status, about how others see us, or about how effective we are. We are led by God and are free to think about His love and His plan for us.

The third aspect of self-perception is self-worth. Self-worth asks the question "How effective am I?" Once again, the secular world has a plan for self-worth that will come crashing down. If being worthy depends on my own abilities, I will eventually fail. The most extreme example of the abuse of self-worth can be seen in serial killers who have the ultimate goal of making their mark on history. It is so important to them to be famous, to be remembered, to be effective, that they will kill in grotesque ways in order to achieve this goal. How ironic that their only way to achieve self-worth is to fail monumentally.

He guides the
humble in what is
right
and teaches them
His way.
Psalm 25:9

And this is how
we know that He
lives in us:
We know it by
the Spirit He
gave us.
1 John 3:24

The Christian view of self-worth does not depend on self-ability or on self-notoriety. Our answer to the question "How effective am I?" is "I am powered by the Holy Spirit. Anything I am able to do comes from God. I can do nothing by myself." Now we see the complete picture of self-perception: I am a child of the Heavenly Father, forgiven by my Savior and powered by the Holy Spirit. The answer to the questions "Who am I?" "How good am I?" and "How effective am I?" turns the questions around. My self-perception comes from the great I AM.

Children who are humble are not burdened by taking care of their own needs and are free to develop healthy relationship skills. Children who do not have humility or a healthy self-perception tend to have trouble compromising, cooperating, initiating or negotiating. They may not compromise because they fear they will not get what they need. They may not cooperate because they feel they need to be in charge. They may

not initiate ideas within a group because they do not believe they have ideas that will interest anyone else. And they may fail to negotiate because they do not think they will be liked by the other child if that child does not get his or her way in the matter.

Research does indicate that children with a healthy self-perception will do better in school and build healthier relationships with others. But this research does not explain the right way to achieve a healthy self-perception. Only God can do this for us and for our students. Jesus is famous for taking the world view and putting it on its head. In order to give a child a healthy self-perception we teach the child to be humble. In order to teach a child to be humble we talk about his God. The more we integrate the faith, the more we teach God's word, the more we explain God's world through the lens of love and mercy, the better our students will understand themselves, their worth, their abilities and their place in the world.

Group Discussion

1. Before reading this piece on humility what was your definition of humility? Did it change?
2. Why does most bragging indicate insecurity? When is bragging a healthy thing?
3. How does the Christian view of self-perception take the pressure off of your students? Will this keep them from working hard and excelling? Why or why not?
4. How important is a healthy sense of self-perception to success in learning? To success in relationships?
5. What are the consequences of an unhealthy self-perception?
6. What are the signs of a lack of proper humility?
7. How can we compliment children in a way that promotes humility?
8. Give examples from the life of Jesus of how he modeled proper humility.

Putting it into practice

Teachers

Divide your class into three categories:

Those who put themselves first:

Those who put themselves last:

Those who are humble:

The first group most likely needs to develop the social skills of compromise and cooperation. Make a plan for a class activity or a lesson that will give them an opportunity to practice these skills.

The second group most likely needs to work on the social skills of negotiation and initiation. Make plan for a class activity or a lesson that will give them an opportunity to practice these skills. When planning these activities try to group the children heterogeneously. In other words each group should have someone from each category. The children who are humble will be good role models for the others.

Did you see a change in behaviors? Record your observations here:

Putting it into practice

Administrators

Divide your staff into three categories:

Those who put themselves first:

Those who put themselves last:

Those who are humble

To which category do you belong? Can you think of a way to use the third group to mentor the teachers in the other two groups? What issues arise, on staff that stems from the humility levels of your teachers? Are there some who take control instead of lead? Are there some who insist they could never lead when it is obvious to those around them that they have leadership skills? To be a church worker is to be a leader. It falls within your list of responsibilities to encourage your staff members to become healthy leaders within your school, center and church communities. Each person's leadership will take on a different form; however, there should be evidence of leadership for each staff member

Think about how you compliment your staff members. Those who have issues with humility will also have issues with compliments. The staff members who brag because they are insecure will compliment themselves before you get the chance. Those who have a false sense of humility will be embarrassed by compliments. Use these guidelines when giving compliments to your staff members:

1. Compliment staff members in private. If someone is uncomfortable with a compliment it may be best to do it in writing.
 2. Be specific about your compliments. Simply saying "you are a good teacher" is vague and easily dismissed, especially after a bad day. Instead, list a skill or something you observed that leads you to believe the receiver is a good teacher. Use the words "I admire how you _____." Such as "I admire how you greet each child by name in the morning. Your students know they are important to you."
- Choose a different staff person each day to watch and identify a potential compliment. It is easy to forget the ones you know are doing well. They need encouragement from you, also.

Assessing learning with follow-up discussion

These questions can be used for a follow-up discussion after teachers have completed classroom observations:

1. Please share the class activities you tried to encourage your students to learn to negotiate compromise, cooperate and initiate.
2. What observations resulted from these activities?
3. Take some time to brainstorm other activities or teaching methods that will help children to develop confidence in the abilities God has given them.
4. How will you know if you are successful?