

# The Way Up

by Jim Cymbala

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*Humility is the key to experiencing God's blessings and living a life worthy of our calling.*

**Duration:** 31:56

**Scripture:** Proverbs 16:18, Matthew 11:29, Romans 12:3, Ephesians 4:3, Philippians 2:8, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5

**Topics:** "Humility"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal story about a woman with a powerful voice who humbled herself and served others. The message emphasizes the importance of humility and taking a low position, just as Jesus did. The speaker encourages the audience to seek more of God's blessings and grace by humbling themselves. The sermon concludes with a powerful example of a woman who selflessly served others, inspiring the speaker to give her a song.

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## Transcript

I wanna talk about something today. I've been struggling and praying, like how do I introduce this subject? Because it not only applies to all of us, but the lack of any emphasis on it is really startling. In fact, as I begin to preach about this, you that are visiting, you that are regular attendees, or Christians who know about what books are written about, and Christian subjects that are emphasized, tell me, choir, if this is not a really rare subject for anyone to discuss.

And yet, as we analyze from scripture, it's important. One could say it's the key to everything. Do you want more of God in your life, more blessing from God? This is the key.

How many want more grace and strength from God every day? This and this alone is the key. How many would want to have a more peaceful, happy life on a daily basis, because we know a lot of Christians live with agitation and discomfort. This is the key to that.

This is the key to everything. This is more essential than love, joy, peace, meekness, kindness, and all the fruit of the spirit. This is it, and how rare we mention it.

And it's not a negative subject, as we're gonna find now, it's the most positive subject. When Paul is writing the Apostle Paul to the church in Ephesians, he gets through with the doctrinal part of the letter, which is his usual format. He talks about doctrine, who Christ is, what Christ has done, how do we become Christians, and then when he's done with that, he then applies that practical application.

You can't live on theology. You have to live with theology that affects your life. And he says this in Ephesians chapter four, verses one and two.

Let's look. As a prisoner for the Lord, what does that mean? He's in prison right now. This is one of the prison epistles, and when he says as a prisoner for the Lord, he means I'm in jail because of Jesus.

I'm being persecuted and arrested, false charges and all of that. As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling that you have received. Be completely humble and gentle.

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle. So Paul says, look, I'm writing to you, and since God has pulled you out from sin, condemnation, fear of death, since Jesus came and did everything that needed to be done for you, since you now bear his name, since you now are called Christians, since you are now identified with John 3, 16, with God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, since all of that has happened, you, please now, he says, I'm urging you, live a life worthy of your calling.

Notice that the Christian process is not live a life in order to become a Christian. That's legalism. It's no, now that you've received the gift freely from God's grace of salvation, now that your sins have been forgiven, when we were steeped in our sin, even then Christ came and died for us.

How many are happy for that, say amen. Now that that happened and Christ did that, and now that you belong to Christ, you're called Christians, live a life worthy in keeping with your calling and who you belong to. Don't live off in left field when he's over here.

When as a kid to the Naval Academy as a midshipman, that was the first thing they drilled in you. Hey, you're gonna wear the uniform now? We're not only gonna cut your hair short, we're not only gonna teach you how to shine your shoes, but now that you're one of the 3,800 midshipmen, there's only 3,800 that go to Annapolis and then become ensigns, officers, or sometime go in the Marine Corps. Now that you're that, hey, you gotta walk like a midshipman, you gotta act like a midshipman, even when you go home for leave.

Remember now, you're a midshipman. You're in the Navy, you're gonna be an officer. There's only 3,800 of you in the whole world.

So now you have to act different. Forget your Brooklyn ways, forget your South Carolina ways, forget any kind of ways, you're a midshipman now. So walk the way they should walk.

You say yes ma'am, no ma'am, yes sir, no sir. You open the door for a woman, don't tell her to sit down. You pull out the chair and all of that.

You don't be eating with your hands all over the table. You eat the right way. You're a midshipman now.

That's on that level. Paul is now saying, you're a Christian now. By his grace, he has saved you and changed you.

Now live worthy of that calling. You can't live opposite when you're calling Jesus your savior, can you live opposite from Jesus? That would be totally contradictory. In other words, Jesus is my savior.

How many can say today, Jesus is my savior? Just lift your hand, Jesus is my savior. Well, now the Bible's saying, since he's your savior and you're called a Christian, live like him, be like him, follow him. Don't be

living opposite to who he is.

And then out of nowhere, the first thing he says is be completely humble. The King James has it, with all lowliness. The modern translation here is not just humble, completely humble and gentle, which would proceed out of humility.

Well, that word is mentioned in every single letter that Paul writes. He talks about humility, humility. Remember, walk with all lowliness.

Remember Jesus, how he lived. The most humble person that ever lived and he was the son of God. Also, it's important because what is humility the opposite of? Pride, and pride in the Bible is the root of every evil.

Pride is the root of every evil because pride manifests itself in selfishness, which is the root of sin. I want my way because it's my way. I don't care what God says.

My desires are greater than God's. My plan for my life supersedes his plan. I don't yield and humble myself to anything.

Now, pride, the Bible tells us, is what changed Lucifer, the most beautiful of God's angelic creation, into Satan, or the devil. His heart was lifted up with pride. Now, how insidious is pride when there was no one to tempt him? There was no temptation.

How evil is pride that his heart was lifted up in pride and God cast him down and he was condemned as an enemy of God and became the enemy of all God's creation, especially Christians? It was pride. So, thus, pride holds a place in the Bible that nothing else holds. For the Bible says God doesn't resist the drug addict.

God does not resist the alcoholic. Never says that. But who does God resist? He resists the proud.

In fact, pride is so repugnant to God that that word there means God sets himself as an army general and marshals all his forces behind him to take down the one who is full of pride. Pride cometh before a fall. Pride is the root of everything that God is against because pride blocks us from every blessing of God, every grace of God, because humility, if pride is the worst sin, humility is the chief virtue.

But it goes beyond virtue. The Bible tells us that humility, whatever it is, we'll get to that, is the root, the only channel that God uses to bring everything good into our lives. The only root, the only channel he can use is humility.

The minute pride comes in, God himself is blocked because it's in his nature to resist the proud. Proud thoughts, proud attitudes. And pride is so insidious because it can be everywhere.

It can be in what you've achieved, how you look, how much money you have, how smart you are, what degrees you have. If you're a doctor, you can look down on a bricklayer because you think you're something better than a bricklayer. It can come right into spirituality.

You're prouder that you know more of the Bible than the other person. I mean, it can come on the preacher, it can come on a pastor, it can come on anything. A soloist can come up here and sing with a proud spirit.

Watch how I can sing. Pride can feed on anything. You name something, pride can get in there.

We cannot have two dimes together and be humble before God and ask God for a blessing. He can give us a job and then a raise, and now we're proud that we have the job and the raise. Makes no sense whatsoever when we got it from God.

The first thing Paul says is for the unity of the church, and that's the same passage, endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There will always be peace when people are walking in humility. When pride comes, all kinds of dissension and fighting comes in.

Why? Because pride makes us say, why'd you step on my shoe? Why did she get the solo? Why does she sit there? Just name anything. Pride will take off on it. How many say amen? Just anything.

Pride in my race, as if you chose your race. Just think how crazy that is. Nobody chose what color they are, but we're proud what color we are.

We just woke up and that's who we were. Do I get a witness here or something? But we're gonna boast in that, and don't you get it that if you woke up a different color, you wouldn't be boasting in the other color? You'd be boasting in your new color? But it's anything. It, just name anything, and when pride comes in, there will be, wherever there's fighting, there's pride.

Someone now has been injured in their pride. So Paul says, you gotta live worthy of the one who has saved you. So be completely humble.

Not humble, completely humble. Well, what is humble? Someone joked and said, I can't define humble, but if you think you are, you're not. What is it to be humble? Most people think that the main cause for humility is our sin, and that's not correct.

There's a stronger cause for humility, because Jesus was the most humble, and he had no sin. So people say, yeah, we should be humble. Look how we've messed up before God.

That's all true. But Jesus is the great example of humility, of being nothing so God, the Father, could be everything. That sense of emptiness that looks to God for everything gives him all the glory, gets everything it needs, only from God.

It's not self-dependent in any way. You say, this is radical. It's absolutely radical.

Remember what Jesus said? I can do nothing of myself. The words I speak, those are not my words. I get them from the Father.

The miracles I do, you think I do those? No, the Father does those. Give him all the glory, diverting attention away from ourselves. The humble person never wants anyone to look at them because they know that in themselves there's nothing.

They want God to get all the glory. How many say amen? When we're walking in humility, we go, no, no, no, no, no. Not my name, don't mention my name.

Don't, no, listen, it's God. Give God all the glory. Give God all the glory.

But only humility can do that. A.W. Tozer, a great preacher of another era, said that pride is so terrible among ministers like myself and what he was and everybody who preaches. He said that most preachers say, I want God to get all the glory, but how about a tithe for myself? I only want 10%.

I know God got all the glory, but come on. It is me that he's using. So Paul says, look at Jesus.

How can you walk contrary to the one that you're singing about? If he was so humble, then live appropriately in keeping with your calling. He calls you to follow him and the most outstanding distinguishing trait was his humility. First of all, the Bible says he humbled himself to leave heaven.

To leave heaven and come into a human body so people could spit at him? He humbled himself. He lowered himself. Then it says that being found in the form of a man, Philippians 2, he humbled himself so that he would die for us on a cross.

We were singing, oh, the blood. You know what made the blood possible? His humility. He could have called 10,000 angels, but he humbled himself.

When they were yelling at him and screaming and false accusations and lies, he didn't open his mouth once. He took it for the team. He took it for us.

Humility. He said, I am among you as one who serves. On the last supper, did he say, guys, I'm gonna go to the cross for you.

You don't even know what I'm gonna do now and it's gonna be hard. Could you please wash my feet before I go? No, what did he do? He washed their feet, including Judas. What kind of person kneels down and washes the feet of the person who's gonna betray him? He is the lion of the tribe of Judah, but when he was on earth, how they identified him was the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Well, I learned something about sheep the first time I went to Argentina where out I was with gauchos and people who kill cattle and have those big asados and all of that and they also do lamb asado where they barbecue the lamb. And they said the thing, you know, they kill pigs and if you don't do it right, the pig will run 300, 400 pounds all over the camp screaming like a pig, in fact, and blood spurting out and all of that. And I saw a cow shot and killed and then butchered.

But they said, I didn't see this, but they said a lamb I can't do. One minister told me, he said, I can't do a lamb because as you take it and you're slitting its throat, it just looks right at you. Doesn't even make a noise, it just looks at you.

That's who Jesus was, he humbled himself. Didn't open his mouth for us. Gave all the glory to God.

Always took the low position. And he taught us, when you go to a banquet, what kind of seat should you take? In the front where everyone can notice you? No, take a seat in the back. Why, someone might say, come on up to the front seat.

You know, promotion comes from the Lord, but when you promote yourself, you're on Facebook telling everybody all that you've achieved. That's far, far, far away from Jesus. Am I right or wrong? Why would anyone wanna know what you're doing or I'm doing? I don't get that, does anyone get that? Jesus wouldn't even, no, he said, don't tell anyone what I just did, that miracle, don't tell anyone I did it, just give glory to God.

And we would be, don't tell everybody I pulled the chair out for you, tell everybody I did that for you. So Jesus is a perfect example of that humility, and Paul is saying, if you're gonna follow him, and if you're gonna have your name connected to him, please walk worthy, be in sync with that, because if you walk around proud as a peacock, and you're going off on everybody, and judging everybody, and getting upset, you know they have a saying in Argentina, it just came to me, I'm in my Spanish mode a little bit, when someone is really proud and prickly, because proud people, it doesn't take much to get them off, am I right? Means you could offend them in anything, just the way you look, the way you shake their hand, it wasn't firm enough, anything. They have a saying there called fofurito, which is matchstick, *comprende o no comprende?* They say, no, be careful, he's a matchstick, or she's a fofurita, that means you just have to rub a little bit, whoop, flame goes right up.

Fuego, fire, what makes us prickly like that? Our pride, all of us, our pride. Always us involved, comparing ourselves, why wasn't I given mention, why I have never, I'm not treated right, that other one is favorite and not me, that's all manifestations of Jim Symbola's stinking pride. But more than that, it's only right, because God is the creator, you and I are here today only because of him, how many can say amen to that? Our sins have been forgiven only by whom? By him, the only reason we're Christians is because of him, but let's go further, the only reason we can live one day and still keep serving him and have the grace that we need is because of him.

The way God made it is we're not allowed to contain anything in ourselves. God has made salvation to be everything a gift, not only the initial gift of forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life, but we're left trusting him every day for everything, give us this day, hour, and everything else that we need daily. Well, if it all comes for him and you totally depend on him and you wanna have a good channel for him to keep pouring it, then why are we walking around acting as if something is me? If we do anything good, it came from him, how many say amen? If we have anything, intellectually, material, every good gift comes from him, so how could I walk around like I'm somebody when I'm a nobody, I depend on him for everything, let's put our hands together and say amen.

That's why Jesus was humble, he had no sin to be humble about, he was perfect, but he's still humble because he realized my father is everything, I am nothing so he can be everything, I wanna divert everything away from me so he could get everything, I can't speak on my own, I can't make plans on my own because only the father knows what's best for me, that's humility, very hard for us. But let me bring this to a close, I told you it's the key to everything because it's the root, do you need more love for a boss who's just tormenting you? God will give you that love, but the only channel he can send it through is humility because he resists the proud, do you need more strength for the journey, he'll give you the strength but it has to come through someone who says God, you alone, I am nothing, you are everything, how many could say that today, we are nothing, God is everything, am I right or what? So God, I humble myself before you, I put away my defense mechanisms, I put away asserting myself, notice me. You know what happened one time years ago, my wife, a lot of years ago, we were in the other building, someone who was involved in Broadway came to sing, joined a choir and was on Broadway and all of that.

She wouldn't mind me telling this story because she knows she was here, she turned into a phenomenal Christian lady. So she came in the choir and she was very assertive and she was used to being, this is Broadway, she was in the industry, you know people who want you to know I'm in the industry, you got it. And approached my wife like, I'm here, I know you've had a choir but I am here now.

Diva all the way. So my wife did what she would do when she discerns that spirit, put her in the top row and just nothing. And she chafed at it, she chafed at it.

But look, this is not showtime here, we want people to sing for the Lord, not for themselves. Am I right or wrong here? I mean, if you wanna have someone show off their talent, go to Broadway, don't come to a church. My wife just put her back up there and said, let's see what God does because we loved her.

She chafed for a couple months, then the next thing, I would see her coming down at the altar just crying after the services, praying, crying, crying, crying, crying. Didn't know, didn't talk to her, didn't know how God was dealing with her but you could tell God was dealing with her. One day I was doing a wedding on a Saturday, the other building, and I did a lot of weddings.

And I went into the lobby where they were gonna have a punch and cake that people didn't have much who were getting married, they had nothing. So all they could afford was a little punch and a piece of cake. And as I'm in the lobby trying to encourage this couple, new in the church, no money, nothing, nada, pobrecitos, and I see some person crawling under a table where they're serving some of the food or something.

And I look and it's someone trying to help set up things and something had spilled or something. And I look closer and it's her. So I go over to her and I say, excuse me, what are you doing here, what's going on? Oh, I heard that this couple, I heard that this couple had no friends and no one to help them and they don't know anyone in the church.

So I just thought I would come here and take my Saturday out and serve them and help them. And I went, really? I went home and said, give her a song. Give her a song.

Am I right, Carol, did I just speak the right story? She not only began to sing, oh my goodness, her voice was so strong that when she went in the soprano section, it got 20% louder the first Sunday she sang. Everybody's just going back when the voice came out. And then she started singing, she recorded with the choir.

She ended up being a hostess at Christian television down in Florida, one of the most lovely, beautiful Christian women I've ever met. That sweetest spirit you could ever imagine. And that's what the Bible says.

Humble yourself before God and he will lift you up. Listen, the name of this message is the way up. Do you wanna go up? How many wanna go up with God? How many want his uplift, right? Then go down.

The more you become like Jesus and go down, remember what the Bible says? Because he humbled himself and did all of that, therefore God has highly exalted him and given him a name above every other name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that he is Lord. Why, why did God give him that name? Because he went down, he went down the son of God on a cross for you and me, not saying a word, a lamb. One more thought as I said.

This is the key to tranquility that most of us are missing. I've tried to hold before you the beauty of humility because to God, the most humble person in the choir is the most beautiful person in the choir. He doesn't go by clothes and you all look great, and men too, but he doesn't go by that.

That's why the Bible says in one portion, clothe yourself with humility. Every day, put it on like a coat. Put humility on because if you're not wearing humility, you certainly are out of sync with the one who saved you.

You're walking around with any form of pride, we're grieving the name by which we're called. But listen to what Jesus said, and I'm done. One of the most important verses in the Bible, I read it for 10 years without getting it.

10 years I read this without getting it, starting as a kid. Look, Matthew, take my yoke upon you, Jesus said, and learn from me, for I am what? And what? In heart and notice, and you will find rest for your souls. You know, that's where you find rest, in humility.

All agitation, all frustration, all anger, all jealousy, all of it proceeds from wounded pride. And Jesus said, learn from me, I'm happy every day, even when they're planning to kill me. I'm happy every day because when joy and peace exists in the basement, not on the roof.

You gotta go down. And he said, learn from me, for I am meek and lowly, and you will find rest for your souls. You don't have to defend yourself, you don't have to fight back, don't have to advertise yourself, give it a rest.

You don't have to promote yourself, you don't have to do anything, just leave it to God. Because God will fight your battles for you. God will do everything, you remember the story of Moses? Remember? What happened with Moses, he married a woman from Africa, and his sister and brother, it was none of their business.

You marry who you want, don't be judging what other people who they marry, amen? But they were into some Jewish thing or whatever, and they didn't like that he married an African, so they started to talk bad about him. And they came to him and they said, who are you? I mean, we don't like this person, and they started criticizing him. And the Bible indicates, at that time, he was the most humble person on the face of the earth, Moses was.

So as they lit into him, you know what he did? He didn't say a word, he just bowed down, like this, before God. Now, when you attack someone, and they bow down before God like that, you're in a lot of trouble, how many say amen? Something bad is about to happen, right? He didn't say a word, he just bowed down, just bowed down. And suddenly, the cloud came from off the tabernacle, and God's voice came out and said, who are you to talk about my servant Moses? But humility brings about God's response, God's blessing, God's supply, and brings about that rest.

Karen, if you would come out here. You mind if I tell a story about you? You want to know why God uses her? No, stand out here with me. So we met her when she was a teenager.

I felt God speak to me that my wife and I would love her and encourage her. She was dedicated to Satan when she was a little girl, by a brujita, a witch who got influencing her family, involved in santeria, which is a Latino form of black magic. So there was an altar for Satan in her room as she grew up, and she was scared to death when they dedicated her, and they killed an animal or something, and people were yelling things at her in trances, or speaking in Satanic tongues, or whatever was going on.

Then God saved her. She started singing, maybe 17, 18 years old, 19 with the choir, 19 years old. And you know how much she blesses us, amen? So when she was in her 20s, I guess, by singing here, you

know, people visit, ministers visit and get certain exposure.

So people started to invite her out as they do some of the other soloists and other people to go to a church. She's not happy with where I'm going, but I'm gonna go there. So she went out, she was invited to sing somewhere.

She went, this was new to her at that time, not now. She goes around the world. And she went and sang in the Midwest, if I remember.

She told me where she was gonna go. I said, great, be a blessing. This was all new to her.

Grew up in Coney Island, hadn't traveled much. Now she's singing. So she sings, comes back.

I ask her, how did it go? Fine. I get a call about three weeks later from a pastor. And he said, I'm the minister of the church where Karen, at that time, Melinda, sang.

I said, it went well, I hope. She's enjoyed it. He said, yeah, you know, she's too much.

I said, I know she can sing. He said, no, I don't mean that. I said, you know what she did? Never happened to me before.

We gave her an envelope with the honorarium. She sang, but God laid down on her heart to make it heavy, a heavy check, to bless her. She sent it back and said, no, I can't receive that much money.

My singing isn't worth that. Whoever goes down, God will lift up. Can we give God honor and praise? Father, we thank you for these verses that we've been pondering.

And we confess that we cannot, in our own strength, humble ourselves, that's impossible. You tell us to, but we need your grace. We need the spirit of Jesus to make us humble.

Even the Lamb, even Jesus, would you please come, Holy Spirit, and give us the humility of Christ in our lives, not just individually, but as a church, help us to be completely humble and gentle, completely humble and gentle, esteeming one another better than ourselves. That's impossible for us, but you can do it with you. Nothing is impossible.

We're not asking now for money, houses, better job. We're asking for the spirit of Jesus to be more prominent in our hearts and lives. Give rest to all of us today, Lord.

No chasing, no inner agitation. Help us to just rest in you and let you be everything, everything we need. And we will give you all the praise, all the praise.

Not unto us or a church or a minister or us individually, but we give you today all the praise. In the house of God, we give you all the praise. Let's put our hands together and give God all the praise, all the praise.

Be with us the rest of the day. We pray it in Jesus' name. And everyone said, before you walk away five steps, whether you're the choir or out there, turn around, lady with lady, men with men.

Give someone a hug and say, I love you with the love of the Lord. I love you with the love of the Lord.

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