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## Essential Elements for Victorious Living

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The Greeks considered water, air, land and fire the basic four elements of the universe. Without any of these, the universe could not exist. When it comes to us human beings, theologically speaking, we also can find a list of essential elements such as body, soul and spirit. And finally, when it comes to spiritual virtues, here too we need certain essential virtues without which we cannot exist as Christians. Paul has his list in his Galatian letter, beginning with: *...love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness...* (Gal. 5:22). Peter has his list, beginning with: faith, virtue, knowledge (2 Peter 1:5). But then we have Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, putting this following virtue called humility as a foundation for all others:

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. 5:3).

Indeed, if there is a Mount Everest amongst the virtues in the kingdom of God, this is the one. Without a doubt, humility is the garment of excellence, the key to revival and the foundation of Christianity. Without poverty of spirit, we will not and we cannot drink from the river of life nor be nourished by the bread broken for us on the cross. All other virtues get their lifeblood through poverty of spirit as all the organs of our body receive their lifeblood through our pulsing arteries. The Sermon on the Mount tells us that all the treasures of heaven are emptied out on the humble, the poor in spirit. Think of this sermon as an upside-down pyramid with its peak resting on us, emptying all its goods into our heart. But we will not experience that until we get to humility. Listen to Solomon: *Like a bird that wanders from its nest, is a man who wanders from his place* (Prov. 27:8). Christianity has wandered far from her nest of humility in which she was destined to rest.

In essence, Christianity did not begin on Pentecost, nor at the empty tomb, nor on the cross at Calvary, but rather, Jesus took up the cross when He was yet in the heavens above:

*He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance*

*as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name (Phil. 2:7-9).*

Jesus essentially exchanged His crown in heaven for an apron on earth. In my humble opinion, this is when and where Christianity started. This big decision was made UP THERE, to then be executed DOWN HERE.

And so, for us there is no other starting point other than that we will humble ourselves in repentance and will do as our Master, seeking His will forever. Again, it is only as a man comes to poverty of spirit and is done with himself; then all of the other beatitudes can be realized in his life. And it is only through poverty of spirit that his actions will reflect that he is truly born of God. Go for humility.

Notice that it is those who are clothed in humility who have the favor God, the power of God and the blessing of God. They are the only ones who have strength to do what needs to be done. Only in them is found the wisdom, the kindness, the compassion and the revelations of God. The hands of the humble are indeed the hands of God. Clothe yourself with humility, for humility is the way to all that God has prepared for you before the foundation of the world. Humility will never fail; it does not know how to lose. It can be kicked around, knocked out, abused, slandered, shot at, falsely accused, spat upon, pressed, pierced through, crucified and buried. All that, but humility will never die—it is indestructible. Each time, it will rise up to resume its journey where it has left off. Though humility does not fight any battles, it wins all wars. Humility seeks nothing for itself, yet it has everything. Humility rests at the foot of the cross, yet it touches all of the universe, causing angels to wonder and God to smile. Yes, humility is not only the garment of excellence, but it is also an ornament of grace.

And with this, I have no better choice than to project the character of Moses on the screen of human history as the supreme model of a mortal man having embraced the life of humility in its totality. Yes, after 40 years of spiritual reconstruction, Moses became the most beautiful illustration of the first beatitude when he met God at the burning bush where God touched him to the very core of his being. From that point forward, he was the meekest man that walked upon the face of the earth. From that point on, God could do anything He wanted to do in him and through him. Through him having reached this lonely place of humility, God could make bread fall from the sky to feed almost 2 million people for 40 years. Through him, God caused water to

gush out of the rocks to quench and refresh the thirsts of almost 2 million people. Through him alone, God gave His people a shield from the sun by day, and warmth and guidance by night. Through him, God's people were set free from Egyptian slavery leaving a dead body in every Egyptian home without ever having raised a sword. Again, who was this man? How did he become that way: the meekest man on the face of the earth? Who taught him? Who prepared him? What did it cost him?

No, my friend, do not get me wrong, none of us are called to be a Moses—but all of us are called to operate on the same lowly plane as Moses did. Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount to all of us. Without that, we have nothing. Moses knew it before it was preached. From time immemorial, men have been looking for methods, for equipment and for brilliant plans to advance the cause of the work of our Lord. But there is so much of the flesh in this. God is looking for hearts. Do you remember the cry of God: *Oh, that they had such a heart in them...* (Deut. 5:29)? No wonder then, that Jesus led the way into this great wonderland by emptying Himself of Himself, *before* He ever made entrance into the human race. With this virtue named humility, the Christian is invincible.

And wasn't this the problem with Adam's sin, the lack of poverty of spirit, or also with Abraham's sin or with David's sin? Isn't this lack of poverty of spirit what took the kings into captivity and Peter to say: *I will not deny You!* (Matt. 26:35). In fact, if you go through the Bible carefully, you will notice the glaring absence of poverty of spirit on almost every page.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit.* And blessedness is happiness. This happiness is an inner thing. It does not require the acquisition of wealth, fortune or fame, nor a change of our circumstances, but rather an emptying out of ourselves so that the King of glory may come into our hearts. The soil of the kingdom of God is humility. Again, as Jesus gave His Sermon on the Mount, He made humility an entrance requirement for every man or woman in the world to enter into His kingdom.

But now I cannot help but speak of the best companion of the virtue of humility: Discipline.

Humility in our lives needs the protection of discipline. Discipline is, first of all the ability, and secondly the willingness to say: "No." You must have the ability and willingness to say "No" to what others are doing and to say "No" when your flesh or your carnality wants to say: "Yes." You need the ability and willingness to go backwards when others go forward, to be quiet when others speak and to speak when no one else has the courage to speak. And I am not

talking about just saying “No” occasionally. I am talking about the need for consistency in the running of your race. Paul states that not all who run the race receive a crown. Only the disciplined are conquerors. In your flesh, you do not like to hear this, but in your spirit, in your heart, you know that I am right. The advice that I am giving to you is safe and sound, and I am giving it to you in love.

And this gets me to some specific spiritual disciplines. You need to have discipline in your witnessing, in your prayer life, in your church attendance, in your financial support of the work of God, in your Bible reading, in you as a husband loving your wife and in you as a wife submitting to your husband. It takes discipline for you to take time in bonding with your children, and in protecting your children from the influences of the world through the Internet, television and radio. You need to teach your children from the cradle on that they are not called to be the center of the universe, but rather, they are called to be servants. Teach them from early on that they are called to adopt a remnant mentality. God only works with the remnant. Accept discipline and you open the door for humility to find entrance into your heart, and with that, the entire kingdom of heaven will also settle into your heart.

In summary, trying to get anything accomplished in the church of the living God without poverty of spirit is like trying to grow crops without water.

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