The Bible warns us again and again about not taking ourselves too seriously but to know our place (e.g. [Prov. 3:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+3%3A7&version=NrsV); [15:33](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+15%3A33&version=NrsV); [25:6-7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+25%3A6-7&version=NrsV); [Zeph. 2:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zephaniah+2%3A3&version=NrsV); [Is. 5:20-22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Numbers+5%3A20-22&version=NrsV); [Rom. 12:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3A3&version=NrsV); [Phil. 2:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2%3A3&version=NrsV); [1 Pt. 5:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+5%3A5&version=NrsV)). A healthy pride affirms one in his or her self-worth as a human being and beloved child of God. A person with a balanced self-understanding does not feel threatened and does not threaten others. One does well not to give too much weight to one’s knowledge and titles, physical looks and physical strength, age and health, accomplishments, possessions, and status in life. All these are fleeting: here today, gone tomorrow, with memory being the first to go. Feeling satisfied with our external features is proper when our pride is in check and does not elevate us over others. As it has been said before, anyone who is wrapped up in herself is overdressed. If our self-image is based on our accomplishments, then it is built on a fragile foundation. Mature people are not addicted to external sources of gratification, but validate themselves on the basis of their dignity, integrity, honesty, and the ability to be emotionally connected.

As Christians, we should be delightfully unimpressed with ourselves, right? We are requested to do what needs to be done in all simplicity, becoming like little children ([Mt. 18:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+18%3A4&version=NrsV)). But too often, we are quick to judge, quick to take offense, quick to defend our honor – all because we believe that we *deserve* honor and glory. We want to make a name for ourselves, but our efforts are the result of our fears ([Gen 11:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+11%3A4&version=NrsV)) not understanding that a life with, and in God will give us honor for generations to come ([Gen 12:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+12%3A2&version=NrsV)). Throughout the Bible, we learn it is God who blesses those who live righteously with eternal glory ([Ps. 112](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+112&version=NrsV); [Lk. 1:46-49](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A46-49&version=NrsV); [Phil. 2:1-11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2%3A1-11&version=NrsV)) Arrogance goes hand in hand with forgetting about God: Who needs God to grant us a name when we can earn one ourselves? An inflated view of ourselves borders with self-righteousness ([Mt. 6:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+6%3A5-15&version=NrsV); [Lk 18:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+18%3A11&version=NrsV)): how easy it is to blame others and wonder what their problem is, if they do not think and do like we do ([Mt 7:1-4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+7%3A1-4&version=NrsV)). Humility instructs us to come down from our high horses and not to judge others but to seek understanding and show compassion. Jesus is quick to remark: If you seek the seat of honor at a banquet, you may well end up being humiliated. Stand back, don’t assume too much. “For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” Be careful, because the pursuit of honor and (self-) righteousness may well destroy your soul.

A man knocked on his friend's door to find he wasn't there for the dinner they had planned to have together, so he left a sign on the door that had [Revelation 3:20](https://www.christianforums.com/bible/revelation/3%3A20/) which is "Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and eat with you, and you with me." Then he left. Later, getting out of the shower, the friend saw the sign, smiled under his breath, and went to put a sign on his door, hoping that his friend would return. The note referred to Genesis 3:10 which reads, "And he said, I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself.”

When we are at ease with our humanity, and there is nothing to defend, it becomes easier to be vulnerable, acknowledge our limits, and admit mistakes. It starts from us and with us and then it extends to others, acknowledging their humanity and limitations. We work to correct our mistakes and work with others to help correct their mistakes. without anger or a hint of superiority. When pride substitutes our human dignity, it disconnects us. By “affirming our dignity and allowing others their dignity, we become more available to honor ourselves and connect with others as equals. Pride is a burden we don’t need. Living with dignity allows us to move more freely through life.”[[1]](#footnote-1) When we take ourselves too seriously to the point of wanting to rise above others and risk relationships, are we not making idols out of ourselves?

Jesus accepts a dinner invitation by a leader of the Pharisees, a group with which he is often at odds (e.g. [Lk 11:42-43](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+11%3A42-43&version=NrsV)). What we see Jesus doing, first of all, is to make himself vulnerably available even as he knows his enemies are watching his every move. Although Pharisees dispute with Jesus and sometimes express hostility toward him, Jesus continues to engage and dine with them ([Lk. 7:36-50](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+7%3A36-50&version=NrsV); [11:37-43](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+11%3A37-43&version=NrsV)). Engaging without defensiveness and an arrogant sense of superiority with those we disagree prepares the ground for the possibility of an honest conversation. It is obvious, on the other hand, that the leader has invited Jesus to the intimacy of a dinner with other reputable guests out of respect and admiration. Jesus is in the company of the social elite, people of affluence and connections, who scramble to take the seat of honor perhaps next to the person they admire or need a favor from. The explicit social ranking at meals was commonplace in first-century Greco-Roman society.

With a short parable, Jesus highlights the reversal of what appears to be the social norm: God uplifts the lowly and exalts the humble ([Lk. 1:46-55](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+1%3A46-55&version=NrsV); [20:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+20%3A17&version=NrsV); [24:46](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+24%3A46-47&version=NrsV)). His exhortation is to pursue humility, a concept with significant status connotations. Humility was very rarely considered a virtue in Greco-Roman moral discourse. Yet, humility is what is expected of the followers of Jesus, according to so much of the Christian Scriptures (e.g., [Lk. 18:10-14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+18%3A10-14&version=NrsV); [Phil. 2:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2%3A3&version=NrsV); [Col. 3:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+3%3A12&version=NrsV); [James 3:13](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+3%3A13&version=NrsV); [1 Peter 5:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+5%3A5&version=NrsV)).

Jesus does not waste the occasion and unfolds before the leader the vision of God’s counter-cultural kingdom, where class, status, and wealth are not factors in determining human dignity, respectability, and value. Next time, Jesus admonishes, consider inviting the poor, the physically challenged, and the marginalized. You may not want to consider yourself too high up to associate with the lowly. Invite those who cannot repay you, so your attention is on the human being and not on what advantages you may draw from such a connection. Look at another human being as a subject and not as an object. Jesus challenges the expectation that social interactions should be engaged in the hope of future transactions in mind. Attention to others and honest hospitality should be extended for the sole purpose of being genuinely present to another human being, and then, who knows, one might be entertaining angels ([Heb. 13:1-2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+13%3A1-2&version=NrsV)). The ability to honor God in the other person is already by itself God’s reward. As Christians seek to live out the counter-cultural value of inclusion for the most marginalized, their actions mirror Jesus' own inclusive kingdom agenda.

Who are the ones from whom you keep at a safe distance? Who are the disgraced and the defective in your world? When we acknowledge their humanity we also celebrate our own humanity. Getting up close and personal with those socially vulnerable and unwanted, Jesus assures the leader (and us), has profound meaning. Let us practice humility and, in so doing, find our true humanity. Amen.

1. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/intimacy-path-toward-spirituality/201506/why-pride-is-nothing-be-proud> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)