

## Humility vs. Anxiety

Scripture: Proverbs 3:34; 1 Peter 5:5–7

Code: B121128

*With the fear and uncertainty generated by the current COVID-19 pandemic, we consider this series by John MacArthur to be even more timely now than when it was first run eight years ago. The following blog post was originally published on November 28, 2012. —ed.*

The apostle Peter was a worrier. He worried about drowning when he was walking on water, even though Jesus was right there with him (Matthew 14:29-31). He worried about what was going to happen to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, so he pulled out his sword and tried to take on a battalion of Roman soldiers (John 18:2-3, 10). And when he worried about Jesus being crucified, Peter ordered God Himself not to go to the cross (Matthew 16:22).

Nevertheless, although Peter had ongoing trouble with anxiety, he learned how to deal with it, and he passed on the lesson to us—a lesson that shows the connection between our humility and our ability to conquer anxiety.

Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, *casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you* (1 Peter 5:5-7, emphasis added).

When Peter said “clothe yourselves with humility toward one another” (1 Peter 5:5), he had a specific image in mind. He used a Greek term that means to tie something on yourself with a knot or a bow. It came to refer especially to a work apron. A slave would put on an apron over his or her clothes to keep them clean, just like you might before you start a messy chore. The word became a synonym for humble service.

Humility is the attitude that you are not too good to serve others, and you are not too great to stoop. It was not considered a virtue in the ancient world. Sadly, we have reverted to those times in that regard. Humble people today are mocked and trampled on. The world calls them wimps and instead exalts pride, arrogance, and runaway egos. Although society was no different in Peter’s day, he called his readers to *be different*.

To support his exhortation to clothe ourselves in humility toward one another, Peter cites the Old Testament: “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5, cf. Proverbs 3:34). Those verses provide keen motivation for displaying humility. In simple terms, we will be blessed if we are humble and chastised if we are not. And one of the blessings of humility is the ability to deal with anxiety.

On the other hand, pride only compounds your problems when you give in to worry. Pride usurps God’s preeminent position, leaving you no one to rely on when anxiety creeps in. You can’t rest in the sovereignty of God when you arrogantly exalt your desires, opinions, and will to the same

level—or above—the Lord's.

Humility keeps priorities in proper order. It keeps you from being overwhelmed by your own circumstances and instead focuses your attention on God's plans and purposes in those circumstances. It takes your focus off the immediate situation and helps you appreciate what the Lord is accomplishing behind the scenes.

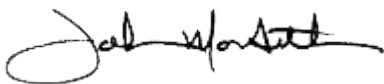
Humility also puts us on God's timetable and not our own. As Peter says, "He may exalt you at the proper time" (1 Peter 5:6). What's the proper time? His time, not ours. When will it be? When He has accomplished His purpose.

Now that might seem a little vague, but there's no cause for concern—God has perfect timing. Indeed, our salvation depended on His perfect timing. Paul specified that the hope of eternal life was "at the proper time manifested" through Jesus Christ (Titus 1:1-3). Trusting in God's timing is no light or peripheral matter to the Christian faith.

We can, and should, rest assured that God will exalt us according to His perfect timing. But what kind of exaltation should we anticipate? Paul used a Greek term that speaks of lifting us out of our present trouble. For the Christian, even the worst trial is only temporary. *Remember that truth*, as you *will* be tempted to conclude that because there's no end in sight, there is no end at all. Don't believe it for a minute; God promises to lift you out.

How are we to conduct ourselves until the promised time of deliverance? Peter said "Humble yourselves . . . casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:6-7).

That's where we'll pick it up next time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John MacArthur".

(Adapted from [\*Anxious for Nothing\*](#).)

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