

The Fight for Obscurity

By Francis Chan

He must become greater; I must become less. (John 3:30)

... and less, and less, and less, and less ... We can't ever be "humble enough." Humility is not something to attain, but to consistently and aggressively pursue. Each week should be a quest to make His name greater and ours more obscure. When's the last time you thought about ways to make yourself *less* known?

Each year we're given opportunity for more attention. In America, we love to turn saints into celebrities. We love to take humble servants and make their stories "known." We tempt them to forfeit their eternal rewards to accept the praise of men. Too many fall for it. Being praised is fun.

I was speaking at a summer camp years ago. When I was done, students were telling me I was their "favorite speaker." It felt good to hear them talk about how funny and convicting my messages were. I loved it. I got into my room and thanked God for helping me speak so well. About three minutes into my prayer, it hit me. The students were talking about me, not God. I was standing before a holy God after robbing Him of His glory. It's a terrifying position to be in.

I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. (Isaiah 42:8)

The Ugliness of Pride

In the book of Revelation, we have an amazing description of Heaven. In chapter 4, John sees the throne of God. From this throne came *flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne seven lamps were blazing (vs.5)*. There are four living creatures *with six wings and covered with eyes all around (vs. 8)*. There are twenty-four elders who drop their crowns and *fall down before Him (vs. 10)*. In chapter 5, John hears the singing of 100 million angels as they *encircle the throne (vs. 11)*. All attention is on the throne.

Imagine if one of those angels screamed, "Stop staring at Him! Look at me!" It's a pretty ugly picture. Who in their right mind would draw attention to themselves and away from God? Me. Attention is attractive. I forget that any attention I receive is attention stolen from God.

Pride is something that many of us fight daily if not hourly.

Forgettable

*Every day of my life, pride and I fight a war
God supplies me a little, but I grab for more
Tempted by popularity, glory, and gold
I place myself in the spotlight, and shove God out the door*

*But the strongest desire of my heart is to die
And no longer preach one thing and then live a lie
I must humbly submit my will daily to Christ
Turn the spotlight away and make this my heart's cry*

*When I pass through may my name be forgot
May the words I have spoke be as though I have not*

*I will plan every step so in all that I do
Jesus, none will see me,
But see through me to you*

-Darin McWatters

The Cure for Pride

Not many people, if any, will confront you on pride during your lifetime. It's one of those allusive sins that is hated by God but not confronted in the church. I was one of those rare individuals who was so arrogant that it moved a pastor to rebuke me. I responded by doing what arrogant people do - I defended myself. At the time, I didn't recognize that only a proud man would defend his humility.

Over time, I learned more clever ways of making myself appear humble. It's easy to lie. That's why focused prayer is the only cure. What I mean by focused prayer is taking time to focus on the One to Whom you pray before saying a word. Try it. Take thirty seconds to think about how you would feel if you stood before the throne of God. Think about what you would say if you had just a few minutes to speak to Him face to face. Then speak.

Nothing cures pride like coming into the presence of God. Read any of the biblical accounts of people who came into His presence. Instant humility. Accountability with other believers is nice, but it's not difficult to fake humility. There's something about coming into the presence of the One who knows all of your games.

Humbling comes when you stand before the One who knows everything about you.

*"Oh Lord you have searched me and you know me."
(Psalm 139:1)*

Others can search you and not know you. God searches you and knows every lie. He sees through every attempt to disguise your pride. He sees our secret longing for praise.

Humbling comes when you envision Him as the Potter and yourself as clay.

*"Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'He has no hands?'"
(Isaiah 45:9)*

Try to picture yourself standing over pieces of broken pottery. This is the imagery the Bible uses to show the distinction between God and man. I am just "a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground." It makes boasting seem not only undesirable, but ridiculous.

Humbling comes when you compare your age with a God who is eternal.

"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand."

"Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this. What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside? Can you take them to their places? Do you know the paths to their dwellings? Surely you know, for you were already born! You have lived so many years!"

(Job 38:4, 18-21)

We all laugh when we watch a three-year-old child try to correct his parents. Do you see the foolishness in a fifty-year-old man or woman questioning an eternal Being?

Humbling comes when you remember He can take your life before you read this verse.

“Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?” (Isaiah 2:22)

Are you still there? Thank Him.

Our humility will plateau when we stop learning about and focusing on the character of God. The more we understand of His glory, the more obscure we will seek to be. You're not humble enough. Take your obscurity to the next level.

Be Humble and Great

Unfortunately, too many see these as mutually exclusive. In an effort to be humble, we make comments like “I’m not that good.” For years, I told people that I didn’t see myself as a good teacher. I reasoned that saying, “I’m a great teacher” would be boasting. The humble statement must be, “I’m not that good.” The problem with that is not only dishonesty but a belittling of the gifts God gave us. Humility isn’t self-degradation. Mistaking humility for incompetence leads to ineffectiveness.

Several times in scripture, we see God sharply rebuke those who question their abilities. To question the competence of a creation is to insult the Creator. When Moses doubted his own ability to speak, God responded by asking: “Who gave man his mouth?” (Exodus 4:11)

Jeremiah is told that He has been chosen to speak to the Israelites. God goes so far as to say,
“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5)

God explains that Jeremiah was created for this task, chosen before he was even born. Yet even with this knowledge, Jeremiah responds in the next verse by saying that he is “only a child” and does not “know how to speak.”

David solves the problem with his statement in Psalm 18:35 “You stoop down to make me great.” This is what God desires to do with all of us. The result of being filled with a great God is greatness. Only the truly humble experience true greatness.

*Check out Francis Chan in **Stop and Think**, a new short evangelistic film featuring Hollywood production quality, a dynamic speaker, and greatest message in the history of the world! Watch it [here](#). Buy it and share it [here](#).*

Francis Chan is the pastor of Cornerstone Church in Simi Valley, California. He has been serving there for the past 13 years. He is also President of Eternity Bible College and serves on the board of Children’s Hunger Fund and World Impact. Francis spends much of his time speaking to high school and college students. His commitment is to teach directly from the words of scripture. His passion is to see the next generation of American Christians display a much deeper love for Jesus. www.francischan.org