With a Touch of Humility

Perhaps a third cornerstone is humility. The word can be defined as self-restraint from excessive vanity and this is seen as a virtue, having a clear perspective and respect for one’s place in context, and a modest view of one’s own importance.

Humility seems to have a heavy religious connection and I found it very interesting to see how it is seen by a variety of religions of the world. A Jewish Rabbi Jonathon Sachs says that “humility is an appreciation of one’s self, talents, skills, and virtues as well as effacing oneself to something higher.” To Christian C.S. Lewis is not thinking less of oneself, but thinking of yourself less. He also says that pride leads to every vice and humility is the opposite of pride. For the Christian Bible Reference Set the Bible states that humility is a quality of being courteously respectful of others which allows us to go more than halfway to meet the needs and demands of others. Humility does not deny our own work but rather affirms the inherent worth of all persons. For Islam it is surrender to God. In Buddhism the natural aim is enlightenment. As a quality to be developed, it is deeply connected with the practice of Four Abods: love-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity. Confucius say humility is the solid foundation of all virtues. One needs to be humble, modest, and unpretentious.

Perhaps in our western world we have tended to not look at these more complete definitions of the word. Rather we have focused on thinking lesser and lower of ourselves and that others are more than who we are. Consequently we are uncomfortable with the word to the point of even wondering if it really is a character trait that we want for ourselves. Truly, we need to acknowledge that we, too, are human and have a variety of skills, abilities, and strengths just like the other humans. Let’s not put one above the other, but me and others in tandem.

Let’s try to put that into practice. In general you would try to address another’s live and thoughts before yours; but certainly when you are in crisis, you will ask if your needs can be addressed. In almost all situations you need to avoid bragging, boasting and valuing your opinion above others. You will treat each person as someone of value despite their societal position, profession, age, race, or economic status, etc. As to treating yourself, you need to value yourself, but do not spoil yourself. It is helpful to avoid unhealthy and superficial behavior. Remember since we have lived in our own thoughts and beliefs, we need to try to look at any situation from other angles.

Being humble affects your life in a number of ways which will help us to be and remain civil. First one can handle difficult situations with a sense of peace, responding rather than reacting. You are able to see others more clearly. Therefore you give, but in return you will receive. It is a wonderful networking tool as others will be comfortable with you and seek you out. You will listen more and think before you speak. You will be seen as trustworthy. Others will be loyal to you. Additional benefits are peace, wisdom, healthy relationships, and respect.

Just think what our world can accomplish if we are always focused on the principle of humility, we are equal in this world. Together we will forever strive and improve our lives. Apart we will fall backwards or miss so many opportunities.

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