

St. Benedict's Ladder of Humility

Start at the bottom, step with care, and ask for help as you need it.

- Step 12** Be being transformed into the love of God, a Christ-like presence. Develop increasing ability to know yourself as God knows you. Deeply understand the contrast between the Pharisee and the Publican. "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, be merciful to me, a sinner."
- Step 11** Practice gentleness and respect with others. Be done with haughtiness, sarcasm, put downs, and airs of importance. "There is a God, and I am not Him." (from the movie *Rudy*)
- Step 10** Learn to be still and free of strife, to receive rather than control, and to avoid using laughter to turn serious issues into jokes.
- Step 9** Learn to practice silence and speaking less. This is seen near the top of the ladder because it is seen as the outcome of a life that seeks God and is filled with wisdom. Benedict observes, "The wise are known for their few words."
- Step 8** Admit personal fragility and smallness and your need for the wisdom of our Christian community.
- Step 7** Become deeply aware of personal sin patterns. See ourselves as potentially weaker and more sinful than others. This is not self-hatred or self-contempt, but is meant to make us kind and gentle.
- Step 6** Seek contentment, no matter what; be disentangled from all that prevents inner freedom.
- Step 5** Be honest with others about your weaknesses/faults and limitations. Quit pretending to be someone you are not.
- Step 4** Have patience to accept the difficulty of others. Give others a chance to figure out their weakness their own way in their time. Have patient endurance in suffering.
- Step 3** Be willing to subject yourself to the guidance and direction of others, giving up arrogance and all-powerfulness.
- Step 2** Do God's will, not your own or other people's. Surrender self-will to God. .
- Step 1** Revere God and be mindful of Him. Keep the fear of God, a sense of His presence at all times and places, always uppermost in mind. Stop acting as if He were not present. (See Psalm 36:1-2.)

More About Humility

Psalm 131:1-2

O LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.
But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child is my soul within me.

John 3:30

He must become greater; I must become less.

Luke 14:11

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Genesis 28:12-13a

Jacob had a dream in which he saw a stairway (or ladder) resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the Lord...

The Rule of St. Benedict - Chapter 7, verses 5-9

Accordingly, brothers, if we want to reach the highest summit of humility, if we desire to attain speedily that exaltation in heaven to which we climb by the humility of this present life, then by our ascending actions, we must set up that ladder on which Jacob in a dream saw angels, descending and ascending (Gen. 28:12) Without doubt, this descent and ascent can signify only that we descend by exaltation and ascend by humility. Now the ladder erected is our life on earth and if we humble our hearts the Lord will raise it to heaven. We may call our body and soul the sides of this ladder, into which our divine vocation has fitted the various steps of humility and discipline as we ascend.

Quote from Francois Fenelon:

Christ, the eternal Word, who must be communicated to the soul to give it new life, requires the most intense attention to His Voice. We must forget ourselves, and all self-interest, and listen and be attentive to God.

I Peter 5: 5b-7

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Matthew 7:13-14

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

From *The Message*: Don't look for shortcuts to God. The market is flooded with surefire, easygoing formulas for a successful life that can be practiced in your spare time. Don't fall for that stuff, even though crowds of people do. The way to life --to God!-- is vigorous and requires total attention.

Hebrews 4:12-13

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (motives and intentions). Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.