

A Search for Humility and Happiness

Not an End in Itself

By Rick R.

On Page 70 in my version of the 12&12 it says that "humility, as a word, is often misunderstood". When asked, what is the opposite of humility; my first guess would be Pride. Who could argue with that? It was in my 22nd year of sobriety when I had a phone call from my first wife's husband at the time and the conversation started going south. I was trying to refrain from bickering with him and when he couldn't get any traction, he made the statement that, "He had heard stories about me in the past, and that I was no angel. I thought about it for a few seconds and responded, "I've done a lot of things in my life that I'm not proud of, but I'm not ashamed of anything I've done in the last 22 years." The call ended peacefully. It didn't occur to me at the time, but in that phone call, the *polarity* of pride and shame was evident. About 16 years later, at a step study meeting on Step Seven, the discussion of Humility came up and I listened to all the different points of view. The memory of that phone call came back, and I questioned where humility fits in. In the 12&12 Step 5, it amounts to "*a clear recognition of what and who we really are followed by a sincere attempt to become what we could be*". With Pride at one extreme and Shame at the other, I see Humility right in the middle. It simply means doing the things we are supposed to be doing every day and doing them *without fanfare*. I always knew what I was supposed to be doing but with an overbearing sense of insecurity and neediness, seldom was I strong enough to do the right thing. I developed a sense of unworthiness that prevailed until I found a solution in the bottle which only deepened my guilt and shame. In one of my more recent articles, I explained that I was doing a little research to find the definition of the word *happiness* and discovered that it is often described as "*a byproduct of right living, and not an end in itself*". Happiness is not a goal, but it is the result of *living right*. A friend once shared at a meeting that, *satisfying his wants will never make a person happy*. Another person shared that she had read something that described it like this: "*happiness is like a butterfly, the more you chase it, the farther away it gets, but when you stand still, it will land on your shoulder*". If my motive is to create happiness, it's probably not going to happen. I believe that this perspective applies to Humility as well. I also believe that right living is a good start. I don't believe that anybody can claim humility for themselves, but we can see it in others, and it seems to be a byproduct of the way they live. I've known some humble people, in and outside of the program, and they all have some things in common: They seldom bring attention to themselves, they never criticize others, they are always comforting, and they are always an asset and never a liability. Humble people do the things they were taught as a child. They treat others with respect. They are trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind.... Sound familiar? I learned it in the boy scouts. I learned the Golden Rule in church, but I was never strong enough to live by it. If you're not sure what you're supposed to be doing, Read the 11th Step Prayer in the 12&12 or The Boy Scouts Laws, or try practicing The Golden Rule. That should be a pretty good start. When I found AA, I was reintroduced to these values and helped to rein in my ego, and today I am at peace with myself and with those around me.