

## Does Jesus Bless Those Who Think Highly of Themselves?

Luke 7:1-17

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*"Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Therefore, I did not presume to come to you." - Luke 7:6-7, ESV*

The question in today's title is absurd. It seems too obvious, doesn't it? Over and over again, the Bible warns us not to think too highly of ourselves and says how God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5 both quote Proverbs 3:34 as saying, *"God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."* So, God gives us this Proverb three times in His word.

Beyond this three-time repeated proverb, the Bible tells us . . .

- *"Blessed are the poor in spirit . . ." - Matthew 5:3*
- *"For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment . . ." - Romans 12:3*
- *"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." - Proverbs 16:18*
- *"When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom. - Proverbs 11:2*

So, does God bless those who think highly of themselves? No! It would seem like this principle is so plainly evident in Scripture as to be undeniable.

But as we have seen recently again, people continue to deny this basic Bible truth. Thirty-four years ago, it was Robert Schuller who released *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation*. More recently, it was Joel Osteen's book, *The Power of I Am*. Here's how the publisher describes this book: "In the pages of his new book, bestselling author Joel Osteen shares a profound principle based on a simple truth. Whatever follows the words I am will always come looking for you. So, when you go through the day saying: I am blessed...blessings pursue you. I am talented;...talent follows you. I am healthy;...health heads your way. I am strong;...strength tracks you down."

Interestingly, in today's passage, the centurion makes an "I am" statement: "I am not worthy to have you come under my roof." He says, "I am not worthy" and Jesus responds by healing the centurion's servant. So, let's look at two other "I am" statements from Scripture to test Osteen's theory:

1. In Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, the Pharisee makes the self-affirming "I am" statements, while the tax collector beats his breast and says, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" Jesus said that the tax collector went home justified and not the Pharisee.

2. Paul, in 1 Timothy 1:15, makes this "I am" statement: "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost." (see [Luke 18:9-14](#))

So, in these three examples, the "I am" statements of those saved and blessed by God are "I am not worthy," "I am a sinner" and "I am the foremost of sinners." Those seem a little different from the suggested "I am" statements from Mr. Osteen.

Our lesson from today's reading can be easily summed up with two final Bible verses:

*"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." - Jesus, in Matthew 23:12*

*"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you." - James 4:10*