

John Calvin's Life (July 10, 1509 - May 27, 1564)

- He was a second-generation Reformer, and admired Luther, Zwingli, and others; didn't compete
- He humbly left Geneva after the city kicked him out, he did not hurl insults at his persecutors
- He gladly served in the church and did not aspire to political or church power
- When he was nearing death, he evaluated his accomplishments with great modesty

John Calvin's Teaching on Humility

1. **Humility in our Knowledge.** Humans cannot know God or themselves apart from God revealing Himself in the Bible. (Acts 17:28)
2. **Humility because of God's Sovereignty.** Lay aside "ambition and thirst for worldly glory" (*Institutes* 3.7.2) Since God is at work in all things, there is only so much credit a man can take! "The story of Job overwhelms men with the realization of their own stupidity, impotence, and corruption." (*Institutes* 1.1.3) (see Job 38:1ff.)
3. **Humility because of Election.** The elect cannot take pride for their salvation before God. The fact that God does not save all people spurs us on to humility. "Why ME?" is the question we all should ask.
 - Why, then, do so many people reject the Bible's teachings on election? (Psalm 115:1)
4. **Humility before the Law.** Nature and natural law do not give us enough info on how to please God. The fact that God publishes His law calls us to humility.
 - As we read the Law, what else do we see that drives us to humility? (Romans 3:20)
5. **Humility applied to political leaders.** In applying Daniel 6 and the Babylonian rulers who seek to write a new law so Daniel will get thrown into the lion's den, Calvin writes that "it will always be deserving of condemnation when we find men selfishly pursuing their own advantage without any regard for the public good." Calvin went on to mention that many rulers in the church and politics of his day were likewise proud and pompous.

Does a detailed and careful study of the Scripture, as John Calvin has done and as we have been trained, confirmed in, and believed in the churches of the Reformation, does all this doctrinal knowledge lead us to pride? Is it inevitable that we will be proud and arrogant?

Modern theologian J.I. Packer writes that John Calvin was not opinionated. He was consistently dependent on the Bible. Amid all Calvin's intellectual gifts and handling of theological and moral controversies of his time, "Calvin never says: this is my idea. He only ever says: this is what Scripture teaches....[His only intellectual interest is] to be a loyal servant of the Word of God."