

## 4.12 Practising Humility – Learning Love

**Leaders in education know that humility is intrinsic to authenticity. They acknowledge their own imperfections, take responsibility for their mistakes and shine a light on other people’s successes. Their choice to serve others builds trust and enables genuine collaboration. Whether rejoicing in success or dealing with failure, they pursue love, around which everything turns and towards which everything should be drawn. This love “always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”**

### Practising Humility

To develop the posture, orientation or lens of humility in our interactions with one another takes significant practice. It places the other above oneself, drawing on the example of Jesus as outlined by Paul: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather in humility, value others above yourselves.” (Philippians 2:3) – indeed the prophet Micah calls us simply “...to walk humbly before your God.” (Micah 6:8). Unlike many other things we may practise, it may be unlikely we will ever master it. It stands in tension with the constant pressure to be right and builds trust with teams through placing greater honour on other people than oneself.

Humility causes us to re-orient our desires before and more in line with God: “Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding...” (Proverbs 3:5), while acknowledging that it is acceptable (and even important) to get things wrong: “If my people will humble themselves and pray and seek my face...I will forgive their sin and heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:14). It is not about being self-deprecating, but rather retaining appropriate perspective and spreading the credit across teams.

Leading with humility can have profound consequences for teams, and the leader themselves. It builds others up, causing leaders to become more approachable; it avoids bitterness in the face of a challenge or mistake; it helps diffuse arguments, and also builds patience in teams and individuals for the longer term: “Humble yourselves therefore...that he may lift you up in due time.” (1 Peter 5:6).

Practising humility is not to dispel confidence and momentum, but rather asks where is that confidence placed and how secure are those foundations? “Before a downfall, the heart is haughty, but humility comes before honour.” (Proverbs 18:12). It notes that in our weakness we are strong, and our power as leaders comes from God’s grace, not our own endeavour – as Paul outlines: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9). This re-orientation defines teams, communities and cultures in schools, and is also a fundamental posture for the teacher in classroom practice, showing themselves as adults to be learners first.

1. How do you think the concepts of ‘humility’ and ‘authenticity’ relate to one another?
2. To what extent are you able to take opportunities to shine a light on other people’s successes?
3. Where is the tension between appropriate levels of humility and the confidence to talk boldly about your school to an inspector?
4. How could we demonstrate humility in the classroom, and how integral might this be to effective pedagogy?