



HUMILITY

Values for Living—Cadet Character Development Forum

INTRODUCTION

Each Values for Living character development forum helps Civil Air Patrol members explore a virtue from multiple angles and practice that virtue through a hands-on activity. The combination of analysis and practice helps members internalize the virtue so it stays with them beyond the end of the squadron meeting.

Humility can be hard to define but most of us know it when we see it. Humility is living in a way that respects the truth. Humility refines our perspective by allowing us to see ourselves as we are, to gratefully acknowledge the efforts of others, and to commit ourselves to our duties. In this lesson, participants will consider examples of humble people and practice humble behaviors.

PRECLASS CHECKLIST

Prior preparation is essential to success. Please prepare the following well ahead of time:

- All media installed and checked out
- Handouts and materials prepared and available as per teacher instruction sheet
- Phase Three cadet orientation/training completed
- Participation awards such as candy or granola bar treats available
- Room arrangements complete

ATTENTION GETTER

LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (5 MINUTES.)

Option 1: Video Clip—Lincoln's Humility at Gettysburg

Option 2: In lieu of watching the video, the chaplain, CDI, or commander may read the transcript of the video, as follows:

In July 1863, during the height of the Civil War, the North and South clashed near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania in one of the most horrific battles of the war. When the smoke cleared after three days of intense fighting, the fields around Gettysburg were strewn with the bodies of over 50,000 wounded, dead and dying, and hasty graves were dug on the battlefield to bury the dead.

Later that year a committee supported by the governor of Pennsylvania created a soldier's cemetery for the Union troops who died in the fighting at Gettysburg and those bodies were relocated to the new cemetery. On November 19, 1863, a dedication ceremony for the cemetery was held that included a two-hour speech by Edward Everett, praising the Union and showing off Everett's eloquence.

Then, near the end of the ceremony, almost as an afterthought, the President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, rose and gave a brief, two-minute dedication that has become known as one of the greatest speeches of all time: the Gettysburg Address. Lincoln was one of the finest leaders our country has ever known, yet his remarks that day provide a glowing example of Lincoln's genuine humility as a person and a leader. Listen to Lincoln's words:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Let's take a moment to consider how Lincoln's remarks show his humility.

First, did you notice that Lincoln never mentions himself, never mentions that he's president, and even downplays his own importance? He says, "The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here." Instead, he emphasizes the work of others: "the world... can never forget what they did here." He even points out that he cannot accomplish what the fallen have already accomplished: "we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract." Like all humble people, Lincoln didn't think too much of himself, his abilities, his office, or his accomplishments.

Second, the entire address is an expression of gratitude. It's an attempt to thank and honor the brave soldiers who "gave the last full measure of devotion." Humble people honor the efforts of others and thank them for their sacrifices rather than claiming glory for themselves.

Third, Lincoln doesn't emphasize the differences between the Union and Confederacy. This speech unites rather than divides and leaves no room for "us vs. them." He doesn't mention that his side won the battle. There's no gloating, no chest-thumping. Lincoln doesn't even presume that his side is going to win the war, even though the Confederates had lost one-third of their forces and Lee was forced to retreat to Virginia. Instead, Lincoln admits that we are still "engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure." Because it's a "civil" war, it's *our* war, which means it's *our* fault and not just *their* fault. Lincoln accepts his share of the responsibility and draws the nation together. Humble people own up to their responsibilities instead of blaming others.

Fourth, Lincoln commits himself to the "unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced." Lincoln doesn't pawn this off as someone else's responsibility. Instead, "it is for us the living," in which he includes himself, "to be dedicated here to the unfinished work." Humble people are willing to take on difficult and challenging tasks.

Finally, note of the order of importance Lincoln implies: the living are less important than the dead, who are less important than the nation, which is less important than liberty and equality under God. Humble people have their priorities in order and know whom and what they serve.

Almost no one remembers what Edward Everett said that day in his two-hour-long speech, but the world remembers what Lincoln said. Abraham Lincoln was one of the greatest leaders our nation has ever known because of his ability to lead with humility. Genuine humility is not a weakness. It is one of the defining traits of a truly great leader.

Option 3: Personal Story

Share a story about how humility contributed to successful leadership or improved relationships.

UNDERSTANDING THE DESIRED BEHAVIOR

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION LED BY PHASE 3 CADETS (3-5 PEOPLE IN EACH GROUP. 10 MINUTES.)

Small Group Exercise/Discussion – (no more than 6 in each group including senior cadet moderator)

Most of us learn about virtue through the example of virtuous people. Even if you can't define humility, you can name people you think are humble.

We'll start our discussion by going around the small group and asking each cadet to name someone that he or she thinks is humble. What does that person do that you associate with humility? Depending on the size of your group, you may want to give everyone a chance to name more than one humble person. As the participants describe humble people, the facilitator should take notes and compile a list of humble behaviors. Your list might look something like this:

- having a modest opinion of yourself and your accomplishments
- showing courtesy and respect to others
- putting the interests of others ahead of your own
- not drawing attention to yourself
- undertaking difficult, unpleasant, or thankless tasks

- expressing gratitude to others
- being willing to change your mind
- acknowledging your limits and asking for help when needed
- not insisting on your own way
- accepting criticism without making excuses

Your small group may not identify all these behaviors on their own. After everyone has had a turn, the facilitator may suggest some additional humble behaviors. Then review your list together; ask the cadets if there is anything they would like to add or change.

Once you have that list, ask your cadets the following questions, allowing them time to discuss each one:

- How can humble people be assertive enough to be effective leaders?
- Based on our list of humble behaviors, how would you define humility?

APPLICATION OF THE BEHAVIOR TO THEIR LIVES

LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (15 MINUTES)

Chaplains/CDIs/commanders should continue the lesson with a large group discussion. Please choose questions from the list below or propose questions appropriate to your unit.

- How does practicing the virtue of humility allow you to embody CAP's core values?
- Sometimes it's easier to recognize the virtues by describing their opposites, the vices. How can you recognize someone who lacks humility? What behaviors do you see in such people?
- How can someone be both confident and humble at the same time?
- A poor self-image is also contrary to humility. If arrogance is thinking that you are better than you truly are, poor self-image is thinking you are worse than you truly are. What are some negative consequences of having a poor self-image?
- How can you recognize humble senior members? What behaviors do you see in them?
- How can you recognize a humble cadet? What behaviors show you that a cadet is humble?
- Could the humility of our members ever negatively affect the squadron? If so, how? What should we do about that?

ACTIVITY

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION LED BY PHASE 3 CADETS (3-5 PEOPLE IN EACH GROUP. 15 MINUTES.) PICK ONE

Cultivating humility is hard work and we don't become humble without practice. In this lesson, we've discussed many ways in which we can practice humility. Now, in this last small-group exercise, each facilitator will choose one activity for his or her group to practice.

Instructions: All of these activities are best accomplished with pen and paper. Ask the cadets to write down their responses for the activity you choose and then read their responses to the group.

Write a Thank You Note

Take a few minutes to draft a thank you note to someone who has treated you kindly, helped you through a challenging situation, or been a positive influence on your life. Address the note to a specific person and, in your note, refer to specific actions for which you are grateful. Sign the note anonymously. Once everyone is done writing, ask the cadets to read their notes to the rest of the group. Encourage the cadets to re-write and send their notes after the meeting.

Acknowledge and Address a Weakness

Ask each cadet to think of an area in which he or she is underperforming. This area may or may not be related to CAP. Perhaps the cadet is struggling with drill and ceremonies, never understood the quadratic equation, lacks patience with a younger sibling, or spends too much time in front of a screen. Ask each cadet to write down the problematic issue, describe the way that issue has negatively affected her or his life, and what steps the cadet can take to address the issue. Be sure to include people the cadet can ask for help and how he or she will know that the issue has been satisfactorily addressed. Once the cadets have finished writing, ask them to read their notes to each other.

Nominate Someone Else for an Award

Each year, the Air Force Association offers an award to an outstanding cadet in each squadron (for more information, see CAPR 39-3, Section G, article 42). In order to allow commanders the widest possible latitude in this selection, no specific criteria for the award is established. Take a few minutes to write a note to your squadron commander recommending someone else for this award. Explain why you think this cadet is deserving and, if possible, how the cadet has positively influenced you. Once everyone is done writing, ask the cadets to read their notes to each other.

LESSON SUMMARY AND WRAP-UP

LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (5 MINUTES)

Read to the group:

Marcus Aurelius was the Roman Emperor from 161-180 AD. In that capacity, he was the most powerful man in the world. From that position, he could have easily looked down on anyone and thought himself the greatest of all men—or even a living god. Marcus had a different perspective. Instead of entertaining an exalted opinion of himself and his office, he began each day by reminding himself of his relationship with and duty to all other men. As he writes to himself in his *Meditations*,

When you wake up in the morning, tell yourself: the people I deal with today will be meddling, ungrateful, arrogant, dishonest, jealous and surly. They are like this because they can't tell good from evil. But I have seen the beauty of good, and the ugliness of evil, and have recognized that the wrongdoer has a nature related to my own—not of the same blood and birth, but the same mind, and possessing a share of the divine. And so none of them can hurt me. No one can implicate me in ugliness. Nor can I feel angry at my relative, or hate him. We were born to work together like feet, hands, and eyes, like the two rows of teeth, upper and lower. To obstruct each other is unnatural. To feel anger at someone, to turn your back on him: these are unnatural.

Marcus knew all too well the failures of his fellow human beings. Even when confronted with their worst behavior, he refused to condemn them, refused to be angry at them, and refused to turn his back on them. Because Marcus knew the truth, because he could distinguish the beauty of the good from the ugliness of evil, he humbly committed himself to the service of his fellow human beings.

May our nation enjoy the guidance of such humble servant leaders and may you grow to become those leaders.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

"Never look down on anybody unless you're helping them up."

– Jesse Jackson

"Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too."

– The Apostle Paul¹

"When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom." – Proverbs 11:2

"Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less."

– C.S. Lewis

"We should in truth think it possible for another person to have something that is hidden to us whereby he is better than we are."

– Augustine of Hippo

¹ Philippians 2:3-4. Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation.