

[Romans 12:3:] For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

1. Price Is Right rules: bid as close as you can to the actual retail price of a product without going over. Closest one wins; otherwise, sad trombone. But then, there's the \$1 bid. That strategy works if you think everyone else has overbid, leaving you to be the only one left that is guaranteed not to be over.
2. Price Is Right rules fit the topic of humility so well! Act humble enough so that no one can accuse me of bragging, but definitely not so low that everyone looks down on me. And there's still the \$1 humble bid: I say that I'm next to nothing in the hopes that people notice my humility and say "Oh, no you're not!"—for the win. Is that the strategy Jesus has in our lesson? Not quite. {Read verses 1,7-11.}
3. At first glance, this lesson may seem like Price Is Right rules with regard to humility. But there's one major difference. If we bid *at all*, we lose the game *no matter what*. The only way to "win" is to not play. Only God would come up with a game like this. And thank God He did!
4. Who is worthy in God's eyes? Jesus shows us only one who is perfectly humble is worthy in God's eyes. To apply the Price Is Right game to Jesus' parable, I try to elevate myself high as I dare. But then comes the sad trombone. The moment I play the game, I cease to be humble, which means to be low. That's why the "Aw, shucks, I'm nothing" \$1 bid doesn't work either. I'm still playing the game, trying to manipulate someone else into thinking higher of me, which means I don't feel I'm the nothing I claim to be. And so we hear the sad trombone again. The question still stands: who is worthy in God's eyes? Only the One Who does not feel the need to elevate oneself and simply is where they're supposed to be, happy where God put them. We, by nature, do not do this. Period.
5. Cut to Isaiah 14. There we see the devil try to outbid God. In a prophecy of Babylon's vanity, we get a glimpse into Satan's fall, which is used to picture Babylon. How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit. Being above God was not the devil's place, no matter how much he wanted it. So, the Creator cast his creation down. Cut to Genesis 3. The devil crawls up to Adam and Eve. He deceived them into playing the game with the \$1 bid. They were nothing. They could be a little more: "You will be like God ..." They fell because they joined the devil in playing the game, not simply being what they were supposed to be.
6. What were they supposed to be? They—and we—are objects of God's love, wanting what God wants. The moment we lift ourselves up with Price Is Right rules, we cease being what God wanted and play a game to be what we want. And the devil is a

contestant right next to us in a game we never needed to play because we had it all. Yet God still loves us.

7. Jesus teaches us a couple of things with regard to humility. Verse 11 is the key verse. {Reread verse 11.} Being exalted is passive. We don't do it. Someone else does. That's what the devil got wrong. And contentment with what God made us is what we gave up when we followed the devil. The reason Jesus is at the highest place is because He came as One of us to be lowest of all. And His was not a false humility. He came to be so close to the ground that no one could be lower than Him. No one could get between Him and the grave He was pleased to occupy for us. He was buried in the tomb for my sin and your sin of thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought. How should we think of ourselves? We're in the upcoming parable. Put yourself in the place of the poor, crippled, lame, and blind in what Jesus is about to say. {Read verses 12-14.}
8. Although they cannot repay you ... Because of Christ, we win even though we don't play the game. That's the only way we win. We have nothing to offer God when it comes to saving ourselves. We are not going to play Price Is Right rules with Him. As Luther reminded us on his deathbed, we are all beggars. When we realize that—because by the grace of God He has taught us that—then we embrace whom He has made us to be: objects of His love (whether others consider us high or low—they can play Price Is Right rules all they want!). We simply are happy to be at the banquet. We get to be with others, celebrating that God has brought us together, celebrating that when we had nothing to offer, Christ gave His all for us—in other words, exalting God and not worrying about exalting ourselves. We invite everyone we can. The humble Christ saves us, exemplifying humility. We're truly humble when we're being whom we are to be: made by God, loved by God, saved by God. God knows where to slot us in with the rest of the beggars as we live for God doing the things God gives us to do here. Amen.