



PHILIPPIANS: JOY FOR LIFE'S JOURNEY
FOLLOWING WITH JOY • PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11 • 5/8/2022

NOTES

As we go through Philippians 2:1-11, the main points may differ, but the idea of "What humility looks like" should correspond to this lesson.

MAIN POINT

We can live in love and humility even as Christ did.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Share a time when you really needed an attitude adjustment.

What threatens the unity of our churches today?

In the midst of the throes and threats of a dying church, Paul invited the Philippians to live lives that emulate Christ. Paul explained that to cultivate unity within the church, you need humility, love, and self-sacrifice—all of these can be found by taking on Christ's perfect attitude. In this attitude, believers will experience unity and joy.

| WATCH THE SESSION 3 VIDEO.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 2:1-2.

What did Paul mean when he encouraged the Philippians to think the same way as him (v. 2)?

Following Jesus isn't a solo act. We grow in Christ as we live connected to other Christ followers. In these verses, Paul gave us a four-fold motivation for unity among believers. We see these as a series of "if" statements, which we may better understand as "since" or "because" statements. The "if" in these cases refers to certainties, not possibilities.

Why is unity so essential in the church?

Four motivations for Christian unity are encouragement in Christ, the consolation of love, the fellowship with the Spirit, and shared affection and mercy. We have the blessing of being found in Christ and knowing Him. In the midst of suffering, we find encouragement in our relationship with Him. Believers have experienced Christ's love, and this shared experience leads us to love each other—this leads to unity. The Spirit unites us as brothers and sisters (see 1:27), partners with us in the gospel (see John 16:13-15), leads us in service and worship (see Phil. 3:3), and helps in our weaknesses (see Rom. 8:26). Disunity threatened the Philippians congregation, so Paul reminded them of the Spirit-produced fellowship they shared. Finally, Christians share a common experience of being the objects of God's compassion. This tender care should cause us to look out for the interests of others.

Describe a time when you felt in harmony with fellow believers. What factors contributed to the unity?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4.

What are Paul's commands in this passage?

Paul encouraged the Philippians to get their heads on straight and remember their identity and common mission as followers of Jesus Christ. His words likewise encourage us today. In order for the church to experience unity, we must pursue humility. More precisely, we must pursue Christ-like humility.

What are some examples of rivalry within the church today?

The humble person will avoid "rivalry and conceit." Paul wrote earlier about the preachers who were wrongly motivated to "preach Christ out of envy and strife" or to "proclaim Christ out of rivalry" (1:15, 17). Now he told the whole church it was necessary to avoid these attitudes. Every church member should be aware of the presence of rivalry and seek to put it to death immediately.

The word “conceit” is translated as “vainglory” in some Bible versions. It’s an empty glory, a glory that doesn’t exist. People are literally conceited over nothing! Jesus Christ demonstrates the very opposite of this. Nothing is empty about His glory. Paul told the church not just to consider their own interests, but to look out for others’ interests.

Why is humility important in the body of Christ?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11.

Notice how Jesus did not empty Himself by losing His divinity but by taking on the form of a servant. Would someone be willing to try to explain the magnitude of Jesus’ humility?

Want to know what humility and selflessness looks like? Beginning with verse 5, Paul pointed to Jesus as the perfect example of the mindset we need and the humility we should pursue. Philippians 2:5-11 highlights key doctrinal truths and provides a foundation for Christian living—all within the setting of a hymn. The song draws us to both adoration and imitation. The more we behold Jesus’ glory and imitate His character, the more we’ll be unified as a church. This hymn not only teaches us the pattern God gave us to follow, which is Christ; it also reminds us of the power we have through the Spirit to emulate Christ. Christ’s humility is stunning. As Jesus Himself said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

How does experiencing the work of Jesus on our behalf make us humble people?

Why is humility a necessary characteristic for those who follow Christ?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What are some ways you can live a life of humility in your church? What attitudes or expectations are in your heart that you must put aside for the unity and humility of the body of believers?

How can we work together to make our attitude that of Christ Jesus (v. 5)?

What are some ways you can look out for the interests of others in the church this week?

PRAYER

Go before the Lord in humility. Confess and give to Him any hidden pride within your heart. Ask the Lord to help you each day to be more others-oriented. Pray for help to be a more joyful servant. Finally, thank Jesus for being the perfect example of humility and sacrifice.

COMMENTARY

| PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

Paul built his challenge for unity on the reality of Christ within each believer. The phrase encouragement in Christ refers to encouragement that comes from Christian commitment. That Christ lived in the Philippians' hearts was indeed a great blessing for them. The term comfort from love refers to Christ's love for them. Believers are the eternal recipients of God's tender affection not because they deserve love, but because it is God's nature to love. The participation in the Spirit emphasizes the shared nature of the Christian life. The presence of the Holy Spirit makes possible the proper functioning of the body of Christ. With the expression affection and sympathy, Paul pointed to the mercies the Lord had given the believers at Philippi. The Holy Spirit provided rich fellowship among them (v. 1).

In verse 2 Paul shifted from the spiritual blessings the believers enjoyed together to their responsibility to him. The Philippian believers had a heartfelt concern for Paul. He planted the church at Philippi. They watched as he invested his life in their lives. Now he called them to continue what they started.

In contrast to his positive instructions, Paul also detailed for the Philippians what attitudes to avoid in pursuing unity. The word nothing (v. 3) emphasized Paul's conviction that rivalry or conceit should not taint any aspect of the church's life. The term rivalry implies a selfish ambition that causes disputes and divisions. The sense is that the problems facing the Philippians caused members to choose sides. Paul saw schisms in the church as contrary to the testimony of Christ and dishonoring to God's name. Also the word conceit describes what is vainglorious or groundless pride. The cornerstone of Christian faith is that humans are powerless to save themselves and must trust Christ to provide all that is necessary for salvation. Thus the believer has no basis for arrogance toward others. Furthermore, arrogance strikes at the heart of Christian unity, spoiling the testimony of the faithful.

To avoid such a destructive mind-set, Paul directed the believers to consider fellow Christians and their needs as more important than their own interests and concerns (v. 4). The church's antidote for selfishness and divisions is an abiding concern for the welfare of others. Paul called

the believers to take careful note of the concerns others hold. Such willing consideration of others erases the gaps between individuals and builds a strong unity.

The apostle then gave the Philippians a vivid illustration of the perspective he intended them to have. He showed them Christ. Verses 5 through 8 paint a poignant picture of the humility Christ revealed in His incarnation and His substitutionary death. Paul urged them to exchange their selfish motives for the Savior's attitude. While Christ has all cause for glorying, being God Himself, He willingly surrendered Himself for the needs of others. The Son of God did not seek His own advantage, that is, He refused to ignore others' needs. The passage states that Jesus Christ made himself nothing. The result was that the Savior set aside His glory to minister grace and mercy to those who are most undeserving of such blessings. Assuming the form of a slave, the Lord placed Himself under the authority of His Father. The focus of the Son was to please the Father, and in doing so He sacrificed Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross.