



DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

SERIES: THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES • SERVING •
PHILIPPIANS 2:1-30 • 7/30/2023

MAIN POINT

In learning how to serve in God's kingdom, we look to Jesus for example and inspiration.

INTRODUCTION

In your life, whom have you looked up to the most? What did you learn from this person's example?

Why do you think we find people's good examples so inspirational and encouraging?

Why might we see a good example in someone but choose not to follow it?

Some people look up to their parents and intend to follow their example in life, work, parenting, and hobbies; other people choose to run from the example of the parents, saying, “I’ll never do that.” We can find inspirational examples in pop culture figures or even our peers. In some cases, we can see the most powerful displays of strength in families and children enduring diseases and their treatments. We long to see examples of what is good and right, and according to Philippians 2, we find the greatest example of this in Jesus Christ. And what’s more, by following in His steps we are to be examples for others—we should be children of God who “shine like stars in the world” (Phil. 2:15).

UNDERSTANDING

READ PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4.

Paul begins this chapter with a call to unity of mind and heart among Christians.

How does Paul say this unity among one another should be achieved? What one word or phrase sums up what Paul is driving at here?

When you consider the word “humility,” what are your first thoughts?

In your opinion, what is the prevailing idea in our culture regarding humility?

People often understand humility as a sign of weakness or passivity. Our culture (not to mention our own hearts) conditions us to be selfish and prideful, seeking our own desires even at the expense of others. But in the kingdom of God, humility is to mark

its citizens. Far from being weak and passive, humility is actually a great show of strength and love.

READ PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11.

How did Jesus Christ show humility in His life on earth?

How does His example challenge your view or the culture's view of what humility means?

Jesus, being the Son of God, is equal with God. But for the sake of disobedient sinners, Jesus set aside His rights as God to take on the likeness of humanity and humble Himself, even to the point of dying on a cross, taking upon Himself the punishment for our sins. Who does that? Who chooses not to claim what he has coming to him? Who chooses to bear someone else's punishment when she did nothing wrong? You might find a rare example here or there of these things, but the high point of humility is found in the divine Son of God dying for sinful man. This is not passive weakness, but active strength. We must point out that true to God's nature, because Jesus humbled Himself in obedience, He is exalted as our Savior and Lord—for "whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matt. 23:12).

In light of this call to make Christ's attitude of humility our own, Paul goes on to write of the examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus, two of his brothers and coworkers in the faith.

READ PHILIPPIANS 2:19-24.

How do we see Timothy having the attitude of Christ Jesus?

What is the connection between caring about the interests of others and caring about the interests of Jesus Christ?

Timothy was a servant and a son to Paul, a partner in the gospel ministry to make Jesus known so that sinners would believe in Him and be saved from their sin. Contrary to the natural bent of us all to seek our own interests and desires, Timothy followed Jesus' example to care about the interests of others. We see this in his service to Paul with all the physical hardships that came throughout his missions and in his proven character, which must have involved a heart set on putting other people's needs before his own.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 2:25-30.

How do we see Epaphroditus having the attitude of Christ Jesus?

Epaphroditus was also a servant to Paul, sent on behalf of the Philippian church. In his mission of the work of Christ, he came close to death. He risked his life for the ministry, following closely in the steps of Jesus Christ who gave His life for the sake of sinners to be saved.

APPLICATION

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

What are some ways we can follow the example of Jesus and humble ourselves for the sake of others in our church? For those outside of our church who need Jesus?

How can our group encourage one another as we strive to walk in humility, caring for the interests of others?

How might our actions of faithful humility open doors for sharing the good news about Jesus, and how can we seize those opportunities?

PRAYER

Father, thank You for the example and inspiration of Jesus Christ, who humbled Himself to die on the cross to save us from our sins. Help us to follow in His footsteps, in the power of the Holy Spirit, as we strive to work out our salvation and shine like stars in this dark world.

COMMENTARY

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-30

2:1-2. Four if statements in this verse form the basis of Paul's appeal. These phrases express conditions that are assumed for the sake of argument. Both Paul and his readers will be inclined to believe the truth of these conditions. Fulfill my joy, not "make Paul happy," reminded them that their steadfastness completed God's call on his life. Four actions on the Philippians' part explain what Paul meant.

2:3-4. These four habitual actions reveal themselves collectively through another four attributes. Rivalry or conceit recalls the problem Paul condemned (1:15,17). Humility, the antidote for wrong attitudes, results in considering others as more important. Additionally, humility considers the interests of others. Proper

relationships include the contrast “not only but also.” Personal responsibilities demand consideration, but the concerns of others are equally important.

2:5-11. This is one of the most difficult passages in the Bible, prompting various theories attempting to describe what Jesus gave up in coming to earth. The text illustrates Christian humility. Because of its rhythmic character, it is often considered an early hymn, including two stanzas—verses 6-8 (on Christian humility) and verses 9-11 (on Jesus’ ascension).

2:5. The phrase make your own attitude (“value”; cp. v. 2) commands the church to value Christ’s character as a model.

2:6. The key thought of this verse is that Jesus did not consider (cp. v. 3) His own interests, thus allowing them to dominate His actions. Existing (lit “existing originally”) should be “although existing” since it presents an apparent obstacle for Jesus to overcome in becoming human. Form suggests His complete deity. Equality with God indicates His coequality with God and separate personality (the second person of the Trinity). To be used for His own advantage is capable of two connotations. It can mean “to grasp” (steal), but because of Jesus’ deity it probably means “to clutch” (hang on to at all costs).

2:7-8. The phrase He emptied is much debated. Theologians ponder what Jesus emptied Himself of. It is certain that He did not divest Himself of deity or its attributes. Two statements accompany the verb. First, by assuming the form of a slave indicates that God the Son became a servant. “Form” (cp. v. 6) indicates true servanthood, as does the word “slave.” Second, the likeness of men explains both emptying and servanthood. “Likeness” differs from “form” (vv. 6-7). Two statements explain the second verb humbled (cp. v. 3). First, when He had come as a man in His external form provides the time of His humility. “External form” contrasts with the form of God (v. 6). Jesus was more than human, though He came to earth in the form of a man. Second, Jesus’ humility came through becoming obedient. Servants or slaves obey; Jesus obeyed God, even to the point of dying on a cross.

2:9-11. God is described as acting in these verses. Again, two verbs organize the thought. First, God highly exalted Him (“super-exalted,” occurring only here) suggests that God gave Jesus a new position, although some take it as superlative (“to the highest”). Second, God gave Him the name. This name that is above every name is Lord (v. 11). Every knee will bow and every tongue should confess state one

result of God's exaltation (vv. 10–11). The posture and the confession imply submissive reverence. "Every" includes spatial dimensions: heaven... earth, and under the earth. Together they indicate the living and the dead (blessed and condemned). All bring glory to God. This teaches that Jesus mediates between God and humans. He is the focus of worship (Lord) and the administrator of God's will on earth.

2:12–18. Three applications follow in this section: practical Christianity (vv. 12–13), positive steadfastness (vv. 14–16), and personal joy (vv. 17–18).

2:12–13. Obedience is directed to God, not Paul, who hoped his potential death would not dampen Christian enthusiasm. Work out means to apply salvation, not to earn it. Fear and trembling means to have proper respect in response to God's blessing. True obedience comes from reverence, not fright. God... is working provides the deeper incentive: Christians are recipients of God's initiatives of motivation and empowerment.

2:14–16. Grumbling and arguing come from selfishness and vainglory (1:15,17; cp. Dt 32:5). Blameless (complete Christian character) and pure (inoffensive living; cp. 1:10) introduce metaphors. First, believers are to be morally faultless in a world crooked and perverted by its failure to understand the word of God. Believers are straight models for distorted lives. Second, they are to shine like stars whose brilliance contrasts with the darkened world.

2:17–18. Drink offering recalls the OT sacrificial system. Paul was the substance being poured out for these believers. Sacrifice is the offering; service performed the ceremony. All of this brought Paul—and the Philippian believers—joy.

2:19–30. Paul in this section expressed his hope to visit some day, but he planned to send Timothy and Epaphroditus to the Philippians immediately.

2:19–24. Encouraged (lit "good souled") means "cheered." Like-minded (lit "equal souled") means "soul mate or partner" in service. Paul characterized Timothy three ways: he genuinely cared for their interests (cp. vv. 1–4); he valued the things of Jesus Christ and others; and he had proven character (lit "tested by fire"), refined in the demands of the gospel ministry.

2:25–30. Epaphroditus shared Paul's ministry (brother, coworker, and fellow soldier) and represented the church. Messenger (lit "apostle") and minister (lit "religious

servant”) indicate that the church expected Epaphroditus to care for Paul in Rome. Traveling to Rome, Epaphroditus suffered a near-fatal illness. He felt he had failed Paul and the church. The words welcome him (“appropriately”) and hold... him in honor reveal that Epaphroditus did not fail. He gave his best for the work of Christ. The words what was lacking refer to the churches’ care for Paul. Epaphroditus took it upon himself to make up that lack.