

Philippians

Devote All to Christ

Focal Verses: Philippians 2:1-11¹

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will: **ANALYZE** the work of Christ in Philippians 2:1–11; **FOLLOW** Christ’s example of humility and sacrifice; and **GROW** in our ability to place the needs of others before our own.

In Focus

Mr. Jefferies was one of the most popular people in the barbershop. Every evening, the silver-haired, slightly balding man dressed in a blue maintenance shirt came by the shop to sweep up the hair. Whenever Mr. Jefferies was around, he offered commentary about everything from politics to sports. His words were mixed wisdom and wit.

One day, Mr. Jefferies approached Aaron while he was waiting on his barber. “Young man, you’re mighty dapper—what line of business are you in?”

“I’m in commercial real estate,” Aaron answered. “Are you familiar with it?”

“I know a little something, but that was back in the day,” Mr. Jefferies explained.

“Gentrification has taken over now, so I’m sure things have changed.”

From that moment, Aaron and Mr. Jefferies became barbershop buddies. Aaron wondered why such a learned man was sweeping up around a barbershop.

“Andre, why does Mr. Jefferies work here?” Aaron asked his barber Andre. “Are you for real, Aaron? You don’t know who Mr. Jefferies is?”

Aaron was puzzled. “Mr. Jefferies owns this barbershop and 10 other buildings in the city,” Andre said. “Mr. Jefferies is a multimillionaire. He cleans up just to stay connected to the community.”

Mr. Jefferies reminds us of Christ’s example of humility. What helps you to stay humble before God and others?

¹ Excerpt From Precepts for Living® Dr. Vince L., Bantu

Keep In Mind

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem the other better than himself. (Philippians 2:3 KJV)

Lesson Text

Philippians 2:1-11

1 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tenderness and mercies,

2 fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord and of one mind.

3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem the other better than himself.

4 Look not every man to his own things, but every man also to the things of others.

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,

6 who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God,

7 but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.

8 And being found in the fashion of a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death—even the death of the cross.

9 Therefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven and things on earth and things under the earth,

11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The People, Places and Times

Philippi: It was a Roman colony in Macedonia. The people of Philippi were proud of their status as Roman citizens, promoting Latin as their official language and taking advantage of their tax-free status. Many of the social and governmental institutions of Philippi were modeled after those in Rome. The apostle Paul preached the Gospel to the city of Philippi on his second missionary journey. One of Paul's first converts in the area was a prominent Philippian businesswoman named Lydia. She welcomed Paul and his entourage into her home, which was one of the first house churches in Philippi.

What places or cultures do we see as models in our community building?"

Background

While Philippians 2 begins a new section in Paul's letter, Paul continues to expound upon themes considered in his opening. Paul turns his attention to issues affecting the Philippian community: their unity and humility. As Philippians 1 ends with a confession of what God accomplished through Christ for believers resulting in a charge to suffer joyfully like the imprisoned Paul, Philippians 2 explains how the Philippians should do this. Paul reminds them of what they have entered as a Christian community and what they have received because of Christ's sacrifice. Delivering what scholars consider "the Philippian hymn," Paul lifts the example of Jesus, drawing on the Christological doctrines of Christ's preexistence, His divinity and humanity, His subjection and obedience to the Father, His suffering on the Cross, and His resurrection to accomplish salvation for all humankind. Paul uses Christ's humility as exhibited in His earthly ministry as a model for believers to embrace and embody as individuals for the benefit and unity of the entire community."

How does knowing what Christ did for the church affect how we act in the church

In Depth

1. Community is Created Through Humility (Philippians 2:1-4): Paul begins his call to unity through humility by reminding the Philippians of what they have received in Christ. He lists four characteristics of the Christian community: encouragement in Christ; consolation in love; fellowship in the Spirit; and compassion and tenderness (2:1, NLT). Paul affirms these characteristics as the foundation of the Philippian community and exhorts them to maintain these to achieve unification. He encourages them to agree wholeheartedly with each other, by "loving one another," and "working together with one mind and one purpose" (2:2, NLT).

To fulfill these commands, the community must exhibit the virtue of humility by considering others "better than themselves" (2:3). While Paul is calling the Philippians to unity, he is not calling for uniformity. Paul values the variety of ideas and opinions within the community but recognizes that diversity can cause division. Paul calls for unity in diversity by way of humility. Individuals can and should maintain their individuality and diversity of thought but must be careful to avoid selfishness and personal pride that will destroy unity. Paul encourages them to place the interests of others above individual "self-interests within the community. Through this type of demonstrated humility on a personal level, unity will be achieved among the Philippians on the communal level.

What does humility look like in diversity?

2. Christ is the Model of Humility (vv. 5–11) Paul urges the Philippians to follow the example of humility found in Christ's ministry. Through "the Philippian hymn" (vv. 5–11), Paul highlights Christ's humility by "

“drawing specific attention to His servant’s nature. He did not use His divine status for His own personal gain or for special privileges, but to benefit others. While Christ never gave up His divine nature, He “emptied himself,” or laid it aside, becoming human so that He could reach humans. Christ’s humility went to the depths of the human experience by accepting and subjecting Himself to the most degrading form of capital punishment during the time of His earthly ministry—Roman crucifixion.

As Christ was willing to go to the depths of human humiliation for the benefit of others, the Philippians are called do to the same. Paul urged them to the same type of radical obedience and self-sacrifice that Christ modeled for the world by abandoning self-interest, identifying with the needs of others, and embracing the depths of human suffering for the benefit of others. Christ’s incarnation—suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection—is the ultimate example of humility and is the standard for living in Christian community among the Philippians.

How can you “empty yourself” like Christ did?

Liberating Lesson

Paul uses the language of “slave” and “servant” to describe the humility that Christ modeled for believers to embody, this has the potential to take on different meanings considering the African and African American experiences. Modern-day believers should avoid harmful interpretations of this text which would suggest we are called to ***purposeless suffering*** which does not affirm or benefit humanity. Humility’s goal is to lift others out of sin and suffering, not to humiliate them or us needlessly. Through humility, we are to look for those who are suffering and place their needs and interests above ours. When we do this, we fulfill the Christian mandate of humility by serving others and lifting ourselves together to God through Christ.²

Application for Activation

Reflect on your relationships with God, yourself, your faith community, and your larger community. Write in your journal about your experiences to see how you already exhibit Christ’s humility and how you can embody humility more fully. Ask a trusted friend where he or she sees humility at work in your life. Ask God to show you where you can serve more deeply and purposefully. What aspects of humility do you need to develop? Where is God calling for your service in your family, faith community, and greater community? How can you deepen and expand your service in the world?

Closing Prayer

² Excerpt From Precepts for Living® Dr. Vince L., Bantu

Week of 09 June 2024

Daily Bible Readings



Monday – – Matthew:15-17

Tuesday – Matthew: 18-19

Wednesday – Matthew:20-21

Thursday – Matthew:22-23

Friday – Matthew:24-25

Saturday – Matthew:26

Sunday – Matthew:27-28