

NEXT STEP DISCIPLESHIP

"STEP #1: BELONG"

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

This Week's Core Competency

Biblical Community – I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world. Acts 2:44-47, *All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

People disagree; it happens. We get crosswise with others in community—sometimes over principle, mostly over preference. But when we do, the kaffuffle that results and often spreads should not be mistaken for a mark of community. It's not; it's an aberration. In Philippians 2:1 Paul describes the norms of Christian community in a series of "if" statements that should really be read as assertions. In this verse the apostle asserts that people who are united to Christ and to each other in community receive encouragement from one another, are comforted by their mutual love, benefit from sharing with each other, and show, as well as are shown, tenderness and compassion. These are the marks of Christian community, rooted in humility reflected in a desire to serve rather than be served.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

– Philippians 2:5

Most of these marks can either be seen directly or inferred indirectly from the description of the early Christian community in Acts 4:32-36. About it Luke writes, "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet."

Nevertheless, disputes occur that create disturbances even in the best of Christian communities. It happened in Antioch. Paul and Barnabas disputed whether to take John Mark with them on their second missionary journey. He had deserted them on their first trip, and Paul wanted nothing more to do with him. The disagreement between them was so sharp that they resolved it by parting company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus; Paul chose Silas and retraced his earlier steps through Syria and Cilicia (Ac 15:37-41). It happened in Philippi. There were those who preached Christ out of selfish ambition, hoping to stir up trouble for Paul (1:17). And there were two women, two close associates of the apostle, Euodia and Syntyche, whose very public disagreement had affected the entire congregation (4:2). These

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women were neither new nor carnal Christians. Quite the opposite, they were women who had in Paul's words, "contended by my side in the cause of the gospel" (v. 3), and yet they disagreed vehemently over something. We would like to believe it was over some spiritual principle rather than some personal preference, but who knows? Whatever, Paul pled with the two of them to resolve their dispute because their situation with its consequences was not the norm of Christian community. It was an aberration, an aberration to be corrected by the example of Jesus.

To prevent the introduction of such disturbances into Christian community or to eliminate them once they are introduced, Paul says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider other better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interest of others." And then he appeals to the example of Jesus who did just that.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Philippians 2:1-11

1 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God
something to be grasped,

7 but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,

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

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

Cf., another translation

1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God
something to be used to his own advantage;

7 rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,

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

11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ
is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father. (NIV 2011)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

* Put asterisks before "if" and "then" in vv. 1, 2.

* Circle "like-minded" in v. 2, "humility" in v. 3, "very nature" in vv. 6, 7, "made himself nothing" in v. 7, "humbled himself" in v. 8, "exalted him" in v. 9, and "name" in vv. 9, 10.

* Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 3, 4, 7.

* Box "the same as" indicating *comparison* in v. 5.

* Underline the words "very nature God" and "equality with God" in v. 6.

* Circle the word "even" used to intensify the death Jesus died in v. 8.

* Box "that" indicating *purpose* in v. 10.

* Draw a line from the words "the name" in v. 9 to the word "Lord" in v. 11.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Describe norms of Christian community mentioned in verse 1.
2. List the traits of *like-mindedness* Paul wanted to see in the Philippians to make his joy complete.
3. Explain the *contrast* in verse 3.
4. Give an example of each side of the *contrast* in verse 4.
5. Put the attitude of Christ in your own words.
6. Elaborate on the *contrast* in verse 6.
7. According to verse 7 Christ "emptied himself." Of what?
8. According to verse 8 Christ "humbled himself." How so?
9. What *purpose* did God have for giving Jesus the "name" Lord?
10. **Discussion:** What do you consider most remarkable about the example of Christ Jesus?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Conflict introduces disturbance into Christian community (cf., Php 4:2). The normative experience of community marked by encouragement, love, fellowship, tenderness and compassion is undermined when members act out of selfish ambition and vain conceit, looking out only for their own interests and not the interests of others. The preventative and corrective for all such behavior involves following the example of Christ who humbled himself for the sake of sinners.

In Philippians 2:1-11, Paul exhorts his readers to "make his joy complete by being like-minded" (v. 2). He prefaces his exhortation with a list of four incentives to encourage the fulfillment of his desire. They are expressed in conditional "if" clauses, but the conditions are assumed to be true. They are: 1) because they find encouragement in their union with Christ, 2) because they take comfort in love, i.e., that of Christ and of other believers, 3) because they enjoy fellowship, with and produced by the Spirit, and 4) because they benefit from the mutual displays of tenderness and compassion among them.

Once stated, the apostle goes on to elaborate on his exhortation in four participial phrases (vv. 2b-4): "having the same love" (v. 2), "minding the same oneness of soul" (v. 2), "esteeming one another" (v. 3), "considering the interests of others" (v. 4). One commentator explains: "First, they should be possessing a mutual love. Inasmuch as it is assumed that all were believers indwelt by the same Spirit (2:1), the love that is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22) ought to be demonstrated in every life. Second, they should be setting their minds on unity with oneness of soul. This phrase repeats the thought appearing earlier in the verse and reinforces the conclusion that there was a problem of disharmony within the congregation. It may be unfair to center the problem on Euodia and Syntyche (4:2), but they were at least involved. Third, they should avoid selfish ambition and conceit and consider others above themselves. The Christian attitude should reveal itself in 'humility' (*te tapeinophrosune*). This concept was not highly regarded in Greek literature. Grundmann observes that the Greek concept of a free man led to contempt for any sort of subjection, whereas the Bible proposes that we should be controlled by God and thus assumes that to subject ourselves to God is praiseworthy (Walter Grundmann, *Tapeinos*, et al., TDNT, 8:11, 12) . . . Fourth, they should be looking not only to their own interests but also to those of others. The self-centeredness that considers only one's own rights, plans, and interests must be replaced by a broader

outlook that includes the interests of one's fellows" (Homer A. Kent, Jr., "Philippians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 11:121-22).

Their example in all this is Christ (vv. 5-11), "who made himself nothing" (v. 7) and "humbled himself" (v. 8). Verses 5-6 pertain to his *preincarnate* status, verses 7-8 pertain to his *incarnate* status, and "but" indicates the *contrast* between the two. Two expressions are particularly important with respect to Christ's preincarnate status or pre-existence: "in very nature God" (Gk *morphe*) and "something to be grasped" (Gk *harpagmon*). "The term *morphe* denotes the outward manifestation that corresponds to the essence, in contrast to the noun *schema* (2:7), which refers to the outward appearance, which may be temporary" and "the participle *hyparchon* ('being' [NIV], in the sense of 'existing') is in the present tense and states Christ's continuing condition" (123). These two expressions make two assertions about the preincarnate Christ: 1) He existed in the form of God, and 2) he did not regard his equality with God as something to be held onto "in the sense of 'taking advantage of it'" (Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT, 207).

Two expressions are particularly important with respect to Christ's incarnate status: "made himself nothing" (Gk. *ekenosen*) and "in human likeness" (Gk. *homoiomati*). Regarding the first, one commentator explains: "Instead of holding onto His former manner of existence, our Lord 'emptied Himself' (NASB), 'made himself nothing' (NIV), or 'laid aside His privileges' (NASB margin, Gr. *ekenosen*). From this Greek word we get the term 'kenosis,' which refers to the doctrine of Christ limiting Himself when He became a man. The 'kenosis' theory in theology deals with this subject" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Philippians," 2016 ed., 35, www.soniclight.com).

And although the text does not directly state that Christ emptied himself "of something," such would be the natural implication of the verb used. But if Christ did not empty himself of his deity, *and he did not*, of what did he empty himself? The answer must be inferred from the text, which indicates the emptying entailed taking the form (*morphe*) of a "servant" (Gr. *doulou*, "slave"), suggesting that Christ laid aside his divine glory and the free exercise of his divine attributes. Another commentator writes: "We may say; then, that the eternal Son, existing in the form of God—robed with the glory of Deity in its external manifestation, possessing and exercising all the incommunicable functions of the true God—counted not this

being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped but with loving condescension emptied Himself, taking servant-form; and as a result of this one act His whole earthly life became the life of a bond-servant, in which he does nothing, speaks nothing, knows nothing by Himself; but all is under the power and direction of the Father through the Holy Spirit" (Alva J. McClain, "The Doctrine of the Kenosis in Philippians 2:5-8," *Grace Journal* 8 [spring 1967]: 9).

Regarding the second, it may be said that "the word 'likeness' (*homoiomati*) does not bear the connotation of exactness as does *eikon*, or of intrinsic form as does *morphe*. It stresses similarity but leaves room for differences. Thus Paul implies that even though Christ became a genuine man, there were certain respects in which he was not absolutely like other men. (He may have had in mind the unique union of the divine and human natures or the absence of a sinful nature" (Kent, 124).

"Therefore" in verse 9 indicates *result*; because Christ "made himself nothing" and "humbled himself," Paul says, God super-exalted (*hyperypsosen*) him, which no doubt refers to the resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Jesus following his humiliation. And he bestowed on him a name, which

likely refers to him being called "Lord." In the words of one commentator, "Most believe that the bestowing on him of the name 'Lord,' as the equivalent of Yahweh, is how Jesus has been exalted to the highest place . . . In favor of it of it is the second part of the result clause (v. 11), that every tongue will confess that 'the Lord is Jesus Christ'" (Fee, 222).

By way of summary, on the example of Christ, one author writes, "The incarnation of Christ Jesus represents the antithesis of the human drive to dominate. Although he had access to all the privilege and power to which his identity with God entitled him, and although he could have exploited that privilege and power to dominate his creatures, Jesus considered his deity an opportunity for service and obedience. His deity became a matter not of getting but of giving, not of being served but of serving, not of dominance but of obedience. The difficult part of all this for the twentieth-century believer is that Paul did not leave his description of Christ's astounding refusal to dominate in the realm of abstract speculation. Instead, he advised the church at Philippi, and through them the church of today, to follow Christ's example" (Frank Thielman, *The NIV Application Commentary: Philippians*, 129).

The Message of the Passage

Manifest the attitude of Christ by humbly looking out not only for your own interests but also for the interests of others, considering them better than yourself, thereby preserving the experience of Christian community for everyone.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following living questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 1-4 Verses 1-4 constitute one 58-word-long sentence in the Greek text that contains just one basic command, "make my joy complete."
- v. 1 **if** The word implies doubt in English, but this Greek construction assumes an affirmative response, which explains the following translation: "Your life in Christ makes you strong, and his love comforts you. You have fellowship with the Spirit, and you have kindness and compassion for one another. I urge you then . . ." (TEV). "They should be translated 'assuming . . . then make my joy complete'" (Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, NAC, 93); or perhaps "since there is . . ." (Fee, 177).
- v. 1 **united with Christ** Lit., "in Christ." Cf., "if there is any encouragement in Christ" (ESV, the NET Bible). Paul assumes his Christian readers derive encouragement from one another or perhaps directly from Christ as a result of their relationship to him.
- v. 1 **from his love** Lit., "comfort of love." The NIV takes this (correctly according to Melick, 93) as a reference to comfort from Christ's love for his people (cf., "and his love comforts you," TEV). Other translations leave it ambiguous (NKJV, NASB, NRSV, the NET Bible). More likely, it refers to comfort they receive from one another as the outworking of God's love in their hearts (see Thielman, 96).
- v. 1 **with the Spirit** Lit., "of the Spirit." The phrase may refer to the Spirit as *object* (i.e., fellowship with the Spirit) or more likely, to the Spirit as *subject* (i.e., fellowship with others in the body of Christ that comes from the Spirit)—just as encouragement comes from Christ and comfort comes from love. Some commentators take it both ways, "any fellowship with the Holy Ghost and mutual fellowship in the Spirit" (Jac. J. Muller, *The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians*, NICNT, 73; cf., Kent, 121).
- v. 1 **tenderness and** The Spirit not only produces fellowship in the body of Christ, but he also produces within each member tenderness and compassion for other members of God's family (see Thielman, 97).
- v. 2 **being like-minded** Lit., "minding the same thing." "The word does not mean 'to think' in the sense of 'cogitate'; rather it carries the nuance of 'setting one's mind on,' thus having a certain disposition toward something (e.g., life, values, people) or a certain way of looking at things, thus 'mind set'" (Fee, 185).
- v. 2 **being one in** Lit., "together in soul," or "fellow souled." "Not only does he want their minds set on the same thing, but he wants them to do so with their whole being. This adjective harks back to 'as one soul/person,' which modifies 'contending side by side for the faith of the gospel' in 1:27" (Fee, 186).
- v. 3 **selfish ambition** Cf., 1:17. Although Paul's Greek sentence runs on, verse 3 begins a new sentence in most English translations. The term refers to "a greedy attempt to gain the upper hand through underhanded tactics" (Thielman, 97).
- v. 3 **humility** The compound words in this Greek word group "first occur in secular literature in the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. (Josephus, Plutarch, Epictetus), always with a depreciatory connotation: e.g., to think poorly, ill; to be ill-disposed, faint-hearted, or weakly; to have a servile mind" (DNTT, s.v., *tapeinos*, 2:259). Although humility was not highly regarded in the Greek world, Jesus revealed it to be a virtue. The sense Paul had in mind in v. 3 is inferred from the contrasts in the preceding and following verses.
- v. 6 **very nature** "Who, although he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men" (NASB). "The word 'form' means an outward appearance consistent with what is true. The form perfectly expresses the inner reality" (Melick, 101, 102).
- v. 7 **made . . . nothing** Lit., "emptied himself" (NASB). Of what Jesus "emptied himself" the text does not say. However, it implies that the emptying (*kenosis*) refers to the addition of humanity rather than the subtraction of divinity. In other words, as a human being, Christ gave up the appearance of deity and the independent exercise of his divine attributes without giving up being in "very nature God."
- v. 8 **appearance** "The primary sense of the word has to do not with the essential quality of something, but with its externals, that which makes it recognizable. Thus, having said that Christ came in the 'likeness' of human beings (v. 7b), Paul now moves the narrative on to its next point, by saying he 'appeared' in a way that was clearly recognizable as human. Together the two phrases accent the reality of his humanity, just as the first two phrases in the preceding sentence accent his deity" (Fee, 215).
- v. 9 **highest place** "God has 'highly exalted' Christ, meaning exalted him to the highest possible degree" (221).
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Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

An article on *churchleaders.com* (December 15, 2016) caught my attention. The author stated, "The statistics are jaw-droppingly horrific: 70 percent of youth stop attending church when they graduate from high school. Nearly a decade later, about half return to church." Only half return to church. As a parent of teens that statistic is alarming to me. The article listed several reasons why this trend may be occurring. While his points are valid, I think a primary reason kids are leaving church as young adults is that they never learned to belong. To keep our kids connected to Christ and His church we need to teach them to be connected. As parents we have the unique responsibility to live an authentic faith in front of our kids. We need to teach them on a consistent basis what it looks like to be a genuine Christ-follower. We need to teach them to own their faith, to know what they believe and have a personal relationship with Jesus. Next, our kids need to know the value of belonging to the church. I'm not talking about a location but people. They need to see us living in community with one another, using our gifts to bring glory to God and further His Kingdom. I am praying for you in this new year as you train your kids to have an authentic faith and a love for God's people that will carry them into adulthood.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Php 2:1-11

1. How does Paul say his joy would be complete (v. 2)?
2. Whose interests should we be most concerned with?
3. In what way did Jesus show humility?

What Do You Think

1. What does it mean to be humble?
2. Why is humility important in our relationships?

What R U Going To Do

Make a list of the top 5 things you love about church. Ask each member of your family to do the same. Are there similar things on your lists? Bring your list to church for 3 extra tokens.

Core Comp

Biblical Community – I spend time with other Christians to help with God's work.

Memory Verse

Philippians 2:13 - *For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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