



PHILIPPIANS

GROWING IN CHRIST

Series: Philippians: Growing in Christ

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Title: Jesus-Style Humility

Hey guys, good morning! Before we get started, I'd like to dedicate our time in God's Word today to the Lord.

PRAYER

Some of you might not know this, but we're thick into the NBA Finals. Boston and Golden State are tied 2:2. The first team to win 4 games in the series goes home the champs. While I don't really follow the NBA Finals much anymore, I always have fond memories of this season of the year because it reminds me of watching the '96 and '97 Chicago Bulls compete for the championship trophy. It's a nostalgic time remembering watching some of history's greatest basketball.

As you might be able to tell, I'm a bit tall. Actually, the camera tripod in the back of the room for our online service has three settings, Pastor Rashard, Pastor Spence, and Jake!

I come from a family with tall boys. My dad stands the shortest at 6'1" and his three boys are all taller than him. Growing up, basketball was our family sport. Many of my childhood and adolescent memories are from being at basketball games cheering to the point of losing my voice for my older brother as he broke our small high school's scoring record. Or, when it was my time to play, training before school in the gym as an 8th grader trying to dunk at a younger age than my older brother did. And for the record, I did it!

Well, whether you like basketball or not, something I think we can all appreciate about basketball and, most sports for that matter, is that there are different styles of playing¹. Whether it's a team style or a player style, there's different ways to achieve victory. Now, if you know a lot about basketball, you know that even different regions have different styles of play. Being from the great state of Illinois, nestled in the middle of the Midwest, I can assure you that just as there's nothing quite like Texas High School Football, there's nothing quite like Midwest High School basketball. Bottom line, there are many styles of playing basketball. Whether you drive the lane and slam dunk or you move the ball around until you get an open 3

¹ <https://hawkeyesports.com/mens-basketball-style-of-play/>



pointer, you can win with any approach. At the end of the game, the team with the most points wins. The specific style doesn't determine victory or success. There's no RIGHT style - except Midwest style! :)

But not everything is like this. Sometimes style matters the most.

Take writing for example. I'm old-fashioned and I like to write handwritten notes. I appreciate getting them and I love giving them. But I can assure you that when I'm drafting an email to send to the members of Mercy about our bylaws, I write in a different style than I do when I'm writing a note to my 9-year-old daughter, Bailey, on Valentine's Day. Any good author takes into account the appropriate style of writing based on the work they're producing. Whether they're writing a song, a biography, a medical journal essay, or a sci-fi novel, style matters.

In today's passage, we're picking up in Philippians chapter 2. We're tuning into Paul's letter to the church in the city of Philippi written from a Roman prison. We're going to zoom in on Paul's exhortation to the church regarding unity. Now last week, we learned about Paul's call to unity as a means of living a life worthy of the gospel of Christ. We saw how the words about *standing firm* in one accord and *contending* together were in reference to the Roman phalanx where shields and spears united together for protection and attack in battle.

Well in today's passage, Paul continues to harp on the importance of unity in the life that's worthy of the gospel of Christ. But instead of talking about unity in battle against outside forces, he's going to talk about the unity that is needed in the battles emerging from INSIDE the church. For us church, certainly persecution, the deception of secularism, and the success of commonly worshiped idols like money, sex, power, or comfort will stand against the gospel moving forward. But like Paul's readers, there's another threat against the gospel advancing through our church, and the way to stand up against this threat is what we'll dig into today.

Here's what we're going to see today in these 18 verses- when the church is unified the RIGHT way, her testimony will be vast, far reaching, and effective. We're going to see that the only way we can really shine in our dark world is if we become like Jesus. We're going to see that we have to **be like Jesus to shine like Jesus**

As we hone in again on Paul's call to unity, we're going to look at humility as a means to this unity. *But, unlike basketball, where specific style doesn't matter for victory, style will matter most in this pursuit.*

We're going to go through verses 1-18, and I hope to show you that *Jesus-style humility is the only way to achieve true unity inside the church and that this true unity is the best way to achieve effective testimony outside the church.*



(SUMMARY) There's going to be several moves in our text today. First, Paul's going to start with the foundation for unity, then he'll appeal to the church to be unified, then he'll give an example of how this unity can become a reality, and he'll finish with a picture of the effect of this unity on the world around us.

So, let's get into the text.

As Pastor Spence always asks, ARE YOU READY?

Starting in verse 1.

2:1 If, then, there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

Alright, so Paul starts off with some rhetorical questions. He's being a bit dramatic here. It's like he's saying, "If you've benefited at all from following Jesus..." Did you catch that? His questions

- Do you have any encouragement from being saved?
- Is there any consolation from being loved?
- Do you have any fellowship with the Spirit?
- Do you have any affection and mercy towards others?

The resounding rhetorical answer to these questions is, "YES!". Of course, they did.

Now remember, Paul had a special affection for the Philippian church and vice versa. They loved Paul. So, after Paul asks these questions, he appeals to this mutual love that they share and says, "make my joy complete" by being unified. It's like he's saying, "Have you received any benefit from following Jesus? Yes, you say. Well then make me happy by getting along and being unified in the same love, spirit, and purpose."

There's a ton in even just these two verses. But, instead of just saying "BE UNIFIED," Paul, like any good shepherd, is going to unpack for them HOW they can find unity. Before we get into that though, I want to draw your attention to something that's foundational to understanding this passage.

True unity only comes from being IN CHRIST

Did you catch the basis for his whole appeal? Look at verse 1.

"If then, there is any encouragement in Christ"

Paul's writing here to believers. He's calling them to unity with each other based on the reality that they have unity with Christ. The basis for getting along, being unified in love, spirit, and purpose is being RIGHT before God.

There are all kinds of failing attempts to create "unity" in our world. The reason I call them failing is because they're typically



sectarian in nature. In God's kingdom though, uniformity isn't unity. Whether it's a sports team, a Facebook group, a co-op farm, a political party, a private school, a law reform, a gender identity, or any other number of things we chase after to find unity in community, the only lasting unity that's actually worth chasing, comes from being IN CHRIST. This is the kind of unity that provides a simultaneous open invitation to outsiders while actively caring for the needs of the people inside. Being IN CHRIST is the only way we'll really experience unity in this church.

And the good news is that Jesus made the way for us to be freely invited IN. Maybe you're here today and you've never surrendered your life to Jesus. I'm here to tell you friend, He's inviting you into unity with Him today. Don't wait. You don't have to have it figured out. You don't even have to be cleaned up. You don't have to wait until the end of this sermon. You can accept His free invitation IN by simply declaring, "Jesus is Lord," and believing in your heart that God raised him from the dead (Rom. 10:9). I would love nothing more than this sermon to be a message from me to you. God wants you! Son. Daughter. He wants you. And He wants you today! So, come!

Now church family, here's the bottom line. We'll never have the unity we desire or the unity that we need in this local body without first being united to Christ! And the cost is too high for us to not fight for this unity.

Let's pick back up in verse 3.

3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. 4 Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others. 5 Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, 6 who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. 7 Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, 8 he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death— even to death on a cross. 9 For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow— in heaven and on earth and under the earth— 11 and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Amen! What a glorious passage of scripture. We're actually going to camp out here for most of our time together.

And here's why. So, Paul's writing a letter to a church. But get this. He intended for this letter to his friends to be read aloud. He planned each word, each sentence, the structure, the flow of thought- each detail matters.

And in our passage today, something significant happens. Paul changes genres mid-thought. In verse 5, depending on what translation you have of the Bible, you might be able to see that the format changes obviously from discourse to poetry. And this shift is significant. It would have caused his listeners and readers to pay attention. It should cause us to do the same.



Paul's using a literary technique to enhance and focus his readers/listeners.

Here's what's happening. A quick recap. Paul is appealing to the church to be unified. He then tells them HOW - humility is the way to unity. But he doubles down on humility by giving an example.

Now, I'd like to invite you to use your imagination with me. To be clear, I'm guessing here, but I can't help but wonder if Paul thought to himself when he was writing this letter,

"You know, I'm asking these guys to get along, to be unified, and I've given them some very specific ways to do that. Things like

- *do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit*
- *in humility consider others more important than yourselves*
- *look to each other's interests not just your own*

But I'm just not sure that this is enough. I mean, people in that church and everywhere I've been, keep fighting over the smallest things. It's like they don't get it. You know what I'm going to do? I'm gonna give them a bit of a sermon illustration. Maybe then they'll understand. I'm going to drop in a hymn about Jesus. That'll get my point across."

² Leland Ryken, [Letters of Grace & Beauty: A Guided Literary Study of New Testament Epistles](#), Reading the Bible as Literature (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 92. & Derek R. Brown, [Philippians](#), ed. Douglas Mangum, Lexham Research Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013), Php 1:27–2:30.

Now that's a little speculative, but I'm not sure it's far off from what might have been going on in Paul's mind. Sometimes as people, we need more than just a list of "here's what to do" or "here's what not to do." And that's what Paul has already given in verses 3 and 4. Sometimes the most powerful way to illustrate a call to action is to show an example of this action being lived out. So that's what he does. He inserts in verses 5-11 what is commonly known as a "Christ Hymn²". And much like many hymns that some of us have grown up singing, this hymn was beautifully written and poetically sophisticated.

Paul's saying, be united through humility. But he doesn't stop there, he's also saying that you need the right style of humility. Not the humility you're used to faking but the kind of humility that you can start imitating. I'm talking about that **Jesus-style humility**. Paul's going to say, "adopt the same attitude" or mindset of Jesus. This is the only HOW when it comes to achieving unity through humility. And church, there is a RIGHT STYLE of humility. A lasting humility that leads to true and deep unity. We're gonna call it, Jesus-style humility.

So, what is Jesus-style humility? How do we apply this lesson that Paul's teaching here? Good question, I'm glad you asked!

I see four things here in this section that I think can help us to



understand and hopefully begin to apply Paul's point to our own lives. We'll call these the **Four characteristics of Jesus-style humility**

First, **Jesus-style humility lays aside privilege**. Look with me at verse 6.

6 (Jesus) who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited

This is saying that Jesus is God. He had equality with God. He's not a less-than version of God. He's fully God. But he didn't grasp, exploit, or use this to his own advantage asserting his power and position. He could have! But He didn't.

In the same way, we are called to be selfless. Look at what Paul says in verse 3.

3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit,

The application of this teaching is WILD! Paul says to do NOTHING out of selfish ambition. Nothing!

Let's take inventory for a moment. We're almost halfway through the year. Think about the last 6 months of your life. Have you done anything in let's say your work, family, and this church body out of selfish ambition? Have you tried to get ahead of others at their expense? Have you put someone down to make yourself look better? Have you gossiped?

Much of our economic system is built on the premise that getting ahead is inherently good. The idea that striving to grow our business, our resume, or our long-term wealth is good for our economy can lead to an ignorance of the ramifications that always striving for MORE can have on both our lives and on others. We can trample over people in the name of capitalism and advancement, thinking, if we're not careful, that they deserve it because they're not working as hard as us. Now, I'm not saying all ambition is bad, but **selfish** ambition **is** bad, and I bet more of our ambition is selfish than we might think.

Maybe you're pretty selfless, but what about vanity or conceit? Most people would look down on selfish ambition and, if we're honest, conceit is easier to hide. When Paul says, "Do nothing out of conceit", he's getting at the core motivation level of our actions.

Have you done anything in the last 6 months with the motivation of impressing others? What if you looked over your last 3 months of Instagram posts and asked yourself, was any of this posted to make myself look better? Or maybe your feed isn't full of posts because you've figured out that it's easier to get away with judging others' motivations and considering them fickle because they have to post their highlight reel to feel some sense of purpose/happiness in their life, but not you. You're not like them. You'd rather hide your pride beneath the surface as you scroll, judge, scroll, judge, repeat- VAIN CONCEIT!

Jesus-style humility has no room for selfish ambition or vain conceit. None at all. ***We're desperate!***



Let's continue, look with me at verse 7,

7 Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity.

So, the second characteristic we see is that **Jesus-style humility lowers oneself**

Jesus emptied Himself of His "God Privileges" and put on the form of a servant. The actual word Paul uses is better translated "slave." Perfect Creator taking on the form and role of the created - from God to slave. There are beautiful implications to God coming in the form of human flesh. Fully God and fully man. It's called the incarnation. We celebrate this every year during Christmas. It's incredible!

But this passage isn't unpacking the whole story of the God-man, but instead highlighting the humility and, in many senses, the "loss" that Jesus took on when he became a human.

In the same way, Paul calls us in verse 3 to, in humility, consider others as more important than ourselves and to not just look out for our own interests but rather look to others' interests.

[PAUSE]

There was this study done by a medical group in 2018 assessing American's self-perception of their intelligence when compared to others. Unsurprisingly, 65% of Americans think they're smarter than the average person. In other words, when it comes to intelligence,

most people think they're smarter than others. And equally as unsurprising, men were more likely to think of themselves as more intelligent than the average person than women were. Once again proving that women are more self-aware than men!

But here's the thing about this study that was most fascinating. The medical group suggested that the "tendency to overrate one's cognitive abilities may be a stable feature of human psychology." Now, I'm not that smart, but it's interesting that this secular medical group seems to believe that there's a psychological bent to think of oneself as "better" than others.

So, here's my point, whether we're psychologically hardwired to think of ourselves as higher than others or we're just sinful and that's what people are discovering through medical findings, data, and analytics, WE ARE IN TROUBLE. We are in need of Jesus!

What if we looked at our participation in church from the framework of "considering others better than ourselves?" What would happen to our serve teams? What about our Community Groups? We're prone and wired to look to our own interests. We don't want to serve in MercyKids because we are too tired, too busy, or already around kids in our work or home life. We don't want to commit to a Community Group unless it fits our exact schedule, location preferences, and the members of the group are people like us. Or maybe we are in Group and we do serve in our church, but when group discussion comes around, we fill the time with our stories or our questions instead of looking to help others benefit from their time at Group. Maybe we come to worship on Sunday, and we really don't think about the needs of those around



us. We'd rather not socialize with anyone since it doesn't fit our Myers-Briggs pattern as an introvert. Or we just want to talk to the friends we already know. But what if someone sitting next to you is struggling to believe that they're important and that anyone in the world loves them. What would a simple "Hi, I'm Jake, what's your name?" potentially unlock in their life?

Jesus-style humility has no room for thinking of ourselves as more important or looking to our own interests only. None at all. We're desperate!

Let's continue with verse 7 and 8.

7(b) And when he had come as a man, 8 he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death— even to death on a cross.

The third characteristic we see is that **Jesus-style humility is obedient**

Jesus doubled down on his humility and was obedient. And not just any kind of obedience, but obedience to death. And not just any kind of death but death on a cross.

So, check it out, Jesus was so humble, that He left heaven, took on the form of His creation, lived life as person experiencing all of the ailments of humanity, and then, when His Father told Him to die a gruesome death full of emotional, physical, and spiritual horror, He did it willingly! Look at this from John 10 where Jesus says

17 This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life so that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."

We too are called to obey God by being humble. We too have been called to take up our cross (Matt 16:24, Luke 9:23). We too have been called to lay down our life (John 15:13, 1 John 3:16, Eph 5:2). Humble obedience, even obedience unto death, isn't optional to "living a life worthy of the gospel"

Jesus-style humility has no room for disobedience. Even if the call is to death. We must obey! We're desperate!

Lastly, let's look at verses 9 - 11. This is where the hymn turns from darkness to light.

9 For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow— in heaven and on earth and under the earth— 11 and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

So, the last characteristic we see is that **Jesus-style humility waits on God for exaltation**

Because of Jesus' humility, obedience, and sacrifice, He's rewarded. Not just did Jesus defeat death by resurrecting, but even more God highly exalted Him. The same God that Jesus obeyed is now



rewarding Jesus with the highest kind of reward. Jesus is exalted BY GOD higher than any other so AT HIS NAME, just the name of Jesus, EVERY knee will bow, and EVERY tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.

From the lowest of lows, to the highest of highs, we see the full picture of Jesus' journey from high to low to lowest to highest.

And just as we've been observing, we too have a promised reward for our humility. But if we seek this reward ourselves and grasp for it, we've missed the point. It's God who rewards us. And the promises of being brought high as a reward for going low are vast.

- 1 Peter 5:6 -Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you at the proper time,
- Luke 14:11 - For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."
- Proverbs 22:4 (ESV) - The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.
- Matthew 20:26 - whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,
- Matthew 11:11 - Jesus says, "Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one greater than John the Baptist has appeared." This is the same John that said referring to Jesus, "He must become greater, I must become lesser" (John 3:30). The humble exalted.
- The story of Joseph who was betrayed by his brothers and humbly served God for years before he experienced

freedom from imprisonment and in the end said, "what man intended for evil God used for good" The humble exalted. (Gen 50:20).

- Ruth- the Gentile widow who loyally stuck with a bitter old woman. The humble exalted. (Ruth)
- The woman who anointed Jesus' feet with an expensive fragrance and was shamed by her onlookers but honored by Jesus. The humble exalted. (Matt 26:6-13)
- The woman caught in adultery and brought forward to be stoned to death. Her head lifted by Jesus as he said, "I do not condemn you." The humble exalted. (John 8:1-11)
- A broken-hearted, runt of the family, shepherd boy broken by his dark sin called a man after God's own heart. The humble exalted. (Psalms, Samuels)
- An aged and barren woman who laughs at the idea of becoming pregnant eventually giving birth to a boy named laughter. The humble exalted. (Genesis)
- A virgin girl submitted to the Father's will when He tells her she's with child only to give birth to this very Jesus that changed the world forever. The humble exalted. (Luke 1)

There are countless examples throughout the scriptures of God exalting the humble.

Jesus-style humility leads to exaltation. This is the good news to our desperation. Jesus' humility is enough! In Christ, we too will receive the glory for, not just for our humility, but for His! So, brothers and



sisters, keep pursuing unity by adopting the attitude of Jesus! The reward is coming!

At this point, we have to ask ourselves, “What could happen if we were unified? What could happen if we collectively started having Jesus-style humility characterize the believers in this church?”

Well, I think Paul shows us. Let’s head back to the text and pick up in verse 12.

12 Therefore, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, so now, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose. 14 Do everything without grumbling and arguing, 15 so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world, 16 by holding firm to the word of life. Then I can boast in the day of Christ that I didn’t run or labor for nothing. 17 But even if I am poured out as a drink offering on the sacrificial service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18 In the same way you should also be glad and rejoice with me.

Paul’s concluding this section of his letter similarly to how he started it. Personal. He’s appealing again. He’s not changing his message or the call to unity. When he says “work out your own salvation” or “do everything without grumbling or arguing” he’s still talking about unity. And he’s still appealing to the friendship he has with this church. What he’s doing is showing the effect of this unity that he’s calling them towards.

So, what is it? What is the effect of unity?

Look with me at verse 15

15 so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world, 16 by holding firm to the word of life.

So here it is church. Paul’s saying, “Be unified.” How Paul? “By being humble. Humble like Jesus.” What difference will it make? “You’ll shine. Like stars you’ll shine!”

[PAUSE]

You know, it’s so easy for us to read scripture and to take out the humanity of the authors or the recipients. I know I do this all the time. The Bible is God’s Word. But it’s God Word written to us in various styles by various authors at various times. And we can miss the voice of God when we miss the voice of the author.

Paul was in prison when he wrote this. Not knowing if he’d make it out. This church in Philippi that he’s writing to was started with Paul



in prison singing hymns to Jesus (Acts 16). Now, here he is again, in prison, writing hymns about Jesus. Here is again in a different city, doing the same work, and sharing from his heart. He's basically saying, "Keep at it! Stay unified. Be humble. Hang in there. In the end when it's over, I'll brag about you as the fruit of my life's work."

So, as we draw this sermon to a close, and as the band comes forward. I want to do the same thing that Paul did. I want to talk to you as my friends.

I started this message off with this simple line that we have to:

Be like Jesus to shine like Jesus

Our passage today ends with the EFFECT of our unity. WHY is it worth it? I mean he said,

- do nothing out of selfish ambition,
- Count myself as less than others?
- obey Christ, even if He asks me to die?!

WHY IS IT WORTH IT CHURCH? WHY?!

Because of the effect. Our unity, which comes only from Jesus-style humility, will be what leads to our testimony.

Here at Mercy, our vision is a bold vision. It's not some small goal. It's audacious. Its faith filled.

To see a gospel awakening in the city of Charlotte that is carried to the ends of the earth.

Listen church, friends, we won't see this vision become a reality unless we're unified. And we won't be unified unless we're humble. And we won't be humble for very long if we don't look to Jesus, worship Jesus, adopt the same attitude as Jesus, and if we aren't united with Jesus. What's the cost for us not pursuing this unity through Jesus-style humility? It's our kids. It's our siblings. Our parents. It's our neighbors. It's our coworkers. It's Charlotte. It's North Carolina. It's Cuba. It's Kenya. It's Ukraine. It's India. It's the unreached people who don't even have access to the NAME they'll someday bow to. If I can't get over myself. If we can't get over ourselves, the cost is HIGH. But if we can, "we will shine like stars in the world."

So let us **worship** Jesus. Only Jesus!