

GIVING OF ONESELF

BIBLE BASIS: Philippians 2:113

BIBLE TRUTH: God calls us, through Jesus' example, to find life in serving others. **MEMORY VERSE:** Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5). **LESSON AIM:** That your students will reflect on the humility needed to serve others.

TEACHER PREPARATION

MATERIALS NEEDED: Quarterly Commentary, Adult Quarterly, Adult resources—charts, worksheets, and other teaching tools, Bibles (several different versions)

OTHER MATERIALS NEEDED / TEACHER'S NOTES:

LESSON OVERVIEW

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON

To discuss the mission of Christ and how we are to respond.

BIBLE LEARNING

Our lives have been greatly impacted because Jesus took humanity upon Himself and died on the Cross.

BIBLE APPLICATION

To learn more of how the church can be the center of unifying a community with actions that will benefit the church and the community.

STUDENTS' RESONSES

Students will share how they identify and respond to situations where selflessness can replace selfishness.

LESSON SCRIPTURE

PHILIPPIANS 2:113

- 1. If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,*
- 2. Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*
- 3. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*
- 4. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on 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 fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

9. Wherefore 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 in earth, and things tunder the earth;

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

12. Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

13. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

The Philippians' church didn't seem to have many big, glaring problems, but the challenges were there. Their biggest problem seemed to have been a lack of unity that stemmed from certain persons who were unwilling to give up their private agendas. They seemed to lack the humility to put aside their pride in order to blend their talents and skills with those of other, perhaps less gifted, church members. There were no emails, telephones, or telegrams in those days; but somehow Paul got the word about them, perhaps by letter, or maybe Epaphroditus brought the news when the Philippians sent him to be Paul's personal minister (Philippians 2:25-30; 4:18). In any case, one of the reasons Paul wrote this letter was to address the disunity that the Philippian church was experiencing.

TEACHING THE BIBLE LESSON

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON

AIM: That your students will appeal for unity and humility.

INTRODUCTION

Responding to Christ's Mission

We live in a culture in which we are encouraged to pursue our dreams at any cost and to fight for our rights. Where can we find more to life than a selfish pursuit of our own happiness at the expense of others? God calls us, through Jesus' example, to find life in serving others. Think of some individuals in your church who have demonstrated humility in specific actions. Ask their permission to share their stories with your class.

BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: That your students will follow Jesus' example of giving of themselves.

I. PAUL ENCOURAGES THE BELIEVERS TO SEEK AFTER THE STRENGTH FOUND IN UNITY AND HUMILITY (Philippians 2:14)

Paul began and ended this section of his letter with this appeal. First, he appealed to the church members' spiritual and personal relationships, and then he made an appeal for their unity and humility. Paul knew he was writing to Christians who had problems but he valued their relationship to Jesus Christ. So the apostle appealed to them on the basis of that precious relationship. Some scholars say that the word "if" in verse 1 is better translated "since" or "because." Therefore, Paul wrote, "Since you have found consolation or encouragement, comfort, fellowship and compassion in Christ, then your behavior should

reflect it." Paul used the word translated "bowels" because it was thought by people in his day that the center of our affections was in the stomach. "Bowels" meant the same thing to them as what we mean when we say "heart," as in the statement "I love you with all my heart." So the phrase "bowels and mercies" is better translated "love and compassion" or "tenderness and compassion."

Unity and Humility Are Tools of Transformation (verses 14)

14. If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Paul provided a series of introductory examples in verses 14 leading up to his main point in verse five, which also could have been his sermon title. Commentator Andrew R. Fausset dubbed these verses, "four influencing motives of the Christian ... to inculcate [impress upon believers] the four Christian duties corresponding respectively to them" {Blue Letter Bible}.

The four motives in verse 1 are: consolation in Christ, comfort of love, fellowship of the Spirit, and bowels and mercies ("affection and compassion," NASB). The corresponding duties Paul urged in verse 2 are: be like minded, have the same love, be of one accord, and be of one mind.

Paul's exhortation in verse 3, "in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves" continued his buildup to verse 5, as did the similar encouragement, "look to the things of others and not only yourself" given in verse 4. Whether realized or not, all of humanity shares humble nature, or "lowliness," in that we are universally fallen, sinners in need of grace, and not one of us is righteous before God (Romans 3:23; 5:12). Paul would have us go beyond admitting to these basic facts, however and, rather than being so consumed with our own wants and needs, begin to actually see to others' needs.

Paul appealed for thought agreement, love agreement, spirit agreement, and purpose agreement among church members. Paul was not fostering uniformity; he was writing to say that if we're going to be effective in ministry, we have to come to some agreements in terms of our thoughts, affections, attitudes, and purposes or goals. That makes sense, doesn't it? We took our greatest strides toward freedom in the Black community when in the 1960s SCLC, CORE, SNCC, and the NAACP agreed to work together.

How can this unity be achieved? By humility! Somebody has to say, "I think my idea or method is good, but I agree that we should try his or her idea or method." Everybody can't be in the spotlight at the same time. Undoubtedly there were many talented Christians in Philippi. Some of them were ambitious, conceited, and self-centered. To those Paul wrote: "Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Don't just think about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and in what they are doing" (2:34, LB).

QUESTION 1

Should we think of others as less than we are

(verse 3)?

(Answer) We should esteem others (think of others) as better than we are.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Love Is the Jesus Way

Our relationship to people, even people we don't like or disagree with sharply, is determined by our relationship to our Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus told us, "Love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44). Perhaps we never do it perfectly or completely, but the extent to which we do is determined not by our relationship to our enemies but by the encouragement, comfort, fellowship, and compassion we experience in our relationship with Christ.

II. JESUS CHRIST IS OUR MODEL OF HAVING THE PROPER ATTITUDE (Philippians 2:5-11)

Paul said in so many words, "Let me show you an example of what I'm talking about," and in six verses (in what some scholars believe to be a first century Christian hymn), Paul held up Jesus Christ before the Philippians as our Supreme Model. Books have been written on this passage, so here is a brief summary. In verses 6-8, Paul wrote that Jesus was God but voluntarily humbled Himself and became a serving, obedient, and ultimately crucified human. In verses 9-11, Paul wrote that because Jesus humbled Himself to achieve God's will, then God gave Jesus an exalted position and name; and that ultimately, everybody in the universe will honor Jesus and give glory to God.

This is one of the most theologically rich passages in all Scripture, comparable only to John 1:18 and Colossians 1:15-20. At the risk of

being overly simple, the essence is that the price of humility is sometimes very costly, but the rewards are extremely rich. If we humble ourselves, we don't fight for the spotlight; we work and don't worry about who gets the credit, and we don't step on other folk to get first place; God has so arranged His universe that what we do will be rewarded. An African American elder put it like this: "You take care of God's business and God will take care of you!"

The NIV of verse 5 says, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." The Greek verb for "[let this] mind be" (*phroneo*, *froneo*) refers to thinking, feeling, seeking, having an opinion or attitude— "mindset" would be a modern synonym. With the exception of only three other uses of the word in the New Testament, Paul alone used this word 26 times throughout his epistles. In addition to its use in verse 2 of today's passage, the apostle urged disciples to "be of one mind" (II Corinthians 13:11); and in the opposite intent, he warned about others "who mind earthly things" (Philippians 3:19). *Phroneo* is also interpreted as "set your affection on things above" (Colossians 3:2).

An Attitude Adjustment (verses 5-6)

5-6. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

We all know in our heads and in our hearts that our mindset or attitudes should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, but how can we better accomplish it? How can we make this happen so as to better reflect His irresistible radiance and divine glory? There are four practical steps we can take, each of which Jesus exemplified: (1) He knew His position as God, (2) He did not flaunt His position, (3) He humbled Himself, and

(4) He became a servant. Because these attributes are unnatural to humankind in its natural state, humility and service by definition involve a change of attitude or mindset from what we held previously.

Jesus did not temporarily humble Himself to make a special point or teach us a valuable lesson; His humility is as eternal as His very existence. To state that He was one with God was simply to tell the truth (John 10:30). As a man and from that perspective, Jesus' human nature, with its inherent limitations, was a "form" of God, or an external appearance related to essence or nature—while Jesus was divine in nature, He chose not exhibit all of God's attributes. Jesus did in fact become a real man and did not just take on or display part of our human nature (Romans 5:15; I Corinthians 15:21; I Timothy 2:5).

QUESTION 2

On a scale from 1 to 10 and 10 is the highest, how would you rate your "Christ like attitude" on a daily basis? Why?

(Answer) will vary; e.g., 7 on a good day or 4 when someone makes me upset

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Sharing Is Caring

Simply helping a stranger who is in trouble can accurately reflect a Christ like attitude. One does not need to preach the Gospel around the world, heal the handicapped, or miraculously feed multitudes to emulate our Lord. We simply need to voluntarily put aside our own superiority perception, step out of our comfort zones, and do something tangibly selfless, with genuine sincerity, for someone else without a

reminder of just how big a sacrifice it was for us.

III. THE SERVANT JESUS (Philippians 2:78)

Jesus' Deity and Humanity (verses 7-8)

The "Kenosis" theory, thought by some to be one of the greatest Christological passages, occurs within the book of Philippians (2:5-11) as an illustration to the Philippians of genuine humility and obedience. It speaks of Christ's eternal deity, incarnation, humiliation, death, resurrection, and exaltation via ascension. Theologians have called it the "Kenosis" passage based upon the Greek text underlying the phrase: "But made himself of no reputation . . ." (2:7). The three Greek words of this phrase *alia heautou keno* (allAH hehowTOO kenOo) are literally translated: "But himself he emptied."

The Kenosis theory takes its name from a transliteration of the Greek *kenoo*. The main questions to consider are these: Of what did Christ "empty" Himself when He became man? Did He empty Himself of His divine attributes? Jesus was just as much God when He was in Mary's womb or when He hung on the Cross as He was when He created the world. Rather, Christ surrendered the independent exercise of His divine attributes when He became a human being. He had them, but He did not always use them. He learned, hungered, and grew weary; these are characteristics of human nature. However, He did use His attributes at times under the control of the Holy Spirit. He forgave sin, created food, gave life to the dead, and walked on water.

The Kenosis also involved the veiling of the outward display of His deity, namely His glory, in human flesh. He also emptied Himself of the

prerogative of sovereignty in order to assume the attitude of a servant to serve others.

78. But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Paul reminds us that Christ humbled Himself and He became a servant. In the Greek, the verb "made [Himself] of no reputation" (ke noo, kenOo), means "to empty oneself" or "to make void"—Jesus stripped Himself clean of His former glory (II Corinthians 8:9).

Paul restates this idea in Philippians 2:8 with the related but more direct verb "he humbled himself," (Greek, tapeinoo, tapieNOo), which means "brought low to the point of being level"—in a real sense, Jesus set aside the independent and unfiltered display of His divine attributes in order to make Himself completely equal with man.

In verse 6, Paul wrote about Jesus being in the "form" of God. Here, the apostle writes that Jesus "took upon [Himself] the form of a servant," which means He took on the role of a humble servant even though He was deity. The Lord did this while He had been completely "made" (ginomai) into the "likeness" of man (see also Romans 1:23; 8:3). We know today from numerous scholars that Paul selected this specific noun form of the Greek verb "to be made like" (homoioo, homoyO o), which translated into "likeness" (Greek, homoioia, hoMOYomah), in order to distinguish Jesus' divine nature from His human nature, even though His "being made like" (homoioo) human nature had been both genuine and complete.

Question 3

Another title for this lesson could be?

(Answer) will vary; e.g., Victory Through Humility or Jesus Always Gives His Best

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Created in His Image

Being made (ginomai) in the likeness (homoioo) of man is here underscored, with Jesus also being found in "fashion" as a man (Greek, schema, SKHAYmah). Paul selected this additional and unique distinction as he continued to help his hearers grasp Jesus' identity. Schema is defined in the online resource Blue Letter Bible as "The habitus, as comprising everything in a person which strikes the senses, the figure, bearing, discourse, actions, manner of life, etc." The only other use of schema in the entire New Testament is in I Corinthians 7:31 (also penned by Paul), "...the fashion of this world passeth away." As real and as old as this world is, compared to eternity and the coming new heaven and new Earth (Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:1), the earth as we know it will have had a temporary existence.

III. LIFT HIM UP (Philippians 2:9-11)

The God of the Bible never required anything from humankind for which He did not provide rewards. God does not delight in punishment, nor is that ever His perfect will for us (Ezekiel 18:23). Every good action or decision on our part yields a reward, whether in this life or after (Galatians 6:7). By Jesus' own example, we are taught that humility, which by definition sacrifices human pride—something God hates (Proverbs 8:13)—brings exaltation. Jesus' extreme humiliation brought extreme reward.

Jesus Christ—Highly Exalted (verses 9-11)

9-11. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

God's exaltation of Jesus was proportionate to His sacrifice, which for the perfect man meant the highest conceivable reward, beyond measure, "highly exalted" (Greek, *hu perupsoo*, *hooperopSOo*), the only use of the phrase in the New Testament—a name before which all of Creation would bow, whether voluntarily or not.

As for the word "confess" in verse 11, it is clear from the Scripture that while the normal use of the Greek verb, *exomologeo* (*eksom ologEHo*), comes from the faith of believers (Matthew 3:6; Mark 1:5; Romans 15:9), it will not always be the case, and all those unrepentant souls who previously refused to acknowledge or confess Jesus as Lord will be forced to do so in the end (Romans 14:11).

QUESTION 3

Who is the Christians' greatest model of humility (verses 5-11)?

(Answer) Jesus

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Jesus as the Humble Servant

The ironic beauty of what Jesus did is that even though He completely humbled Himself, He never stopped being truly Himself. Even in

His most radiant glory (Colossians 1:15-17),

He always has been and never stopped being utterly humble in spirit (Matthew 11:29). He not only humbled Himself and became human, however, but as a man He continued to humble Himself as completely as was possible. This was in complete obedience to the Father, subjecting Himself to advancing extremes in humiliation. This voluntary process culminated in His death—not only death, but death on a cross, which was not even legal for Roman citizens because it was considered the ultimate in humiliation.

Clearly, Jesus did not flaunt His position as Creator of the universe and Lord of lords when He surrendered His life to one of service, humility, and finally, a truly unimaginable death.

IV. APPEAL FOR AN EFFECTIVE

CHURCH

(Philippians 2:12-13)

Most responsible adults understand all too well what it means to work at a career, and work hard. Anyone who wants to succeed in life knows the value of and need for ongoing

hard work, self-discipline, sacrifice, and perseverance. We do all this for financial reward and social approval, but does our spiritual life reflect the same amount of investment—in spite of (literally) infinitely better rewards?

12-13. Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

The context of verses 12,13 involves a discussion of sanctification. Let's begin by looking at the Greek verb for "work out" (katergazomai, katerGOzahmahee), which means "performing, accomplishing," or "achieving." The word choice reveals that, even though Paul is urging the Philippians to strive for their salvation of their own accord (with or without his presence), this passage does not detract from Jesus' work on the Cross being wholly sufficient for our salvation. In verse 13, the same English word "worketh" comes from a different Greek verb, energeo (energEHo), which Paul seems to show as God's work compared with our work in verse 12. The same Greek word energeo became "to do" in the latter part of verse 13, and signifies "being operative, appropriate, putting forth power." When we "work out" our salvation, we perform, accomplish or achieve. When God "worketh" in us "to do his good pleasure," His work has forceful, appropriate power. It does not seem a coincidence that Paul paired these two distinct Greek words, showing the clear difference between our work and God's work in the sanctification process—all of which is after the fact of Jesus' complete work on the Cross. Matthew Henry's definition is, "The word [katergazomai] signifies working thoroughly at a thing, and taking true pains. . . . All our working depends on him [the Lord] working in us" (Matthew Henry, Blue Letter Bible).

QUESTION 4

What would you think a self-sacrificing church would look like in general and specifically at your church?

(Answer) will vary; e.g., not just pew members, but actual doers and learners

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Paul's Call for a True Church

When the selfish, ambitious, conceited Christians in Philippi heard this part of the letter read (verses 511), they probably bowed their heads in shame. They probably had sung this hymn many times as a part of their worship, but it never occurred to them that it had any direct connection to their own, negative attitudes and behavior. Imagine: The reader paused and then went on with Paul's call for an obedient, serving, and witnessing church.

Paul was not saying that the Philippians should serve or work to be saved. He was telling them, "Be even more careful to do the good things that result from being saved" (verse 12, LB). The Living Bible goes on to translate "fear" as "deep reverence" and "trembling" as "shrinking back from all that might displease [the Lord]." When it comes right down to it, whatever ministry we do in the church or community is not really our ministry. It is God's ministry. He works in and through us, giving us both the desire and the strength to achieve His purposes (verse 13).

BIBLE APPLICATION

AIM: That your students will work together as a body in Christ to build up the family of God here on earth.

Building Up Good Things

How long has it been since you enjoyed a big, delicious sandwich? How about one with bologna and salami or ham and Swiss cheese with mayonnaise on two fresh, soft, chewy slices of wheat or rye bread, with a nice, crisp dill pickle on the side? Sounds good, doesn't it? Next time you get ready for a really mouthwatering, stomach filling gourmet sandwich, try a Jewish delicatessen. They don't make sandwiches, they build them!

STUDENTS' RESPONSES

AIM: That your students will bring change to their church and to other surrounding communities.

How can your church be a center of unity:

- (1) to help solve the problem of gang violence that plagues many of our communities;
- (2) to help fight companies that target our neighborhoods with billboards encouraging our young people go smoke or drink alcohol; and/or
- (3) to help people in our community who are victims of spousal abuse? Choose one of the problems listed above or choose another problem or concern around which the class can unify and do something concrete to bring about a positive change in your community either socially, spiritually, or both.

PRAYER

Dear God, help us to dismantle our egos and work on one accord for Your glory. Thank You for Your love and providing us the opportunities to reach out and care for those who are in trouble, need a smile, food, shelter, and so much more. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

HOW TO SAY IT: Colossians. kuhLAHshihnz. Philippi.fihLIHPai.

Philippians. fihLIHPihuhnz.

PREPARE FOR NEXT SUNDAY

Read Philippians 3:716, and study "Living into the Future."

DAILY HOME BIBLE READINGS

MONDAY

The Greatness of a Servant (Matthew 20:2028)

TUESDAY

Revealing a Conspiracy (Acts 23:1224)

WEDNESDAY

Sacrifices Pleasing to God (Hebrews 13:1218)

THURSDAY

A Living Sacrifice (Romans 12:12)

FRIDAY

Poured Out in Sacrifice (Philippians 2:1418)

SATURDAY

Concerned for Others' Welfare (Philippians 2:1930)

SUNDAY

Looking to Others' Interests (Philippians 2:113)