

3. How do we live in Unity?

Philippians 2:3-4 NLT - 3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. 4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

Philippians 2:6-8 NLT - 6 Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. 7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, 8 he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

In verses 3 and 4 Paul does a good job of defining humility. It goes against everything our culture tells us, and that makes it a challenge to follow. So, Paul gives us the ultimate example of humility as our guide- Jesus.

Let's try to think of one way we can change our behavior this week to match Paul's instruction about humility. What way can you be selfless not selfish? What will you refrain from so that you don't draw attention to yourself? How can you put the interests of others ahead of your own?

WRAP-UP

Because we are citizens of heaven and we live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, we fight for unity through humility by having the same attitude that Jesus had, and we look to Jesus for our ultimate example of humility!

MEMORY VERSE.

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.
- *Philippians 2:5 NLT*

PRAYER (20 MIN) Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life

Challenge - Ask God to open your eyes to opportunities this week to promote unity through humility.

“Unity Through Humility”

Prison Letters- #8

INTRODUCTION

Paul is reaching out from prison to his friends in the church of Philippi. They cared enough about him to send a financial gift, and he began his letter assuring them that all is well, and the gospel is being spread. But he is also concerned for their wellbeing. In this chapter Paul tells them what they can do to bring him joy. That is, for the Philippians to have unity and humility. Paul understands the tragedy of pride and division. He appeals to the Philippians to look to Jesus' example of a life that puts others first.

Ice Breaker

Have you ever worked as part of a big group project? Maybe you volunteered at Main Event last week or ran a 5K to raise funds for clean water or helped start a church. Share some of your experiences being part of a large group undertaking.

Key Passage

Philippians 2:2-3 NLT - 2 Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. 3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why should we live united and humbly?

Philippians 2:1 NLT - 1 Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate?

Paul had begun the church in Philippi about a decade earlier. The residents there were Roman citizens who were proclaiming that Jesus, not Caesar, was Lord. In chapter 1 he refers to their enemies and we know Paul and others faced harsh treatment and opposition in Philippi for their faith. So, Paul appeals to them as “citizens of Heaven” (Phil 1:27) and reminds them of the importance of unity and humility.

Sometimes we forget what an amazing gift we have been given. We belong to Jesus, and He loves us and has given us the Holy Spirit to reside in us. Can you give examples of how you experience God’s love and His presence in your life?

Now as we reflect on all God has given us individually, let’s consider how that affects the way we live and how we relate to others.

Colossians 3:12 NLT - 12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

We cannot give to others what we do not possess, but God has extended His mercy, kindness, gentleness, and patience to us. Drawing from the deep well of God’s love, we can offer the same tenderhearted mercy and compassion to others. But this requires us to put others first, and that takes humility.

Can you think of some things that get in the way and prevent you from extending mercy and compassion to others? Have you witnessed or experienced mercy and compassionate acts recently?

2. How do we do this?

Philippians 2:2 NLT - 2 Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

As you read through the Bible you will find some references to Philippi describe disputes or disagreements among them. Those reports troubled Paul. And so, he tells the Philippians that they can give him joy if they would come together in agreement, love, and singleness. But we all know that is much easier said than done.

If someone told you to agree wholeheartedly with everyone at church, what would be your first thought?

Agreeing wholeheartedly doesn’t mean we listen to the same music, vote for the same candidates, or cheer for the same teams (Dodgers or Giants?). Unity is not uniformity. There will be many areas that are “non-essentials” to our faith in which there is a diversity of opinion. We seek unity in the essentials of our faith and liberty in those non-essentials to the faith.

You are probably asking yourself how we define essentials to the faith. The first place to search would be the attitudes and values of Jesus. If we all hold Jesus’ values, we would all be in agreement. Another place to look for guidance is the Apostles’ Creed. This ancient statement of faith dates back to the 4th century and has been accepted by a wide variety of Christian denominations as expressing the essentials of Christianity. Read through this aloud.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic¹ Church,
the communion of the saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

¹ With a lower-case "c," catholic means "universal" and "inclusive." When capitalized, Catholic refers to the Catholic Church.

What are some things that cause division in the church that are not reflected in the Apostles Creed? In those areas Paul calls us to love one another selflessly (agape love), and with humility.