

Philippians 2:1-12



Is Unity a Myth?

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for your word. Please silence the distractions in my mind, and help me to focus on you. Please give me understanding as I read your word, so I may know you more. Help me learn to hear your voice.

1

WE STUDY

Reflect on God's word in our Weekly Devotions as an individual or Family

2

WE GATHER

Together in worship on Sunday

3

WE INVEST

Time in small groups throughout the week to grow deeper as a community

BACKGROUND

We are taking a week away from our summer series on Joseph, and looking at a passage from the New Testament. The book of Philippians was written as a letter by the Apostle Paul, to the church in Philippi. Paul wrote the letter while he was in prison. However, Paul's tone is not that of your typical prisoner. The letter is overflowing with thanksgiving and joy. Paul's contentment comes from his relationship with the Lord, not his outward circumstances. In the letter Paul appeals to the church to live in unity, being of one mind.

SCRIPTURE

Philippians 2:1-12 New International Version (NIV)

2 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.



DISCUSSION

A couple of years ago a movie called Woodlawn came out. It told the story of the last segregated high school in Birmingham, Alabama. In 1973 the school, football team and community were being torn apart by racism and hate. Out of desperation, the head coach permitted a young chaplain to share the gospel message with his team. 40 young men received Christ, almost the entire football team. Suddenly, unity and love overcame the team, school and community. And a funny thing happened; the losing football team started winning. They made it all the way to the regional championship, playing in the largest high school football game every played in Alabama, with 42,000 people in attendance.

Everything that had divided the team disappeared when they looked to Jesus. If we have unity between ourselves and Christ, we will then have unity with all others united to Christ. We don't do things out of selfish ambition, instead our motivation becomes the gospel of Jesus. We don't do things out of pride and conceit anymore, we do them out of love for Jesus.

In verse 2, Paul asks the Philippians to be like-minded. The word in Greek has to do with thinking, judging and observing, but then showing that insight in a outward behavior that displays that mind-set. There isn't a great English word for it actually - because the original greek word encompasses both the visceral (instinct) and cognitive (intellectual understanding) aspects of thinking. So when Paul says to be like-minded, or of the same mind, he is saying; **be united with Christ in such a way that His thoughts, motivations and instincts become**

yours. Have you ever just done something instinctively? Sometimes we call that a gut-reaction. We are to become so closely united to Christ, that our gut-reactions *and* our deep thinking about things both work themselves out in behavior that is like His!

When believers are united with Christ, they are united with one-another.

MEDITATION

“If you are coming here to stay the same, then you are in the wrong place.” Have you heard Pastor Eric say that? What he is talking about is transformation. None of us, not Eric, or Justin or anyone else should be staying the same. We are being transformed into the image of Jesus. How does that happen? Have you ever spent a lot of time with a friend who has an accent, and then realized you started to pick up on it? Or have you ever noticed you were walking just like one of your parents? We pick up traits of those we spend time with. When we submit our lives to the power of the Holy Spirit, and spend time in prayer and God's word, we are spending time with our Savior. Slowly but surely you will begin to take on the family traits of Jesus Christ.

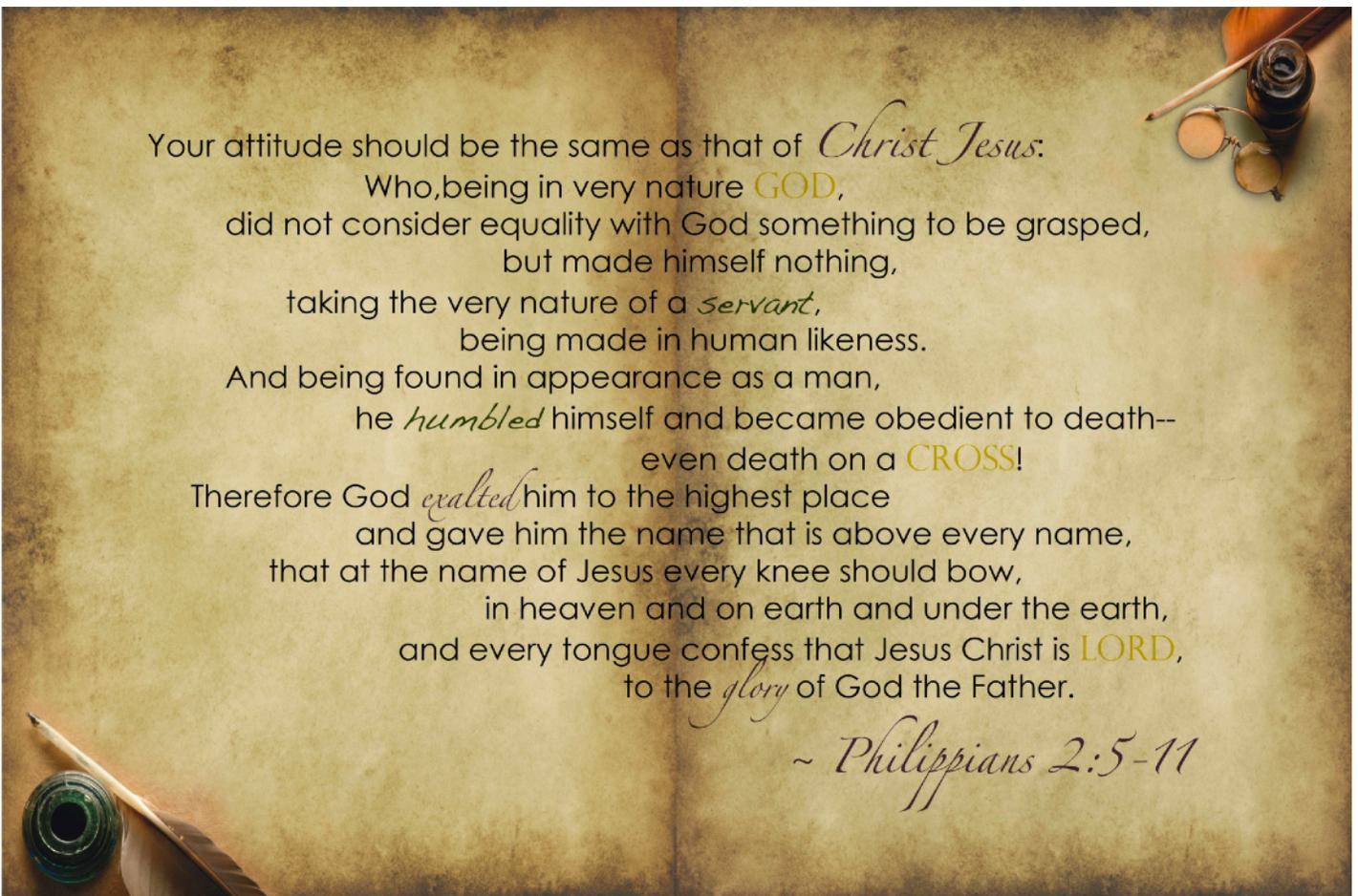
What would happen if everyone who claims to be a Christian was walking in unity first with Jesus?

What would the church look like?

DAY 2

SCRIPTURE

Philippians 2:5-11



BACKGROUND

These verses from Philippians are thought by some to be an hymn sung by the early church. Sometimes it is referred to as the Christological Hymn. It describes what Jesus did in a profound way. Scholars call it Kenosis which means *self-emptying*. Jesus displayed deep humility when he participated in God's plan for the salvation of humanity.

STUDY

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

Who being the very nature God. Sometimes we get too used to the Christmas story. God came down to earth and humbled himself to take on the form of a helpless baby. However, he continued to humble himself even from there. He was the baby of a poor, un-wed mother who lived as a conquered person under the Roman Empire. How many of us would trade in our current lives, to be set in an environment like that as a helpless baby, with no control? And yet, the same Jesus who was with God at the beginning of time, who had all the power and glory due him in heaven and on earth, took that infinite step down.



Did not consider being equal with God something to be grasped. I hear these words and I'm ashamed when I think of the number of things I have grasped at. Jesus was with God, he was God, and yet he did not fight for that place of equality. He laid it down. Sometimes I can't even lay down an argument, or a stupid offense.

But made himself nothing. Other translations say, He emptied himself. He poured out from himself all his glory, power, honor, and majesty. He gave up everything to come to earth. ***Taking on the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*** He emptied himself to take on the form of a human. A human who get's sick, cold, tired, lonely, hungry, thirsty, and hurt. God took on a body that would learn to walk, play, trip and fall, get pushed down on the Bethlehem playground, and have people say mean things to him. But the humiliation did not end there.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself to death. Not only would he lower himself to

that of a common man, he would be lowered still to die. *Even death on a cross!* For Jesus to die in his sleep at an old age would already be more humility than we could fathom, yet he died a criminal's death. The cross was the penalty reserved for those who had no rights, either by birth or by their own actions. The cross was the death for slaves and criminals. *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place, and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow in heaven and earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*



REFLECTION

Philippians 2:5 offers a straight forward command. ***“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”*** What was Christ's attitude? Let's compare it to the instructions we read on Day 1.

Our Guidelines

Do nothing out of selfish ambition

Do not be vain or conceited

In humility value others better than yourself.

Don't just look to your interests, but also the interests of others.

What Jesus Modeled

Jesus did not consider equality with God something to be grasped

Jesus made himself nothing

Jesus took on the very nature of a servant

Jesus died in place of us in order to save us from our sins.

Which one of these are you struggling to obey today? Don't let yourself speed past this by giving a general response. Be specific. Ask God for the strength to live as Christ in your current situation.