

Philippians 2:1-11 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ²complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, ⁸being born in the likeness of men. ⁹And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ¹⁰Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹¹so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

When you have a mindset that makes you and your wants the most important thing in your life, it becomes easy to start fights. That mindset allows your selfish ambitions to rule your actions, aiming to ensure that you get what you want when you want it. (**James 4:1-2** see p4). Fights start because two people want their own way and neither will back down and put the other person first. Neither of them will consider the other more significant than themselves.

We want something but the other person isn't giving it to us so we fight. We want the recognition we think we deserve but no one will give it to us, so we fight by putting others down to get what we want. We want our own way on a decision in the family, or perhaps in the church family, but others are getting in the way so we bully them until we get what we want.

Very few of us actually want to start fights, but it happens in our school, family, work and even in our church life. How can we avoid fights in the communities where we live, work, study, play and worship? Paul shows us how. He is writing to a church where there was division. At the centre were Euodia and Syntyche (**Phil 4:2** see p4). These two were good, godly ladies but they had fallen out. They had worked with Paul in proclaiming the gospel, but division had come between them, threatening the unity of the church. Paul appealed for the church to be united (**Phil 1:27** see p4), and again in **2:1-2** (above). Paul wanted the fight to end and the church to unite around the gospel.

What is the secret to unity?

Instead of allowing our selfish ambitions to rule our actions, the way to unity is to have a humble mindset that counts others more significant than ourselves. Paul called the church to unity (**v2** above) but that could only happen as the church worked out **vv3-4** (above). There is a link between unity and humility.

Without humility there will never be unity

If we spend our time grasping for our rights or acting with selfish ambition, we will have fighting and disunity.

Unity happens as we think less about ourselves and more about the needs of others.

Unity is the product of humility.

Paul shows what that humility looks like by pointing us to the Lord Jesus Christ and to

the greatest example of humility the world has ever seen

Jesus is THE example to follow when it comes to humility.

- No one has ever been greater than Jesus Christ
- No one has ever sunk lower than Jesus Christ.

Therefore no one has ever humbled themselves more than Jesus, as we can see through four steps in his humility.

1. Christ's mindset (vv5-6 above). We see that Jesus counted and considered. This is an activity of the mind.

He considered that his equality with God was **not** something to be grasped or held on to. Jesus Christ is fully God. If you

want to know what God is like, then you look at Jesus because he is the very essence (the form) of all that God is, precisely because he is God. Paul tells us that

Jesus is “equal with God”

Yet he did not count this equality with God a thing to be grasped. God the Son had resolved, in eternity past, to surrender his right to be served by humanity and instead to come and serve humanity – that is you and me. Jesus had every right to burst onto the stage of this world and demand that everyone bow down and worship him, because he is the eternal God. Yet he determined to surrender that right and serve humanity.

- To have a humble mindset means to surrender our rights so that we can serve others.

That was Christ’s mindset and Paul tells us that if we are united to Christ then we are to have the same mindset

- **What are you holding on to that you need to let go of so that you can serve others, putting them first?**
- 2. **Christ’s incarnation (v7 above).** When Christ emptied himself, he did not give up his deity, but added to it a human nature, though without sin. He remained God the Son.

The world worships many false gods, but none of them ever surrendered their right to be served and added a human nature to their supposed deity. That is because none of them are the true God

- who is from everlasting to everlasting
- who spoke this universe into existence and keeps everything going (including us)
- whose glory fills the heavens and is rich beyond all comparison

This God entered our world, adding a human nature (yet without sin) to his divine nature so that

Jesus Christ is both fully God and at the same time fully man

Humility is climbing down from the highest throne to live in obscurity and poverty

so you can serve those who ought to worship you but don’t.

- 3. **Christ’s humiliation (v8 above).** Jesus Christ died as a sacrifice for our sin. Though he himself was without sin, he suffered the punishment of eternal death that our sins deserved, so that we might be forgiven and be able to come into God’s presence to worship him. This required incomparable humility.

In Jesus’ day, crucifixion was the most shameful way to die, the form of execution reserved for the lowest of the low, bringing shame on them and their family. The person was stripped naked and hung up for all to see and mock.

- The Lord of Glory experienced this shameful death. It looked to the world as if he had taken on the might of Judaism and Rome and failed. So the world mocked him.
- The Lord of Glory suffered the shame of bearing our sin. All through his life, Jesus was slandered -illegitimate child, drunkard, glutton, friend of sinners, impostor and so on. To the world, he was getting what he deserved on the cross, but **he was getting what we deserved.**

Jesus bore the slander and shame of the cross for us.

Imagine how ashamed you would feel if all your sin was exposed for all to see. Jesus bore all that shame, and he did so voluntarily, not because the religious leaders handed him over or because the Romans executed him on the cross.

Jesus humbled himself, embracing the cross with all its shame.

He did it for you and me, so we might be brought out of the pit of our shameful sin and into the honour of becoming the children of God.

What has God the Father done in response?

4. Christ's exaltation (v9 above) Because Jesus did not grasp on to his right to be served but humbled himself,

God, the Father, has given him what was rightfully his

Before he came to earth, he deserved to be honoured, and because he was willing to humble himself, the Father gave him what was rightfully his. When he was on earth, Jesus said: **everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted** (Luke 14:11, see also p4 James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:6). Jesus lived this out. What an incentive to follow Christ and humble ourselves!

God will humble the proud but he exalts the humble

Satan tempted Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit by telling them **"you will be like God"** (Gen 3:5). The great irony is that they were already created in the image of God, but they grasped for the honour of being exalted above God. God humbled them by putting a curse on them and all humanity. The most humbling aspect of that curse is that death comes to us all and no matter how hard we try, none of us can keep ourselves alive. **We are not God.**

Jesus came to lift the curse of shame from us. He didn't grasp at being God (even though he is God) but humbled himself by voluntarily submitting to human death, laying down his own life and taking it up three days later.

Because Jesus humbled himself, he is exalted. He shows us what humility looks like and is our example to follow.

He didn't act with selfish ambition, but looked out for our interests even though we are unworthy sinners.

We are to have the mind of Christ

We are all proud and think more highly of ourselves than we ought, wanting our own way. How are we to obey this command? Jesus knew perfectly well who he was (v6 above) and his self-humbling flowed out of this knowledge. He didn't need to grasp on to what he could never lose.

The key to a humble life is to be secure in our identity in Christ

Because of Jesus, God is now our Father who loves us with an eternal love and has committed himself to take care of us.

When we know this, we are free of the need to promote ourselves

- If God fights for us, we don't need to fight for ourselves, but can entrust ourselves to him.
- If God makes us his children, we have the highest honour and don't need to grasp for things we think we have a right to, such as worldly honour, ministry or having our own way
- If God supplies all we need, then we are free to use what he gives to serve others. We can make sacrifices because he gives back what we give away.

Jesus said: **"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions, and give to the needy.** (Luke 12:32-33). Our Father gives us the **KINGDOM!**

We suffer from pride because we fail to think deeply on the cross of Christ and our standing as children of God.

- **The cross of Christ humbles us**, showing us what desperate sinners we are. Securing our salvation cost God his Son, showing just how steeped we were in sin and how great was the price that had to be paid. None can boast except in the cross of Christ. All we can say of ourselves is that we are sinners saved by grace.
- **The cross also assures us of God's love for us.** God the Father gave up his Son for us, God the Son gave up his reputation and his very life for us and God the Spirit pursues us relentlessly and makes us alive.

As a people who are humbled and assured of God's love, we are free.

We are free from the need to grasp for greatness

We are free to serve others.

James 4:1-2 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions^[a] are at war within you?^[b] ²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel

Phil 4:2 I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.

Phil 1:27 Only let your manner of life be worthy^[b] of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,

James 4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

1 Peter 5:6 ⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,