

Better

COLLABORATIVELY



Philippians 2:1-5

1.8

That's the fastest F1 pit stop ever recorded – 1.8 seconds. That means in less than two seconds, a team of people jack the car off the ground, change all four tires, refuel, and get the car back on the track. It took you longer than that to read this paragraph!

What makes that moment possible isn't just skill, it's *synchronized teamwork*. Every crew member has a specific role, and if one person is a fraction of a second late, the whole stop falters. Formula 1 teams don't win races through raw speed alone; they win because they work *better collaboratively*.

In a similar way, the Church doesn't move forward on the strength of one gifted individual. We grow, serve, and thrive when each member works in unity with humility just as Christ modeled. In Philippians 2, Paul points us to Jesus as the ultimate example of someone who led Himself well *for the good of others*. And just like that pit crew, we have to learn what it means to value the team more than the spotlight.

ICEBREAKER

What's your favorite food combination (like peanut butter & jelly, chips & salsa, mac & cheese)? What makes those two things work so well together?

READ IT

Read Philippians 2:1-5

GET IT

1. What kind of unity does Paul call believers to embody?

2. **What personal characteristics threaten this kind of unity?**
3. **What personal characteristic is necessary to achieve this kind of unity?**
4. **What aspects of Christ's example does Paul point our attention to?**

LIVE IT

We were never meant to live in isolation. God designed us for community from the very beginning, and He grows us through it.

From the opening pages of Scripture, God makes it clear: "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). That statement comes before the fall, meaning even in a perfect world, teamwork was essential. And this isn't just about marriage; it reflects a broader truth: humans are hardwired for connection because we're made in the image of a relational God.

God Himself has eternally existed in perfect, Trinitarian unity. The Trinity is not just a theological mystery; it's a model of unity-in-diversity. Each Person of the Godhead is distinct, yet fully and perfectly unified. Since we are created in the image of God, it's no surprise that God has wired us to live in community as well.

In the New Testament, that calling becomes clear. Paul reminds us we are "one body with many members" (Romans 12:4–5), each with different gifts designed to serve one another. And the author of Hebrews urges believers not to "neglect meeting together," but to "encourage one another" (Hebrews 10:24–25).

The better way isn't doing life in isolation but by surrounding yourself with other people because you need them and they need you!

5. **In what ways have you recently been tempted to pull back from community rather than engage more deeply in it? What's behind that?**
6. **How would you define biblical community?**

7. What are some things that act as hindrances to deep, authentic community experience? How can those things be addressed?

Collaboration requires a Common Purpose

True collaboration doesn't happen by accident. It requires alignment around a shared purpose. Whether it's in the church, a marriage, or a workplace, when people are pulling in different directions, even good intentions can lead to conflict and frustration. But when there's clarity of purpose and unity of heart, real growth and progress becomes possible.

Paul opens this section with a heartfelt appeal, *"If there is any encouragement in Christ..."* not as a question, but as a reminder. *Since* we have these blessings in Christ, let's respond by living in unity. He then calls the church to be "of the same mind," "having the same love," "being in full accord," and "of one mind." These aren't calls to uniformity, but to a shared mindset, affection, and mission.

This kind of unity is essential in every area of life. **Marriages thrive** when spouses pursue not just individual happiness but a shared vision for their life together. **Workplaces succeed** when teams are aligned around clear goals, not individual egos. And the **church flourishes** when believers rally around the mission of Christ, bringing their diverse gifts and perspectives under one purpose.

When we each bring what we have not to build our own platform, but to pursue a shared purpose we begin to function the way God intended. Whether in the church, the home, or the workplace, unity around a common goal leads to clarity, cooperation, and lasting impact.

8. What are some signs that people are pulling in different directions instead of working together toward a common goal in a...

Marriage:

Workplace:

Church:

9. What can be done to help restore a lost sense of common purpose?

10. What are some outcomes you've seen, or imagine, when people in a marriage, workplace, or church are working together around a clear, shared purpose?

Collaboration requires we Consider others' Preferences

Collaboration falls apart when self-centeredness takes over. If everyone's fighting to get their own way, unity becomes impossible. But when we learn to *defer*, to *listen*, and to *prioritize others*, we make room for stronger relationships, smoother teamwork, and deeper trust.

Paul challenges the church to resist two corrosive forces: **selfish ambition** (working to promote yourself) and **conceit** (thinking too highly of yourself). Instead, he calls believers to *humility* not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself *less*. That humility shows up in how we value others and how willing we are to yield to their preferences when it serves the greater good.

This principle applies everywhere: in marriages, where one spouse might set aside a preference for the sake of the other; in workplaces, where collaborative teams listen to input instead of bulldozing ahead; and in churches, where sometimes letting go of what we personally want is best for the sake of the greater mission.

11. Paul doesn't say "think less of yourself," but "count others more significant." What's the difference, and why does that matter?

12. When Paul says to look to the “interests of others,” what kinds of things do you think he has in mind? How might that look different in a church, a marriage, or a team setting?

13. When you’re working with other people in any context, how do you decide when to hold your position and when to let someone else’s preference take priority? What helps you make that call?

Collaboration requires a Christlike Posture

To live and work with others the way God calls us to, we need more than tips and tricks, we need a model. And Paul gives us one: *look to Christ*. The humility, unity, and selflessness he’s been urging the Philippians to pursue all point back to Jesus. His mind His posture isn’t just one we admire. It’s the one we’re called to imitate.

And what did that look like? He emptied Himself. He took the form of a servant. He obeyed, even when it led to death. Jesus didn’t come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life for others.

That’s the posture Paul invites us to take. Not clinging to position. Not fighting for control. Not needing to be noticed. Instead: humble, sacrificial, and obedient. In a world where everyone wants to be a star, Jesus reminds us: the real strength is in choosing to be a servant.

14. Jesus obeyed, even when it cost Him everything. How does that change the way we think about service and sacrifice in community life?

15. How might looking to Christ's example challenge your own posture in the "teams" you are part of, whether with your spouse, at work, in your community, or at your church?

16. What is one specific way in the next week you can live out the "Better Way Collaboratively"?

INTRODUCING “BETTER: DISCIPLESHIP FROM THE INSIDE OUT”

Discipleship isn't just about what we know but who we are becoming. The call to follow Jesus is an invitation to a transformed life. Jesus calls us to a *better* way, one that begins in the heart and flows outward into every thought, every word, every relationship, and every decision.

When Jesus called His disciples, He reshaped their priorities, their values, and their way of life. As they walked with Him day by day, their character and conduct began to reflect His. That same transformation is His goal for us through the daily, patient work of His Spirit forming us from the inside out.

This series, *Better: Discipleship from the Inside Out*, takes that vision seriously. If we want to grow as disciples of Jesus, we must begin with the most foundational area of leadership, the leadership of our own lives. Self-leadership in the Christian life is not about willpower or self-improvement; it's about daily surrender to Christ and intentionally cultivating habits of life that align with His way.

Over the coming weeks, we will explore six areas where Jesus calls us to grow: missionally, emotionally, collaboratively, intellectually, physically, and relationally. These aren't separate compartments to check off, but connected aspects of a whole life shaped by the gospel. As we grow in one, we find the others strengthened. This is what discipleship does, it works from the inside out, touching every part of who we are.

While this series draws inspiration from Mac Lake's *Leading Yourself*, our purpose is not to teach a book but to preach the Bible. His framework provides a helpful structure, but the heart of this series is God's Word, anchored in Scripture, centered on Christ, and aimed at the transformation of His people.

Our prayer is that we will not only learn about the better way, but that we will live it. That we will see where our lives are divided and invite the Spirit to bring wholeness. That we will not settle for partial discipleship, but pursue an integrated life of faith that is shaped by Christ in every part, from the inside out.

WANT TO GO DEEPER?

Our small group series is built around many of the key ideas found in *Leading Yourself* by Mac Lake.

This practical and insightful book is a valuable companion to the discussions we'll be having together. If you're looking to grow in personal leadership, character, and spiritual maturity, we highly recommend picking up a copy to read alongside the weekly lessons.

DISCIPLING LEADERS SERIES

LEADING YOURSELF

TRAINING GUIDE

Developing the
Character and Competency
to Lead Yourself

Mac Lake

Foreword by John C. Maxwell

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