

Live the Journey

Living Humbly

Leader Guide

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

Context

This chapter starts with an interesting statement. Paul says that even if the Philippian church already finds comfort from love, participation in the Spirit, and encouragement in Christ, something is still needed for complete joy. But what could that be? Paul asks them to have their minds united and set in following this advice: 'Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.' For Paul, this attitude is the culmination of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. He makes this even clearer in verses five through eleven, where he shares a poem setting before us the example of Jesus' humility.

1. According to this text (vs. 1-4), what are the two main characteristics that accompany the community of the resurrected King? How can we recognize the King's followers?

Paul tells us that the christian life is more than benefiting from Christ's gifts of love, forgiveness, guidance and encouragement. These things should accompany every christian, but ultimately the main qualities that are found in the disciples of Jesus are unity and humility.

2. From the poem that follows (verses 5-11), what can we learn about God?

First, Paul clearly states that we can know God by looking at Jesus Christ. God has revealed Himself to us in the person of Jesus.

Second, the poem states that Jesus did not see his status as something to be grasped, but something to be shared with mankind. We learn that God is a God that shares, freely and generously. We learn that God's focus is on us, even when we did not deserve it.

We usually have the opposite attitude, we grasp for the things we have, being material wealth or things like reputation, professional achievements, or personality traits. Ultimately, our identity can become so attached to such things, that we become self-focused and lose the ability to connect with others in love.

3. From the same verses, what do we learn about being humble? Does the humility of Jesus described here fits the idea of humility held by our society?

C.S. Lewis says that 'true humility is more like self-forgetfulness than false modesty'. And false modesty can be born either out of pride or low self-esteem. Being humble however is not thinking that you are inferior to others, it is acting like others are more important than yourself. The passage did not say that Jesus felt Himself inferior in any way, yet He chose to regard our well being as more important than His own. His humility looked more like an act of practical love than an emotional state. Ultimately, our humility is not defined by our self-image, but by our priorities.

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4. Would you say that this concept of humility clashes with the values of our current culture? How can we find the power to live a humble life?

It clashes with the values of every human culture that ever existed. Our tendency is always to focus on ourselves as opposed to others, especially when there are personal costs involved.

Paul gives us two tips to help us live a humble life. First, he emphasizes that God has exalted Jesus and 'bestowed on him the name that is above every name'. Jesus defeated death and all evil, and eventually all things will converge to Him. Jesus was humble, and Jesus won. That is the hope that empowers us to live in humility.

Second, he asks that we do this as a community. Here again we see the idea that following Jesus is something that we do with others, as part of a family. It is much easier to be humble in an environment where everybody has the same mind.

A man can counterfeit love, he can counterfeit faith, he can counterfeit hope and all the other graces, but it is very difficult to counterfeit humility.

D.L. Moody

True humility is more like self-forgetfulness than false modesty.

C.S. Lewis.