

PHILIPPIANS

UNSHAKEABLE FAITH

STUDY TOOLS

Sunday, March 9, 2025

Teaching Title: Unshakeable Purpose

Key Scripture: Philippians 2:1–11

CEDAR VALLEY

5-DAY READING PLAN WITH QUESTIONS:

Monday: Philippians 1:1–30

Tuesday: Philippians 2:1–11

Wednesday: Philippians 2:12–30

Thursday: Philippians 3:1–4:1

Friday: Philippians 4:2–23

1. What does this passage tell you about God?
2. What does this passage tell you about people?
3. If this is God's word, what do I need to do?
4. What's your takeaway?
5. Who would you tell?

MEMORY TOPIC:

Humility

MEMORY VERSE:

Philippians 2:3 NLT

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION:

Introduction:

In today's world, division is widespread, and unfortunately, this disunity is affecting the Church as well. We often find ourselves divided over issues that aren't central to the gospel—such as politics, traditions, and personal preferences. So, how do we stay united despite these disagreements? How can we prioritize unity in such a divisive climate? In the first century, the church in Philippi faced similar challenges, and Paul wrote to them to encourage unity and like-mindedness. He pointed them to the example of Jesus. Though fully divine, He humbled Himself by setting aside His divine privileges, becoming fully human, and obediently dying on the cross—a sacrifice that brought glory to God. Through His humility and selfless love, Jesus demonstrated the kind of unity we are called to embody as His followers. To be truly unified, we must emulate His humility. From humility, to unity, to God's glory.

Questions:

Icebreaker—What character traits do you admire in a person?

1. Read Philippians 2:1–11 as a group. What does Paul mean by "one mind and purpose" in verse 2? How can we strive for this kind of unity in our community?
2. How do you define unity in the church? Is it agreeing with everything, or something deeper? (Read Romans 14:1–23 for help answering this question.)
3. Read Mark 12:30–31 and Philippians 2:3–4. How do these passages challenge you in your relationships with others? According to these passages, how is unity achieved?
4. In Paul's day, it was revolutionary to promote humility instead of honor (see Notes). In fact, there was great competition for honor! In what ways is humility still revolutionary in our culture today?
5. Jesus' ultimate act of humility was dying on the cross, even though He is by nature God. What does this

teach us about the true nature of humility?

6. How can we follow Jesus' example of humility in practical ways, even when it's uncomfortable or doesn't bring us recognition?
7. How can our church focus more on unity over personal preferences, especially in areas that aren't central to the gospel? Where might our opinions on certain matters be causing division?

Notes

Question 4—

In the Greco-Roman world that Paul and the Philippian church lived in, humility was a revolutionary topic. It was seen as a sign of weakness and disgrace. Note four things about Greco-Roman culture:

1. Honor and status were everything. It was your goal to climb the ranks.
2. Humility was for slaves not leaders.
3. The Roman "virtues" were about self-promotion.
4. Philippi was a Roman colony—they lived by Roman values.

*Therefore, the persecutions the Philippians faced were a significant obstacle to their goal of rising in society. Paul offers them a different perspective, shifting their thinking so that they begin to think like Jesus.

Digging Deeper

Philippians 2:5–11 is often referred to as the "Christ Hymn." Some scholars think Paul is quoting a hymn sung by the early church, other scholars believe these are Paul's own words. Either way, this section of Philippians is one of the most studied and beautiful passages in Paul's letters. Not only does it tell the Church how to be and act like Jesus (ethics), it also tells us a lot about the identity of Jesus.

"The text falls into two sections: Verses 6–8 provide the narrative focus on the humility of Christ, while verses 9–11 explain how God vindicated Christ because of His obedience. Christ humbled Himself and, unlike the first Adam, who wanted to be equal to God, [Jesus] "emptied" himself.... Christ did not take advantage of His divine status but rather was content to be in human form, to the point of surrendering Himself to death on the cross. The first point of the text, then, talks about a preexistent being who had divine status and enjoyed equality with God. Nonetheless, He did not take advantage of his divine status but took on the status of a humble servant. This kind of humble attitude is an example to Christians, who are called to consider others higher than themselves (2:1–4).

The second part of the hymn (2:9–11) shows that on the basis of His obedience, Jesus was exalted by God and was given a name above every other name, *kyrios*, the Lord. Allusion to Isaiah 45:22–23, one of the strongest claims to monotheism in the Old Testament ('For I am God, and there is no other... Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear'), shows that for Paul the resurrected and exalted Christ enjoys the same status as the God of Israel.... The fact that Paul is able to call "Jesus" the Lord means that Jesus is the Lord not only by virtue of His death and resurrection; He was Lord before these events... Jesus shared in the divinity (lordship) of the Godhead before His incarnation, that is, from eternity."

—Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction*. Page 55