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# Philippians 2:1-11

## Discipleship 101: The Humble Disciple

*Jonathan M. Romig*  
CornerstoneWestford.com

Have you ever heard of a **humble brag**? A humble brag is a display of false modesty. People do this on **Twitter** all the time, and thankfully, one user has compiled some of the most humble humble brags.

“Can we start a media campaign to question how I got into Columbia, too? Still scratching my head about how I got accepted & demand answers!” - Annie

“I just did something very selfless. But more importantly, it was genuine & I know it means a lot to the person in the long run. #soworthit” - Cheryl

“@jimmykimmel Hi, I’m 16 and I’m publishing 3 books and an album this year. Do you have advice on how to handle it best?” - Josh

“It’s an evening with the Hoff! Britain’s got talent followed by my life story on Piers Morgan. Hopefully you won’t get sick of me!” - David

“I’m truly humbled you follow my tweets. I pray they enrich your life & strengthen your ministry. God bless all 200,000 of you!” - Rick

To be fair, I’d never heard of a humble brag until this summer when my **older brother** told me that was what I was doing every time I posted pictures of myself doing **CrossFit** to Facebook. Here’s one more...

“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” - Paul

The Apostle Paul understood **humility** and why it matters (Gal 6:14). In our text today, he calls all disciples, all followers of Jesus, to be humble. Last week we learned the first way to live **worthy** of the gospel, through **unity**, and this week we’re going to learn the second way, through **humility**. So although we’re starting in Philippians 2:1, we’re continuing to discover the answer to Paul’s command in Philippians 1:27 to “Conduct yourselves in a manner worth of the gospel of Christ.” So what’s the second way to live worthy?

### **Live worthy of the gospel through humility. (Phil 2:1-11)**

“Therefore if you have any encouragement...” When we run into a “**therefore**,” we need to ask, “What’s it **there for**?” Our “therefore” acts as a connecting word between Paul’s call to **unity** (chapter 1) and his call to **humility** (chapter 2). But there’s an interruption. Our passage doesn’t begin by talking about humility. That starts in verse 3. Instead, Paul begins by telling us **why** we should unify and be humble. So why should we?

### **Why? Because we have God’s grace. (v. 1-2)**

“1 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.”

Every time verse one says “if” we can translate it as “since.” Paul is saying, “Since you’re united with Christ, since he loves you, since you have the Holy Spirit...” Since you have grace... Be unified and humble. *When we realize how much we don’t deserve God’s love, and yet he gives it to us anyways, it humbles us.*

*Each of us is more sinful than we know. We constantly disobey God. And yet, we’re loved more than we can ever imagine. Because we know God loves us **despite** our sins, we can unify as Christians and humble ourselves no matter what. If I do wrong things, but God still loves me, why can’t I love that person **despite** their sin? We humble ourselves because we have God’s grace. But what exactly is humility?*

## **What? Humility is valuing others above ourselves. (v. 3-4)**

“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.”

Paul is writing to the **church in Philippi**, and right here he is laying the **groundwork** for something he is going to say in **chapter four**. The church at Philippi just sent **Epaphroditus** to Rome to encourage Paul in prison. When he came he must have given Paul a verbal report of everything going on. One of the things he told Paul was about the two women in the church who are fighting. So in chapter 4 Paul says this:

**Philippians 4:2** I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. (NIV®)

Wow! Paul calls Euodia and Syntyche to **unity** and **humility** in front of the whole church. This letter would have been read publicly at the church gathering. Can you imagine if I addressed two of you this way? Paul is an Apostle, so we’ll let him do that. But before he says something, he lays the groundwork in chapter two.

Paul says, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.” This Greek word for “**vain conceit**” is the word “**kenodoxia**” and it’s a compound word. A compound word is when two distinct words like “dog” and “house” are combined together to mean something different, “doghouse.” Kenodoxia is the compound of **doxa**, which means “**glory**” and “**kenos**” which means “**empty-handed.**” Have you ever played **Keno**, the Massachusetts **lottery**? In Greek, Kenos means “empty handed” so don’t expect to win! Kenodoxia means “empty glory.” In other words, Paul is saying, “Do nothing for your own glory, because it won’t last.”

Sometimes the reason we prioritize ourselves and our agendas above that of others is because we think we’re more **valuable** than them. We care more for our **glory** than theirs. This week **Henry** and I went for a walk around the garden down the street and we were talking about the **Imago Dei**. Imago Dei is latin for “**image of God.**” We’re all made in God’s image, in God’s likeness, and that gives everyone value.

### **Genesis 1:27**

So God created mankind in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them. (NIV®)

If we realize everyone is made in God’s image, then everyone is valuable, and I can honestly say they’re valuable. In fact, Paul says to even count each other as more important than ourselves. But that doesn’t sound easy. *I naturally think I am the **most important person in the room.*** So how can we do this?

## **How? By having the same mindset as Christ Jesus. (v. 5-8)**

Have you ever noticed that when little kids decide they like you, you’re **golden**. They just want to be around you, and talk to you, and if they really like you they start to mimic your mannerisms. They’ll do the things

you do and say the things you say. Like, even if you don't want them to repeat you, they will. They're developing the same mindset and mannerisms as you.

Adults do this too. Do you have someone you really respect and admire who you want to be like? Maybe it's a **favorite** author, or speaker, celebrity, or TV show host. Maybe it's David Hasselhoff or Rick Warren? What do you do? You read their books, go to their conferences, watch their shows, you even dress like them and do your hair like them.

Paul says, "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." In other words, **think** like Christ. **Walk** like him. **Talk** like him. **Relate** to others like him. Grow a **beard** like him. Get into his mind. *Let Christ's thoughts change our thoughts.* So what did Jesus think about?

### 1. **Jesus thought of the Father before himself. (v. 6)**

In verses 6-11 we find what some consider an early church **hymn** written by Paul or someone else that the church may have sung. This poem starts in verse 6, "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage." We see two things here:

- A. **Jesus is the most important being in the universe.** Jesus is the divine being. That's what "being in very nature God" means. Jesus is equal with God the Father. He is God. And yet...
- B. **Jesus still found a way to put his Father first.** He "did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage." In other words, he didn't use his God powers to get his own way.

Jesus could have called **ten thousand angels** down to deliver him from the cross (Matt 26:53), but instead he did his Father's will so every word of Scripture would come true. *Jesus thought of the Father's will before his own.* I see two ways to apply this to our own lives:

- a. **Value your peers before yourself.** It's easy for us to think, "I'm just as good as that person. I'm as smart as them, as cool as them, as strong as them." Even if those things are true, Jesus doesn't think that way, so neither should we. Instead, let's think, "We're both **valuable** to God, made in his image. How can I show this person they are valuable?" That doesn't just mean do whatever they want, but it does mean showing them respect in your attitude and actions.
- b. **Value the Father's will before your own.** Just like Jesus honored God the Father, so we should develop a mindset of thinking about God the Father first. The **Bible** is called **God's Word**. So we develop a God-centered mindset by reading and studying God's Word and letting it shape how we think about life and interact with others. *Jesus thought of the Father before himself and so should we.*

I wanted to share a story with you of someone modeling humility to me, of someone valuing me as more important than himself. I actually thought of a local pastor. About a year ago **Pastor Peter Wu**, who is the Senior Pastor of the Chinese Bible Church of Greater Lowell (**CBCGL**), which is the church on route 110 between Westford and Chelmsford, set up an appointment to come meet with me. He is a Pastor of a church that I think has about 600 people, and worships in three different **languages**, Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. He oversees all of this plus five pastors, and yet he wanted to come see me here at Cornerstone. And when he came to meet me, he very humbly asked for **my opinion** on a decision.

About a month later I got lunch with him and his staff and his youth pastor told me Pastor Peter Wu is the **Haddon Robinson** of China. That doesn't mean much to you, but to me that means a lot. Haddon Robinson invented "big idea" preaching (I have his book on my shelf) and taught at the seminary I attended, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Pastor Peter Wu has a PhD, has written several books, and taught at a Bible

College, but you would never know his accomplishments because of his humility. *Pastor Peter Wu thought of me before himself like Jesus thought of the Father before himself. He also...*

## 2. Jesus thought of us before himself. (v. 7-8)

Jesus had all the **rights** and **privileges** of God himself in heaven, but verse 7 says, “rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” I preached an overview of Philippians 2:6-11 this **summer** in our What We Believe sermon series when we talked about who Jesus is, The Son. I pointed out that in verse 7 there’s a hotly debated line, “he made himself nothing.” The Greek word **kenōō** for “nothing” means “empty.” So it’s saying, “Jesus **emptied** himself.” Theologians have argued over what Jesus emptied himself of time and time again. This summer I explained Jesus didn’t stop being omniscient, omnipresent, or omnipotent because those are **attributes** of God, and he can’t stop being God.

To find what this “emptying” **means** we just look to the second half of the verse; “he made himself nothing **by** (how did he do it? By...) taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” It’s not that Jesus lost his divinity, but that he **gained humanity**. He left the perfection of heaven for the imperfection of this world. By coming into this world, Jesus experienced what it’s like to get **sick** and dirty and **stub** your **toe**. He could feel pain and cry. We know God understands how awful the **Vegas Shooting** is because he entered into this world through Christ and experienced our **sorrow** and suffering as a **human** being.

Why did Jesus do this? Because he was **thinking** of his Father’s will, but also of sinful men and women, boys and girls, who need a **savior**. Verse 8 says, “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a **cross!**” Gordon Fee says “the cross was reserved for **slaves** and **insurrectionists**.”<sup>1</sup> It was the worst way to die; but even worse, the cross was a **curse**.

**Galatians 3:13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree” — (NIV®)

When the first people sinned, **Adam** and **Eve**, they came under God’s curse. But what does Jesus do? He humbles himself and enters into our curse. He **lowers** himself from heaven to this world, and if that’s not low enough, he comes under the very **wrath** of God and **dies**. He does this so that you and me, anyone who repents and puts their faith in Jesus, can be **set free** from the curse. *Do you see how low Jesus goes for us?*

*Who do you need to think of before yourself? Who do you consider to be less than you, who is **not a peer**, that you can elevate above yourself?* Think of someone you have a hard time putting **before** yourself. Maybe it’s your spouse, or your child, a parent, a coworker, or even a friend. Maybe you ignore this person because you don’t like them, or you don’t pay attention to them because you have more important things to do. I’m not suggesting you let this person **monopolize** you; but what would it look like for you to demonstrate to them their value? Maybe it means listening to them talk, or asking good questions about their lives, or if it’s your **spouse**, deferring to some of their desires, or your **child**, slowing down for them. *We can’t take on the curse for each other. Jesus already did that.* But we can pray, “Lord, help me love this person as Jesus. Help me think of them before myself. Fill me with your Holy Spirit to help me. Amen.”

*Jesus thought of us before himself.* Do you know why it’s hard to live this way? Because if all we ever do is humble ourselves, will it ever pay off? What if I keep going lower and lower until I die? That’s what happened to Jesus, but the story doesn’t end there.

## Result? The Father exalted him to the highest degree. (v. 9-11)

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<sup>1</sup> Fee, Gordon D. *Philippians* (The Ivp New Testament Commentary Series) (pp. 97-98). Intersociety Press - A. Kindle Edition.

“Therefore!” What’s it **there for**? To show that **because** of Christ’s humility, even to the point of death, “God exalted him to the highest place.” What does that mean? It means that when Jesus rose from the grave, and **ascended** into heaven, God the Father poured out the glories and praises of heaven in a way they had never known for all eternity past. The Father gave Jesus the **highest praise** possible.

God “gave him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father.” In the Old Testament, people over and over again call on “**the name** of the LORD—people like **Abraham** (Gen 12:8), **Isaac** (Gen 26:25), and **Jacob** (Gen 31:53). But as early as **300 BC**, the Jewish people stopped calling God “Yahweh” out of **reverence** for God, so they would call him by other titles like “the name” or “adonai” (which is Hebrew for “Lord”).<sup>2</sup>

When the Jews translated the **Old Testament** into **Greek**, they translated God’s name, “Yahweh,” as “Kurios,” which means “Lord.” Remember last week I said the Romans called their **emperor** “Lord and Savior.” In **verse 11** Paul is taking this **title** head on. Only Jesus deserves the title Lord! Why? Because Jesus shares “the name” with his Heavenly Father. He is God! He is Yahweh (Isaiah 45:23)! And every heavenly or hellish tongue, every living or dead tongue, every **willing** or **unwilling** tongue, will one day confess Jesus is the **Lord God** and worship him.

On that final day, will you confess Jesus is God **willingly** or **unwillingly**? Will you confess him as **Lord** but **not** as your **Savior**? We can change that. Today can be the day that you can willingly confess Jesus is both your Lord and your Savior. Jesus **isn’t** a **demanding** far off God. He is one that humbled himself and entered into our human experience to know and love us.

For those of you who struggle with humility I have a second application. The Elders are memorizing **1 Peter 5:1-11** together. One of the verses says this.

**1 Peter 5:6** Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. (NIV®)

Jesus promises that any who humbles themselves, he will exalt. That’s not **empty-glory**. Jesus doesn’t make us play the **Keno lottery**. He is a **sure bet**. *He promises to lift up any who humble themselves, look to Christ, and seek to lift others up above themselves.*

## ***Think like Christ and humble yourself.***

Twitter limits its user’s posts to **140 characters**. *If someone summed up your life in 140 words or less, would it sound like a humble brag or like you’re seeking to lift others up and humble yourself before Jesus?* The **good news** is that if you trust in Christ, you are not **defined** by 140 characters. You are defined by **Christ**. Knowing what Christ did for us, leaving perfection to enter into our world, it humbles us. As his **disciples**, let’s live that same way. Let’s have the **mindset** of Christ. *Think like Christ and humble yourself.*

*Pastor Jonathan Romig wrote and preached this message for the people of Cornerstone Congregational Church. [Click here to listen to more sermons](#) or [click here to read our story](#).*

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<sup>2</sup> Fee, Gordon D. *Philippians* (The Ivp New Testament Commentary Series) (p. 99). Intervarsity Press - A. Kindle Edition.