

WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Christ Church, Crouch End Hill

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No: 17

Philippians Chapter 1:27 - 2:11

INTRODUCTION

We regularly quote things out of their original context - but often they lose something of their original meaning in the process. That's true of the words of Philippians 2.5- 11. The passage is an incredibly beautiful and moving description of the way Christ, out of love for us, humbled himself in becoming man but was then exalted by God. It may have been a quotation from a hymn already in existence which Paul used here, which gives us some justification for using it that way. Nevertheless, in its context it is not an abstract hymn of praise but it has a very practical purpose. Christ's example is used to encourage Christians to show humility in their relationships with one another and to have a willingness to serve. If they follow that example, says Paul, they will be able to overcome their divisions and so work and witness for Christ in a united way, which will deal with the opposition they face. This pathway of humility and service is the opposite to that which the world takes.

Our study begins by focusing on the value of unity and then looks at the sort of unity we should display and the Christ-like path of humble service. We should aim to consider ways by which we crystallize ideas about the service we should be undertaking and/or the service in which we are currently involved.

AIM

To see that Christ-like humility and service are the key to a united witness to others.

READ PHILIPPIANS 1.27-2: 11

"United we stand, divided we fall," goes the saying.

- List examples which prove the truth of that, either from history or your own experience.
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Questions for discussions

- Why is Paul keen that Christians should be united? (1.27-30).
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- What things in the way we live can demonstrate to others that we believe in Christ?
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- What is the effect of our unity on those who oppose us? (1.28).
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- What are the things which should prompt our oneness? (2.1-2).
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- Is suffering for the faith part of the experience of all Christians? (1.29-30).
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- What evidence can you see in your church of people being: like-minded? having the "same love"? being one in spirit and purpose?
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- How do we count others "better than ourselves" when we feel, in all honesty, that we are better than them? (2.3)
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- Should we have a low estimate of ourselves and our abilities?
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- What does Paul teach about the nature of true humility? How does this differ from the attitudes of those around us?
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- How might selfish ambition or vain conceit show itself in a Christian today
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- What does Jesus' example demonstrate about humility and service? (2.5-1 1)
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- Why did he do all this? How can we put others first in the way we live our lives?
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- What does Paul's picture of Christ (2.5-1 1) teach us about Christ's true nature? About his incarnation? About his position now? About his future position?
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ACTIVITY

THE JESUS VISIT

Divide the group into smaller groups of three or four.

Jesus is coming to visit your church and area. Your task is to plan an itinerary for him. He will be in the area for a whole day. You need to specify an exact timetable (eg. 9.30 meet X at Y; 10.15 move on to Z by route 'A' etc). Where he goes; who he meets and talks to; what his programme is; which parts of your church and/or area he sees (and which you do not take him to) are all entirely up to you. Money is no object. You may lay on any programme you wish.

After the planning stage the groups present their proposed itineraries.

The value of the exercise will lie in the discussion that follows. Groups need to explain why they created the programmes they did. At some point the leader needs to draw their attention to Phil. 2.4-11 and raise questions about how far the various schedules try to reflect "the mind of Christ".

Did Jesus see all the 'right' people?

What areas of the church and town were thought appropriate?

What proportion of time was spent with the church as opposed to the town?

Did the Christians keep him to themselves or did they display the same "emptying" and "self-giving" as Jesus did?

What did the schedules reveal about the picture we have of "the mind of Christ"?

The idea for this exercise is taken from Jim Belben and Trevor Cooper, "Everyone's A Winner", Bible Society. (1987)