

MAY  
2022

Donald J. Wills  
*Senior Pastor*

**FOLLOW**



ADULT CONNECT  
CLASS CURRICULUM

The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

Dear FBC family and friends,

Often, the term Christian is viewed as simply a label because of what we do. It's like there is a checklist with specific items and if you are going to be considered a Christian you must check all the boxes. It becomes very task-driven and in turn that becomes our identity what we have done or accomplished. However, Paul gives a different perspective in Philippians with the phrase he often uses of "in Christ." Being a Christian is not what we do, but who we are and because of who we are that becomes the motivation behind what we do not the other way around. You can do and not love or know Christ, but you cannot love or know Christ and not do. Paul states it this way in Ephesians, "We are created in Christ Jesus, unto good works" ([Eph. 2:10](#)).

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God's Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

There is a practical side to the Christian life. Paul in Philippians has a theme of Living the Christian life with an emphasis on the practical. May we strive to live each day with a firm understanding of whose we are and live it out so that others may come to the saving knowledge of Christ.

-Blessings  
Pastor Don



## *Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively*

### *Introduce*

**Day 1:** Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Instruct*

**Day 2:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

**Day 3:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Inspire*

**Day 4:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Incorporate*

**Day 5:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

**Day 6:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

**Day 7:** Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.



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May 1, 2022



# *Follow in Practice*

## *Philippians 1:27-2:4*

Focal Verse:

“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

Philippians 1:27

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## Introduce

Recently, after concluding our Wednesday night Bible study for adults, an eight-year-old girl stood in the hallway patiently waiting to ask me a question. With her grandfather, Bo Boatman, in tow standing behind her with his arms on her shoulders, she declares, "I have a question for you." Bending down and leaning forward, I replied, "What is that?" In all seriousness, she asks, "Do they have shoes in Kentucky?" She and her father were preparing to travel to Kentucky, my home for two decades, for a national competition. Rather loudly, I chirped, "What?! Who told you to ask that?" While pointing at her grandfather, I said, "Was it him?" Standing there grinning sheepishly, Boatman's only reply was, "Shocking."

Not even really interested in the answer to the question, she bounded down the hall. Knowing some of the stereotypes assigned to those from Kentucky, I yelled in her direction, "Do you want to see my teeth too?" Although all in good fun, it illustrates a valuable point. Certain characteristics and traits define us based on "citizenship" or where we live. Even in modern America, some people earnestly have similar beliefs about Texas. They expect Texans to wear boots, brandish big belt buckles, and don a ten-gallon hat. In all seriousness, some ask where we hitch our



*Actors, Not Actual People from Kentucky*

horses and believe every suburban home comes with an oil well in the backyard. Only if the latter were true these days!

Where we live and the people with whom we interact do often have a profound impact on our appearance and how we conduct ourselves. As we can clearly see, some of these perceptions are wildly off base. And sometimes people have a gross misconception of what a follower of Christ should look like and what he should be. The truth is, however, that certain characteristics should define us as believers. They should distinguish us from the world, for our "conduct" should "be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil 1:27). We ought to conduct ourselves as "citizens of heaven" ([Phil 3:20](#)), bearing the righteous characteristics of Christ rather than surrendering to the

## Introduce

stereotypes of the world.

Paul doesn't leave us to guess what it means to conduct ourselves in such a manner, but he defines it for us (Phil 2:1-4). As followers of Christ, we should exhibit love and mercy, being unified with one purpose—to glorify Him. We should live humbly, looking after the interests of others, and not engaging in selfish or self-centered activity. We ought to display these Christ-like characteristics boldly so that they accurately come to define who He has made us. When others look at us, may they see these characteristics rather than the world's stereotypical view of a hypocrite. May we conduct ourselves as citizens of heaven being identified as followers of Christ!

Key  
Question

What stereotypes does the world have about followers of Christ?

### Philippians 1:26-30

#### ***PRACTICE THE WORD THROUGH YOUR CONDUCT:***

The Bible is a book that God designed not only to be read, but also to be applied or practiced. Therefore, Paul begins this section with a command that the Philippians **let their conduct be worthy of the gospel** ([Eph 4:1-6](#)). In other words, he encourages them to live out their faith by practicing it in their attitude and behavior. In the next few verses, Paul spells out in detail what type of **conduct** a Christian should exhibit by describing four specific characteristics. Consequently, he contends that Christians should 1) seek to live in unity (Phil 1:27; 2:2), 2) defend the gospel in both word and deed (Phil 1:27-28), 3) persevere in spite of persecution (1:29-30), and 4) maintain the right perspective (2:3-4).

As a follower of Christ, we have taken a new oath whereby we have forsaken our old way of life and surrendered completely to the will of God so that we might live according to His standards, representing Him in holiness to the world around us. Because we are technically foreigners here on earth and truly citizens of heaven, we ought to **conduct** our lives in a way that honors and glorifies God by imitating the Son whom He sent on our behalf. In the focal verse of this lesson, Paul urges the Philippians to **let their conduct be worthy of the gospel**. The word Paul uses for **conduct** literally means “to behave as a citizen.” As a citizen of heaven, we should **conduct** our lives with humility and strive to live in unity, working together to accomplish the will of God. Each one of us, therefore, plays an integral part in advancing the Kingdom of God in the way that we practice the Word in our attitude, in our speech, and in our actions. The middle school which I attended in small-town Kentucky awarded three students, one from each grade level, the title “Citizen of the Week” based on our **conduct**. To receive the award, which was nothing more than a blue ribbon and our name announced over the intercom, we had to meet specific requirements which we visibly demonstrated through our character. Teachers would nominate us based on





## Instruct

whether we were compliant, cooperative, compassionate, and, of course, studious. Our **conduct** had to be **worthy** to merit the award! Evidence of our good **conduct** must be consistent with the definition of what it meant to be a good “citizen.” Similarly, as Christians, our **conduct** must be **worthy** of the name of the Savior whom we bear. Evidence of our good **conduct** must be consistent with His Word and His character. Others must visibly see those traits displayed in us. On the other hand, we do not become **worthy** by what we do, but He makes us **worthy** in response to **the gospel** which in turn influences how we live.

If God were to dole out the title “Citizen of the Week,” what would He emphasize about your character / conduct?

Question  
# 1

Because we will focus on unity in the next section, we will commence our discussion with Paul’s instruction that the Philippians **strive together for the faith of the gospel**. The word translated **striving together** comes from the world of sports where it connotes working as a team to achieve a common goal. Our modern word athlete actually originates with this Greek term. The verb form used in Phil 1:27 literally means to compete together. Whether we realize it or not, culture competes against us in a titanic struggle for our attention and our allegiance. It exerts a tremendous amount of influence and pressure on us to conform to its ways. It seeks to isolate and disenfranchise those who don’t share its views. The culture, although it claims to be tolerant, has waged war on anyone who refuses to accept its wayward tenets. Unfortunately, the culture seems to be winning the battle as many have turned from the truth to their own sinful desires.

How are we in a competition with culture as believers?

Question  
# 2

Paul, however, urges us to contend for **the gospel together**, drawing strength from like-minded people who stand firm on God’s principles. Thus, **together** we defend **the gospel** both verbally and through our radically changed lives which reflect Christ’s character to a dark and depraved world ([Phil 2:15](#)). As Christians, we must work **together** as a team. No one should ever become isolated because each member plays an important role and the team becomes stronger when all the parts work

together harmoniously rather than individualistically; therefore, we ought to bear one another's burdens, encourage each other, and partner together to advance **the gospel** (Phil 1:3). In addition, we also need to draw strength from one another to face a secular culture that opposes Christian values and has rejected the gospel so that we can maintain a good testimony that points others to Christ.



Using the same sports metaphor Paul uses here, we can identify three primary ways that we allow culture to advance against us rather than boldly allowing the gospel to advance against it. First, we don't follow God's game plan (Scripture). We don't read it or apply it as we should. Second, we become like a self-seeking superstar. The team revolves around him; he doesn't sacrifice and play for the team. Hence, our desires and preferences become the center of attention—and not God's. We want everything our way and the world to revolve around us! Third, we lose focus by paying attention to the crowd rather than focusing on the game. We want to please the crowd, so we go along with them. We become distracted because we seek their approval rather than the approval of the Lord. To resist these tendencies, God has placed us in a body, the church, to work **together**. As a body of believers, we should continually point each other to Christ, remind each other about the game plan God has given us in His Word, and gently and lovingly correct each other when we stray. Through the empowerment of God Himself, we need each other to find strength to resist the culture.

How do you find encouragement through the church to resist a wayward culture that promotes sin?

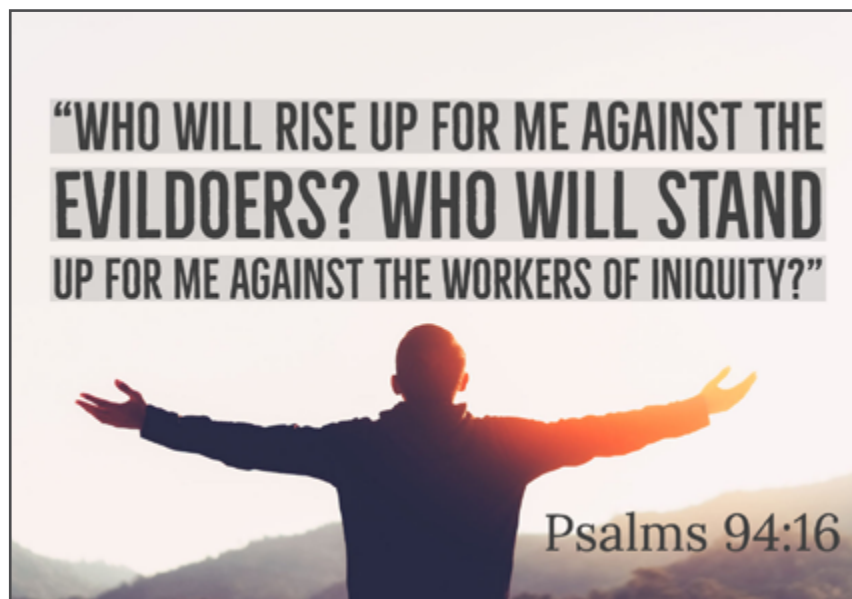
Question  
# 3

Furthermore, another significant part of defending **the gospel** means that we must stand strong against our **adversaries** and not retreat in the face of a cultural war on biblical values (v. 28). Paul warns the Philippians that they must strive together without being **in any way terrified**. Because we have joined the victorious side in Christ, what do we have to fear? Paul explains that the fear and uncertainty of the world is a sign

## Instruct

of their **perdition** or destructive behavior that separates them from God whereas our boldness in **striving together** to advance the gospel, even in the face of opposition, is **proof** of our **salvation**. We simply need to look at the world around us right now to see this perdition or destruction. Culture is destroying itself through moral decay. The family has eroded and been replaced with confused identities in which every kind of moral debauchery goes!

Today, the roles have become reversed with secular culture having a stronger voice in promoting immorality than Christians have in promoting morality and righteousness



in Christ. Although the world may exhibit uncertainty about life after death, they act boldly in championing their immoral choices while Christians have tended to shrink back in fear becoming overwhelmed by the culture. Instead, as Paul suggests, it should be the opposite. Christians should proactively battle immoral cultural choices with the

proclamation of **the gospel**. Not only do we need to stand against immorality verbally, but we must also keep ourselves from participating in it lest we be labeled hypocrites. Consequently, we need to proclaim boldly the Word of God while at the same time living by its standards.

How can we work together as a church to stand against the culture?

Question  
# 4

Because the Christian life at many times may involve suffering and persecution, we must persevere. Paul makes it clear that the Philippians could experience suffering because he reveals that **it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake** (v. 29). In addition, Paul warns them that they will face the **same conflict** which he himself has faced whether this means imprisonment or physical violence (v. 30). Nonetheless, even today Christians will frequently encounter suffering which may come in the form of ridicule, exclusion

from certain social groups, lack of freedom to express Christian views in public, and even beatings, rejection by other family members, and even death. Yet, in the face of persecutions, we must remain strong, knowing that our true citizenship is in heaven and that God will reward our faithfulness by bringing countless people to an understanding of salvation and a relationship with His Son so that they might have eternal life.

In what way have you personally seen persecution on the rise in our society? How should we react to such persecution?

Question  
# 5

## **Philippians 2:1-2**

### **CONDUCT YOURSELF IN UNITY:**

Paul actually introduces the concept of unity in [1:27](#) when he encourages the Philippians to **stand fast in one spirit**. The concept of **standing fast** comes from a military background in which an army stands shoulder to shoulder to defend against an opposing army so that the attacker may not advance and gain ground; therefore, within this context, it signifies the need to remain focused on the task at hand—the advance of **the gospel**. A military unit knows its objective and spends countless hours training for its mission. Each member of the unit knows his or her role and works together to strengthen the whole. In the same way, Christians ought to know the biblical foundation for living according to God’s Word and fulfill their God-given duties within the church to strengthen it as a whole. As Christians, not only must we stand fast with integrity in righteousness so that the enemy cannot get a foothold ([Eph 4:20-32](#)), but we must also **strive together** in unity to defend **the gospel**.

### ***In-Depth Information***



*Notice the emphasis Paul places on the concept of unity in this passage; six times he urges them to stand unified by expressing it in different ways: 1) stand fast in **one** spirit, 2) with **one** mind striving **together**, 3) being **like-minded**, 4) having the **same** love 5) being of **one accord**, and 6) of **one** mind.*

Moreover, a functioning military unit also has a single goal or purpose in its mission. Because they have the same thought process, even though they may have different jobs, they will still work **together** to accomplish a single goal. In the same way, Paul describes the need for Christians to be unified by urging us to act **with one mind** or





to be **like-minded** and of **one mind** ([1:27](#); [2:2](#)). In other words, we should have a Christ-like perspective and attitude about the world around us ([Phil 2:5](#)) and we should maintain pure and holy thoughts ([Phil 4:8-9](#)). If we have this Christ-like perspective, then we will display this **same** type of **love** to one another.

Our **love** becomes visible through cooperation and the laying aside of personal preferences to advance the Kingdom of God and glorify Him. In addition, we ought to **love** others sacrificially which means that we should forgive them when they wrong us and seek to maintain harmony and decorum with those who despise us. Not only should we express **love** to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, but we also ought to express **love** to the world around us by introducing them into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Although Paul can praise the Philippian church as a whole for their participation in the gospel from the first day, he also acknowledges that they have a problem with disunity in their midst. Paul asks two women, Euodia and Syntyche, “to be of the same mind” ([Phil 4:2](#)). Because Paul doesn’t address any doctrinal issues that could have caused the division, we can assume that the women had a dispute over personal preferences. To achieve a common goal, we must put personal preferences aside and work together in the Lord.

In what ways do you promote unity within the church in striving for the purposes of Christ?

Question  
# 6

We often lack unity in churches today because believers have lost focus on what’s truly important. Personal views and preferences receive preferential treatment over the truth of Scripture. The struggle, therefore, becomes to have “my voice” heard instead of hearing and heeding the voice of the Shepherd! In doing so, our personal ambitions and desires become our individual pursuit rather than pursuing a relationship with the Lord who helps us to see the bigger picture. Consequently, even our “service” to the Lord can become corrupted if we fail to see the bigger picture of what God wants to

do through the church as a whole and how all our ministries and areas of service fit together for the work of the kingdom!

Bible study classes, ministries, and areas of service can become a means of competition against each other if we lose sight of the purpose for which Christ has called us. We should, however, not compete against each other, but strive against the world so that the enemy does not advance! Our focus should not be cornering the market for a ministry or doing it our way, but rather what collectively provides the most impact for kingdom growth and the glory of Jesus Christ. Therefore, may we work **together** to promote **the gospel** and defend the truth in a culture that has lost its way and is headed for destruction.

### ***Philippians 2:2-4***

#### ***CONDUCT YOURSELF WITH HUMILITY:***

To be unified and working toward a single purpose, we also ought to exercise humility in our lives. For the most part, we live in a selfish world in which people tend to worry only about themselves, but as followers of Christ we should exhibit selflessness. Last month, we saw that some who preached the gospel did so from selfish motives, but here Paul urges us to examine our lives in terms of our service to others not from **selfish ambition or conceit**. We



should look out for **the needs of others** rather than only to **our own interests** (v. 4). The term **lowliness of mind** can also be translated as humility (v. 3). In this sense, humility signifies having the right perspective. We can have “false” humility in which we always put ourselves down and talk about how worthless we are. On the other hand, we can be arrogant and elevate our achievements which reflects the opposite of humility. When Paul refers to humility in this passage, he is not describing either of these concepts, but rather urging us to maintain the right perspective in relation to God and others. He even more clearly explains the concept in Romans 12:3: “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a

measure of faith." We should adopt God's outlook and see things from His perspective!

How has adopting God's perspective or outlook changed the way that you view the world?

Question  
# 7

In order to follow the example of Christ, we should put others first just as He did during His earthly ministry. While on the cross, Jesus thought not of Himself, but of those past, present, and future for whom He was sent to die. His love for us led Him to give the most magnificent sacrifice that the world has ever known so that we, even though His enemies at the time, might have eternal life. What better way could we glorify Him than to share that same sacrificial love to others and meet their needs so that we can minister to them?

Every October the regular season ends and the playoffs begin for Major League Baseball. At the beginning of the season, every team aspires to win the World Series. Each player works hard in the offseason to train, so that he can contribute to the team's effort to be crowned the world champion. From Spring Training through the 162-game season, each team has the same goal and hopefully every player puts aside his own personal goals and accolades in contribution to the team's success. One or two individuals alone cannot compete in the World Series; it requires the entire team: batting, pitching, and defense.

As Christians we must have a singular goal which is to glorify God through the way that we live and to participate in the ministry of the church to advance the gospel. Undoubtedly, every one of us has opinions and personal preferences as to the way the church as a whole should minister, but we need to look past our preferences and see the bigger picture; therefore, we need to stand unified in order to defend and advance the gospel through our words and deeds. Having the right perspective means that we look to the needs of others above our own so that we can glorify God in our conduct as heavenly citizens. Let's not let the enemy advance, but let us stand shoulder to shoulder united as partners **striving for the faith of the gospel** because we **love** Christ which allows us to love one another so that we can see ministry from Christ's perspective rather than from **our own interests**.

In what ways have you put aside your own interests to serve others and glorify Christ?

Question  
# 8



## ***Inspire***

Although we can observe several misguided stereotypes about the appearance and conduct of people from certain geographical places as we learned in the introduction, Scripture gives us a clear snapshot of the conduct we ought to exhibit as believers. We ought to conduct ourselves worthy of the gospel whereby we act selflessly, putting aside our pride and personal ambition, to collectively strive against the culture and stand without compromise on the truth. Let us, therefore, strive together as the people of God contending for the gospel, so that the truth may advance into the world aided by our consistent practice of its principles.

## ***Incorporate***

Specifically, how do you see your role in striving together with this local body (church) to stand firm on the gospel in the midst of a wayward culture?

How does the church help you prepare for and strengthen you to face this struggle against the culture?

In what ways have you forsaken your own interests to help others? How can we as a church have that mindset as an entire community?

*May 8, 2022 (Mother's Day)*



# *Follow in Prayer*

## *1 Samuel 1:1-18*

Focal Verse:

"But Hannah answered and said, 'No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord.'"

1 Samuel 1:1-18

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## Introduce

Godly mothers don't boast or advertise how much time they spend in prayer for their children. They do so quietly without fanfare. They pray tirelessly day and night.

Although we may not ever know the exact words they utter, we can tangibly see the effects of their prayers on our lives. Perhaps, Abraham Lincoln best captures the impact of a prayerful mother when he speaks of his own: "I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life."\* Their prayers are effectual because



they stem from a heart devoted to the purposes of the Lord as well as from their unconditional love for us. May we be forever grateful to the Lord for godly mothers who prayed so fervently for us!

The pages of Scripture are filled with godly women who devoted themselves to prayer. But we can also look around and see such godly women in our own lives who follow this same pattern of praying today—both our mothers and our wives. The prayer of a godly mother begins even before the conception of her children, whereby she seeks the will of the Lord and dedicates them preemptively to serve Him for His purpose. We observe such an attitude in Hannah, the mother of Samuel, whose prayer in 1 Samuel 1 we will study this week. From the womb, as in the case of Rebekah ([Gen 25:22](#)), mothers also pray for their children's physical well-being and for their future.

Through prayer, mothers express their unconditional love, praying for our salvation through Christ and dedicating us into His providential care. As we grow, they pray for wisdom from the Lord to direct our paths righteously. And, when we do engage in the folly of youth, they pray for a course correction when we stray and make mistakes. They pray for our protection when we make unwise and reckless choices—boys probably more so than girls—but nonetheless they pray consistently. My mother texts often to let me know she loves me and is praying for me—especially on Sundays and Tuesdays when I teach and preach. Although she prays for me in other ways on other days, my mother knows the power of a prayer in dedicating ourselves to the service of the Lord

## Introduce

at all times in every way. As we celebrate our mothers this week, may we give thanks to the Lord for their love, compassion, care, and nurture which we can see through their prayers for us.

Key  
Question

In what ways have you seen your mother pray for you?

## In Reference



Wallace Rice, ed., *The Lincoln Yearbook: Axioms and Aphorisms from the Great Emancipator* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Co., 1907), p. 25.

### 1 Samuel 1:1-7

#### ***PRAYER REMEDIES PROVOCATION:***

After opening with a brief genealogy of a man by the name of Elkanah (v. 1), the text quickly turns to discuss the current situation with his two wives (v. 2). Elkanah married Hannah, whose name means “gracious woman,” and Peninnah whose name probably means something like “pearl.” Although Scripture doesn’t indicate whom Elkanah married first, perhaps by the order we can assume that it was Hannah whom God had made barren and unable to produce children. For this reason, Elkanah could have taken Peninnah as his wife so that he could produce a descendant and heir just as Abraham had done with Hagar years earlier. Despite the scant details about whom he married first, Scripture clearly indicates that he **loved** and favored Hannah more as evidenced by **the double portion** which he would give her (v. 5).

In this opening chapter of 1 Samuel, we see a vivid contrast between two warring mindsets: one that reflects devotion to the Lord and the other that mimics the thinking of the world. Hannah and Elkanah devoutly served the Lord, but Peninnah engaged in petty jealousy and bitterness, seeking to **provoke** Hannah in her inability to have children. Every year, Elkanah took his family **to worship** the Lord **in Shiloh** and offer the prescribed sacrifices (v. 3). Based on inferences drawn from the text, their devotion wasn’t based upon tradition or show, but a genuine relationship with the Lord. As righteous and devoted as Elkanah was, Hannah was even more so. When life pressed around her on all sides bringing discouragement and heartache, she turned to the Lord in prayer.



What petitions have you brought before the Lord when you experienced discouragement or heartache?

Question  
# 1



## Instruct

Scripture never portrays polygamy in a positive light even though people participate in the practice. It always led to major problems! Abraham, for example, lacked faith and grew impatient with the Lord to fulfill His promise through Sarah, so he took her handmaiden, Hagar, and bore a son through her. This created much animosity and bitterness between the women despite it even being Sarah's idea! That hatred and bitterness still causes much dissension and friction in the Middle East and around the world today! Problems also existed between Leah and Rachel and their sons in which Jacob showed more favor toward Joseph. Following the era in 1 Samuel, we should also note that Solomon's propensity for multiple marriages caused him to turn his heart from the Lord ([1 Kings 11:4](#))! Therefore, we ought to realize that God intended marriage to be between one man and one woman for life!

Here, in Elkanah's story, we see a bitter competition between his two wives which combines elements of all the problems these type of polygamous relationships created previously! In much the same way that Jacob shows favor to Rachel over Leah, Elkanah gives preferential treatment to Hannah. The text neither states nor implies that he mistreated or despised Peninnah. He sufficiently took care of her and her children with which the Lord had blessed them. Yet, the text never explicitly states that he **loved** her as it does for his love for Hannah—even in her barrenness!

He **loved** Hannah greatly and this showed in his treatment of her. He gave her a **double portion** of food, particularly meat, even though she could bear no children (v. 5). Culturally, a wife would be given an allotment of food so that she could distribute it amongst her children as well as herself. Elkanah's preferential treatment of Hannah caused great consternation in the marriage and pitted the wives against one another. Even though the text takes care not to call the two women "rivals," twice it says



that Peninnah **provoked her severely**. She antagonized and mocked Hannah in her barrenness (vv. 6-7).

Any time we have such a relationship between two people—whether in marriage or among siblings, employees, or even friends—competition can naturally occur unless we exercise caution. When it does, one often tries to receive honor at the expense of degrading or humiliating the other! Jesus even speaks against this type of attitude in the New Testament albeit in the context of money or wealth. He decries, “We cannot have two masters; for we will love one and hate the other. We cannot love both God and mammon or wealth” ([Matt 6:24](#)). The principle behind this thought lies at the heart of the issue here in 1 Samuel—favoritism will be shown to one over the other which causes turmoil in all the relationships.

How have you seen favoritism in human relationships? What steps must we take so that favoritism doesn't devolve into rivalry?

Question  
# 2

This provocation and mockery took its toll upon Hannah even though she trusted the Lord and turned to Him in prayer. She **wept** bitterly and could not eat (vv. 7-8). She experienced the symptoms of deep depression. She desperately needed a new perspective. She needed something that only the Lord could give her. In fact, the word translated **wept** in Hebrew is most often used for a mother grieving the death of a child or from someone experiencing tremendous physical turmoil. Nothing can offer them comfort and consolation. In Scripture, when this term is employed, the only source of relief is God—not another human being.

Although we should offer words of consolation and comfort where we can as the Lord leads, ultimate healing and restoration come only when we look to Him ([2 Cor 1:3-11](#))! Problems abound, however, when we don't turn to the Lord first and we focus on the situation from a human point of view. As a result, we attempt to console others with mere human compassion. When we do, we will continue unabated down a path of despair and we will never be able to extricate ourselves from its grips. We will have no hope. We have no solution for resolving our problems even though sometimes we throw things out to see what works. We hope and “pray” for the best. At other times, we simply sit idle and do nothing; we complain and resign ourselves to failure—woe is me for no one can help me because we have not looked to the One who can.

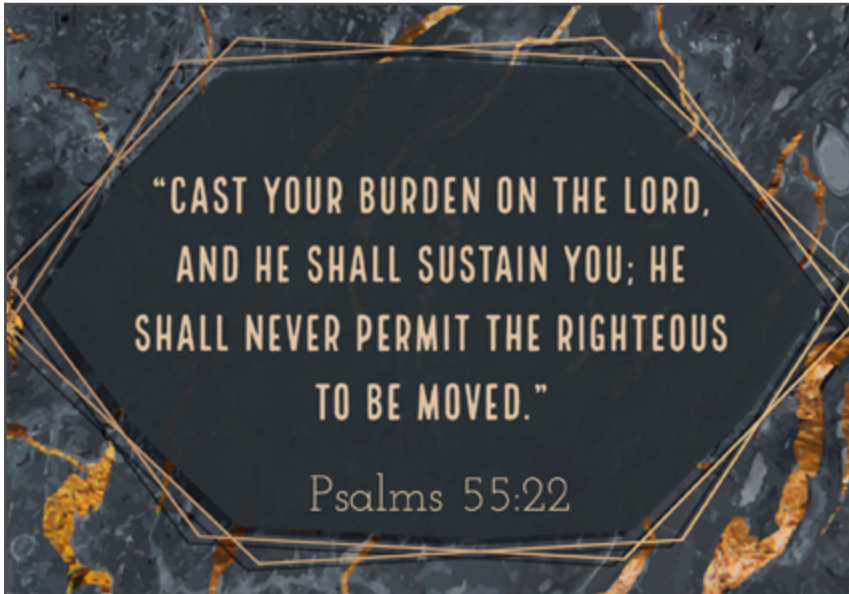
Furthermore, we may even see our problems as unique as if no one else in the world has ever faced what we have. Consequently, we need a new perspective—one which gives us hope—not one that promises a temporary respite. Otherwise, it can lead to many physical, emotional, and social problems in life both immediately and down the



## Instruct

road. Despair and depression, in fact, can lead to many different types of problems if we don't have the right source from which our perspective comes. It can lead to physical issues. For example, the text notes that Hannah did **not eat** (v. 8). And this is only one health problem that can occur!

From both commonsense and scientific studies, such depression can also lead to the



lack of sleep and high levels of stress which has numerous adverse effects. On the other hand, it can have the opposite effect in some people. They withdraw from society. They can eat and sleep too much. Moreover, depression can cause emotional problems where people lash out at those who love them and want to help. It can

cause people to seek attention from others. Rather than have a normal relationship with others, people will say and do things to draw attention to themselves. This causes friction in relationships because the attention must center around that person regardless of what is going on in the lives of other individuals.

How does depression and stress affect you?  
How does knowing the symptoms help you to battle it?

Question  
# 3

Fortunately, for Hannah, she knew where to turn for help and guidance. She turned to the Lord in prayer. Apart from the Lord, it becomes easy to retaliate against the world with the same mindset whereby we repay evil with evil or we seek revenge. Although Hannah experienced depression and the words of her rival pierced her heart, she never retaliated in bitterness, nor did she seek to get even. She had the same perspective as the Lord because she sought Him in prayer. Jesus, for example, had rivals in the religious leaders of His day; they attacked Him, falsely accused Him, and tried to incite people against Him—and eventually they succeeded in doing so—but Jesus never once retaliated ([Luke 23:34](#)). Instead, He prayed for their forgiveness because they

knew not what they were doing. We need the Lord's perspective and guidance to help us overcome and stay on the right track.

How has the Lord given you perspective through prayer when you've faced a challenging situation in life?

Question  
# 4

## 1 Samuel 1:8-10

### ***PRAY PERPETUALLY:***

One day after having gone **to worship** the Lord **in Shiloh** and participate in a ritual meal together from the sacrifices that they had made to Him, Elkanah noticed Hannah's demeanor, so he expressly asked what was wrong. In a series of questions that he poses one after another, he asks: "**Why**

are you crying? **Why don't you eat? Why is your heart troubled**"

(v. 8). But as he asked, he most likely surmised the root of the problem, Hannah's barrenness, because he eventually asks, "**Am I not better than ten sons to you?**"

The phrase **ten sons** has a biblical precedent in the life of Jacob and his first wife Leah. Together they

had **ten sons**, but we saw earlier the fact that he loved Rachel more deeply than he did Leah. Now, Elkanah brings that point to the forefront here. He loves her, has provided for her, and cares for her more than anyone else in the world which is why he poses the questions this way.

The Bible doesn't record Hannah's response if she made any, but what is notable is that her first response to grief is prayer! **After** the family **had finished** their meal together, Hannah got up and went to pray at the **tabernacle** where **Eli the priest was** seated by the door (v. 9). In any situation, our first response ought to be to pray. We should pray to the Lord when we're grieved or angry or feeling any other kind of emotion. We should turn to Him first! Many times, however, we try to resolve the issue on our own before we turn to the Lord. If **provoked**, we spend time stewing about it. Indeed, Hannah was **in anguish** over her situation (v. 10). Yet, we shouldn't only pray to the



## Instruct

Lord when we need something. We should pray to Him at all times; we should praise Him just as we will see Hannah do in [1 Samuel chapter 2](#) when God answers her prayers through the birth of her son! We need to ground ourselves in prayer. To have a proper perspective and avoid the pitfalls of the world, we need to pray daily.

When returning from the Institute of Creation Research on a trip with Legacy Adults two years ago just prior to the pandemic, I knew the direction in which to head on Royal Lane in Las Colinas to get on 161. Arriving at the underpass, however, a sign to the freeway directed us to turn right, but then there were no further signs or even a freeway entrance. After going a little way further with no luck at finding the onramp, I finally used the phone to bring up the GPS which got us back on track. Life, in many ways, becomes like this quest. We see what we think is a sign and clear direction, but we haven't sought the advice of the Lord. We turn only to wander aimlessly through life without direction because we really didn't know where we were going! We need to stay constantly plugged in to the Lord through prayer so that we can consistently know the direction to go—whether in good times or bad.

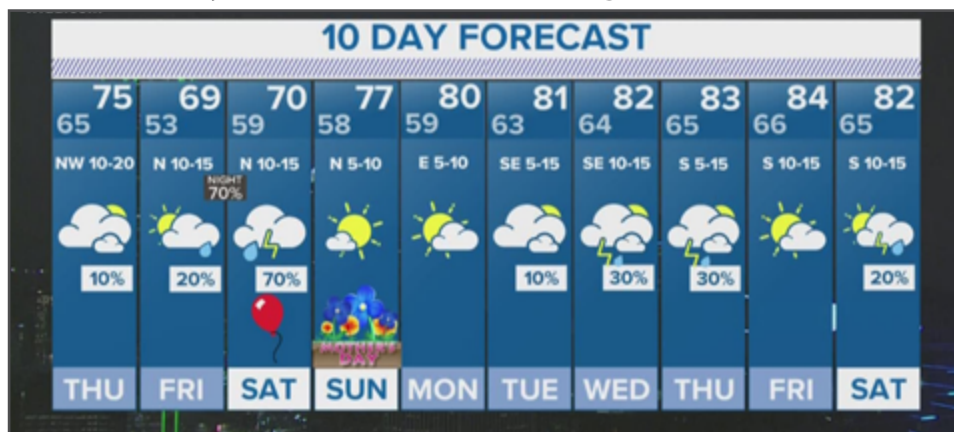
In what situations have you tried to do things on your own before turning to the Lord? How did that turn out? What did you learn from those experiences?

Question  
# 5

## 1 Samuel 1:11

### PRAY PRECISELY:

We live in a world of generalities where most people only know us on the surface. We have very few deep and meaningful conversations with people—even those we identify as our friends.



Think of the conversations that you've had this week or maybe even today. Certainly, the weather is an important topic, but that seems to be much conversation around here

when it's cold, hot, sunny, or rainy! When we ask people how others are, generally we

get a surface answer—some will give a detailed answer that we wish they would have filtered, but in general we speak in generalities—redundancy intended!

It takes years to get to know someone intimately. It doesn't just happen overnight, but through years of conversation and daily interaction. Although we have a close church family, one that serves, loves, and cares deeply for each other, how many close relationships would you say that you have where the person actually knows you? Some of you I wish I knew less about medically having been there at times when the hospital staff, doctors, and nurses asked all those personal questions before surgery! All kidding aside, however, I would say that I truly and deeply only know a handful of people more than just a surface level! God, however, wants us to have more than a surface-level relationship with Him. He wants us to pray precisely and purposefully. Therefore, we need to be focused in our prayers rather than merely surface level, speaking in generalities, all the time!

How would you describe the level of your prayer life? In what ways do you pray specifically more than just on a surface level?

Question  
# 6

We need to pray to the Lord about our specific daily needs. When Jesus taught us the model prayer, it serves as an example of what we ought to pray—not something we repeat verbatim without thought! In [John 17](#), for example, when we see Jesus pray, it's directed prayer for His daily needs—whether strength to do what the Father asked, to discern the will of the Father in a specific situation, or about specific people and their needs! I'm sure Hannah prayed about other things in her life, but here we see where she concentrates on this one issue: her barrenness. In verse 11, she makes a **vow** with the Lord that she will dedicate this child to his service if He would graciously allow her to have a son. For now, we won't focus on the nature of this **vow**, but what's important for us to note is that she prayed with purpose; she prayed with precision; she prayed with direction.

God certainly knows our needs even before they cross our own minds, but He still wants us to pray to Him and cultivate an intimate relationship with Him. Too often, just like in life, we get in a hurry; we do things on a surface level. Our prayers can become too general and sometimes lack focus because we do them out of habit to mark off our to-do list. This is not to say that we can't pray in general terms or say a quick prayer, but we must realize that prayer is a conversation and a relationship whereby we both speak and listen! Sometimes our prayers become repetitious—again there is nothing wrong



## Instruct

with repetition and persistence, Jesus teaches that, but it becomes disadvantageous



when we don't grow in our relationship with the Lord because it's too superficial ([Luke 11:5-13](#)). As a child, I had a prayer in which I thanked God for the food and my family and then said amen; I didn't have a relationship with Him at the time and my parents were right in teaching me to pray, but my prayer didn't stay at that level. It changed as I grew, especially when I had a

relationship with Him!

How has your prayer life with Christ changed or grown over the years?

Question  
# 7

When we pray specifically or precisely, it allows us to see explicitly how God has blessed us and answered our prayers! As we pray, intercede for people by name as God leads—not just a blanket prayer for the health, salvation, or forgiveness of “people” in general. Pray with as much specificity as possible. Pray for any specific needs that you may have. Pray for specific temptations that you may face. Pray for specific areas in which you need to grow or ask forgiveness! Although God hears and answers a general prayer when we pray sincerely in the right spirit, we should pray in specifics as He leads.

## 1 Samuel 1:12-16

### **PRAY PRIVATELY:**

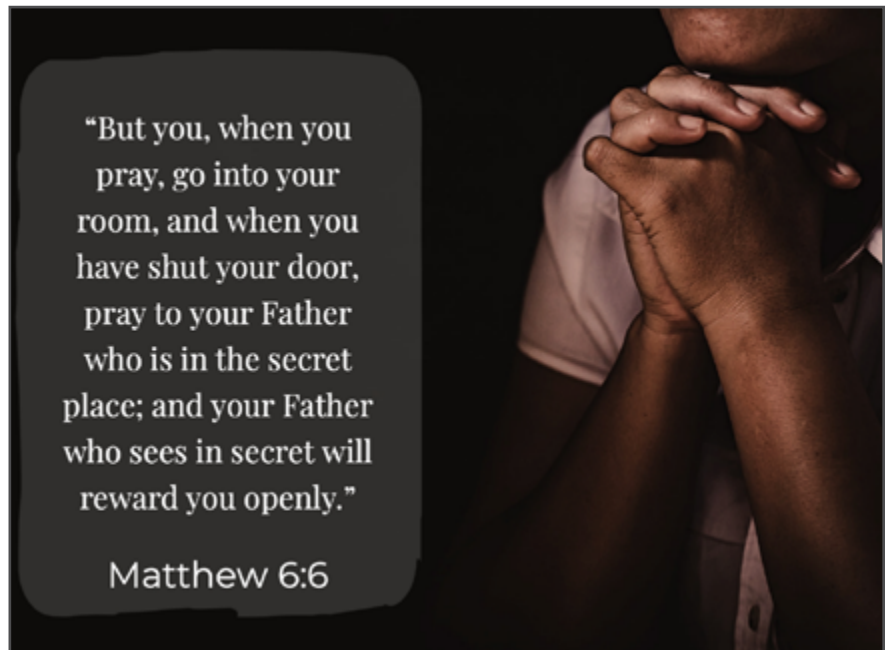
Although there is nothing wrong with praying in public at church or praying as a family or couple (in fact these are good things), we also need to pray privately. Hannah went alone to the **tabernacle** to pray. She was praying silently like we do, but was moving **her lips**, so it drew the attention of **Eli** who stood guard at the entrance (v. 13). At that time, some people at these festivals did not come with pure motives to worship the Lord, but to eat, drink and be merry, so Eli guarded against the desecration of the **tabernacle** and the dishonoring of the Lord. He had noble intentions, but he misread

the situation! He thought Hannah was **drunk** because she was moving **her lips**, but nothing was being emitted (v. 14). However, she reassures him that she is indeed **not drunk**, but she was pouring **out** her spirit to the Lord (v. 15).

We can certainly share our requests and needs with others; we ought to pray for one another faithfully, but we also need time alone with the Lord where we can share from the depths of our hearts. Too many times, prayer sessions can turn into gossip in public and put a damper on people sharing intimately. At other times, the general public doesn't need to know all the details of the prayer either; those are between you and the Lord! He is our high priest who intercedes on our behalf.

We can still pray specifically for people, but not know all the details. Eli, for example, doesn't know the details of her prayer, but he reassures her that God will answer her petition.

When I said that we need to pray specifically earlier, I didn't mean that we have to know all the details to pray! We can still pray for one another by name, but that God would intercede to meet their specific needs which He already knows as He sees fit. Eli does. Therefore, we need to spend time alone with the Lord on our own, praying specifically.



What value is there in praying privately? How does that help us to connect with the Lord?

Question  
# 8

## **1 Samuel 1:17-18**

### ***PRAYER LEADS TO PROVISION:***

Finally, we see how God provides when we pray according to His will. When we have a genuine relationship with Christ, we will want to seek what He desires rather than our own desires. So, when we pray, we will pray according to His will. Through Christ, God transforms our desires and conforms them to His. After she spent time praying and was encouraged by God's answer through Eli, notice the dramatic change in her life (v. 17). She ate and was no longer sad (v. 18). When we have the proper perspective through

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prayer, it changes our lives. God will provide for us as He has determined in His will if we would simply pray accordingly. We should pray expectantly and know that God will answer, but we must also not expect God to answer according to our own human desires. We must expect Him to answer according to His divine pleasure and will! The Lord will provide and will do what is best for us. We just need to seek Him through prayer so that we don't miss the blessings that He has in store for us according to His timing.

In what ways have you seen the Lord provide for you through prayer?

Question  
# 9

## ***Inspire***

Hannah's fervent prayer in [1 Samuel 1](#) should inspire us to pray likewise, adopting the Lord's perspective and petitioning His divine will for our lives. When we seek the Lord through prayer, it changes our outlook. No longer do we follow the pattern of the world which seeks to provoke, but we trust in the Lord and learn to wait patiently upon His timing, enduring whatever challenges may come. Let us follow Hannah's example in praying where we pray perpetually, pray precisely, and pray privately, expecting God to provide as He deems fit.



## ***Incorporate***

How would you evaluate your prayer life according to the pattern established here in 1 Samuel? Where do you excel and what needs improvement?

For what do / have you prayed perpetually? How has God answered? What did He teach you?

How do you intercede for others in prayer? How has God used others, like Eli, to intercede for you?

*May 15, 2022*



# *Follow Christ's Pattern*

## *Philippians 2:5-11*

Focal Verse:

*"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."*

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Contents

Philippians 2:5

## Introduce

In 2010, my friend graduated from Basic Training at Fort Sill in Lawton, Oklahoma. For many of you who have endured the rigors of such training, you understand the difficulty of being separated from your family with little to no communication at all. Upon his graduation, he received a couple of days leave which he wanted to spend with his wife, so he asked me to watch their eight-year-old son. Having a good relationship with him, for he even called me uncle, I thought to myself, "How hard could it be to watch a child for a couple of days?" So, I agreed. So far, the first night had gone smoothly. After having him help me cook dinner, I let him pick one television show to watch before I sent him to get ready for bed.

After he finished getting ready, I stood at the doorway to the guest room while he got situated in bed and turned off the lights. Having checked on him a couple of times, I then went to bed myself only to have him awaken me about an hour later. He came

into my room complaining, "Uncle Mike, my nose is bleeding." After getting the bleeding stopped and cleaning up his face, I began asking what had happened. Like any eight-year-old boy, his excuse was, "I don't know. It just started bleeding. It sometimes just bleeds at night." Although one can get a nosebleed in this way, I sensed there was more to this story, so



I continued asking more questions. "How often does this happen," I inquired? He hesitated a bit before answering, so I now confidently knew there was more than he was telling me.

From the bathroom, I took him back to his bed where I noticed a lump in the covers. Drawing his attention to it by pointing, I asked, "What's that?" His response was quite telling, for he quickly said, "Nothing." I walked over to the bed and pulled the covers back to find a football. Holding it, I said, "This is why you got a nosebleed and you'll keep getting them if you play with this in bed." Then, I stressed, "You are not to have anything in this bed at all—except your body, these pillows, and this blanket. Do you understand me?" He acknowledged, but to make sure, I carried the football back to my

## Introduce

room where it remained the rest of the night without further nosebleeds. For most of you who have known me for many years, you probably expected a story with great disaster. You may have even been surprised that a loving parent would have asked me to watch the most valuable possession that God had given them! It could have very well ended in disaster had I not had the right perspective. If I thought like a single man who had been rudely awakened from sleep and told him to go back to bed it would stop on its own or I didn't take the time to get to the bottom of how it happened, it could have turned out much differently. Although not being a parent myself, I thought and acted like a parent. I had the right perspective which enabled me to respond appropriately.

In life, we must also have the right perspective or thinking. Paul exhorts us to have the mind "which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5). We are not Christ, but we are to think like Him. We are to see the world the way He sees it. We are to adopt His perspective. Only when we adopt His perspective can we navigate life appropriately in whatever situation we may find ourselves.

Key  
Question

How do you reflect the mind of Christ in your attitudes and actions?

### Philippians 2:5

#### IMITATE THE WORD'S ATTITUDE:

In [Philippians 1:27-2:4](#), we learned that we should be unified in our conduct whereby we live selflessly in pursuit of one common goal to glorify Christ in everything. For this reason, Paul implores the Philippians to be **like-minded** and **of one mind**—a theme which he will continue as he transitions to verse 5. Here, he challenges us to pattern our thoughts after Jesus or to adopt His perspective—which is no easy feat! The word that Paul uses in verse 5 literally means to think. Translations interpret the phrase either as “let this mind be in you” or “have the same attitude” as does Jesus. A better understanding of the word, however, would be to have the same perspective as Jesus—think or view the world in the same way that He does! In [2:5-8](#), Paul thus outlines how Jesus thought in terms of His attitude, service, and obedience.

Patterning ourselves after Jesus’ thinking dominates the letter to the Philippians.

It first occurs in [1:9-10](#) where Paul prays that the Philippians might continue to grow in true knowledge and discernment. The result of this knowledge will enable them to approve or test the things that are excellent or good. Both discernment and testing require the ability to reason and see the world according to the principles that Jesus espoused. We



We also see this theme appear again in [4:8](#) where Paul tells them to dwell on the things that are righteous. As a result of holy thinking, the church will be unified having the same mind ([1:27](#); [2:2](#)) and any disunity will be dispelled ([4:2-3](#)).

In 2:5, Paul issues a command for us to have the same **mind** in us which **was also in Christ Jesus**. This is not an optional suggestion, but rather a command which is to be implemented and followed as we mature every day. Therefore, we should see the world from Christ’s perspective which influences what we say, what we see, what we do, how we respond, and what we believe. When we view things from Christ’s



## Instruct

perspective then we act with humility considering the needs of others rather than selfishly existing for our own needs. Having the perspective of Jesus will radically transform our conduct which will exalt God through our service of others around us.

Based on the Bible, how does Jesus view the world? What is most important to Him as characterized by how He lived and what He said?

Question  
# 1

The world has always engaged in a battle for our minds and attempted to capture our attention, but we live in a culture in which that war has become even more evident. The social constructs of a godless society have replaced the core subjects of reading, writing, arithmetic, and science. Schools promote a sinful and corrupt curriculum which has destroyed the concept of the family as God has designed it by pushing grotesque sexual and biological perversions. They push this radical agenda to desensitize children to sin and alter the way they see the world in contrast to how God actually created it and intended it to function. Although some parents are now fighting back, some boards of education attempt to hide the content of the curriculum or to remove parental control and consent over what children learn. The world has realized that to influence one's thinking it must start early in blurring boundaries and desensitizing children to the concept of sin.

We must not only combat this wayward thinking in children who can easily become swayed, but also in adults—most who ought to know better. Ungodly thinking can

“Adulterers and adulteresses!  
Do you not know that friendship  
with the world is enmity with  
God? Whoever therefore wants  
to be a friend of the world makes  
himself an enemy of God.”

James 4:4

easily creep into the church unless we are intentionally on guard against it. Sometimes, we cannot distinguish how people who profess to follow Christ think from that of the world. James 4:4 makes the danger of this failure crystal clear: “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world

makes himself an enemy of God.” If we fail to think like Christ and reject the principles

found in His Word, we are striving against God as His enemies!

The world desensitizes us to sin by bombarding us with images, pushing boundaries, and shifting the goal posts by redefining terms. Usually, things shift slowly—almost imperceptibly at first. But as God is removed from our thinking, the change happens more rapidly because we lack an absolute sense of truth and the ability to discern right from wrong. This then decays into moral chaos where everyone decides what is right for himself. Our culture entered this stage in its thinking long ago and now we are reaping the rotten fruit of that moral decline. It all starts with a cognitive decision: Do we follow God’s pattern or do we do what is right in our own eyes? Therefore, we must guard our minds, being discerning in the things which we choose to consume and practice. We must know God’s Word, stand upon its principles without wavering, and apply it rather than give in to the mindset of this world!

In what ways do you see the culture battling for our mind? How can we maintain a Christ-like perspective in the midst of this battle?

Question  
# 2

## ***Philippians 2:6-7***

### ***IMITATE THE WORD’S SERVICE:***

When Jesus took the **form** of a man and became flesh by being born into this world of a virgin, He came not in the **form** of an earthly king or wealthy aristocrat, but rather He came as a humble **bondservant**. Although Jesus came as a human being, never at any point did He cease to be **God**, for indeed He still remained God in the flesh. As both a servant and God, Jesus always maintained the proper perspective because He did not selfishly exploit His position as God, but rather saw the world in need of a Savior who could redeem it. Consequently, Jesus did not misuse His position as God to benefit Himself, but rather He used it as a means to benefit others through the work that He did on the cross.

### ***In-Depth Information***



*[Philippians 2:6-8](#) has some of the most difficult Greek to interpret in all Paul’s letters because the words are rare and can have several different nuances depending upon the context. For example, the phrase in verse 6, particularly the bold part, “did not consider it **robbery** to be equal with God” has many shades of meaning. Other translations interpret it as “did not consider equality with God as . . .” (continued)*

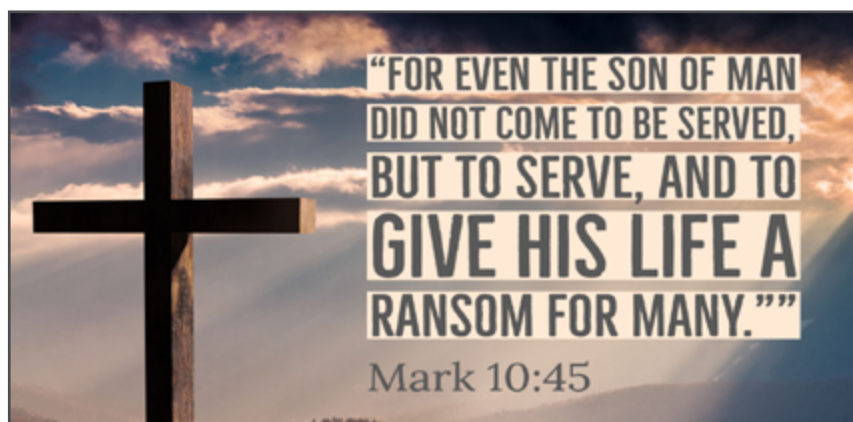
## In-Depth Information—continued

1) something to cling to (NLT), 2) something to be used to his own advantage (NIV), or 3) a thing to be grasped (NASB, ESV). In this case, the NIV is closest to the way Paul intends it in the context. Jesus, as God, does not use His divine position to take advantage of others or exploit His position as God. For instance, James and John witnessed Jesus' rejection in Samaria so they asked if He wanted to call down fire upon them and destroy the village. In His prerogative as God, Jesus could have certainly destroyed the city, but instead of desiring to get even He shows restraint in having the right perspective and says this: "But He turned and rebuked them, and said, 'You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them'" ([Luke 9:54-56](#)).

Jesus certainly could have condemned others because He knew what was in the heart of man ([John 2:24-25](#)). He could have refused to heal nine of the ten lepers who refused to come back and thank Him ([Luke 17:11-19](#)). He could have refused to feed the crowd of 5000 because He knew that they weren't truly paying attention to His teaching, but they just came in order to have their stomachs filled ([John 6:26](#)). He could have come off the cross and destroyed those who taunted Him, but He chose to stay out of love for us in fulfillment of the Father's purpose ([Matt 27:42-43](#)). As God, Jesus remained focused on the goal for which the heavenly Father had sent Him to earth—to redeem His wayward creation through a perfect sacrifice.

What are your goals in life? How do you keep them centered on Christ?

Question  
# 3



Man, on the other hand, from the very beginning attempted to exploit His position with God as the pinnacle of His creation being made in His image and likeness ([Gen 1:27](#)). First, both Adam and Eve ignored the boundaries which God had set forth for

them. Instead of being God's representative to the earth by caring for the Garden, they subjected it to sin and destruction by eating of the forbidden fruit. Second, when tempted, they expressed their desire to usurp God's authority and become like Him knowing good from evil ([Gen 3:5](#)). Jesus, on the other hand, demonstrated the true way that man ought to live by becoming a servant and restoring God's original plan for mankind to have a relationship with Him and representing Him again to the rest of creation.

How do you submit yourself to God's plan?

Question  
# 4

Although we ourselves cannot become divine or "gods," we still need to seek to become like Christ by representing the very essence of God to the world around us. The way that we conduct ourselves, our attitudes, our words, and our actions all bear witness to the radical change that the Lord has begun within us. Since Christ now lives within us, He becomes the stamp or mark on our lives that determines how we live and how we represent Him. Let us, therefore, have a mind or perspective, that sees the world as an opportunity for serving others and pointing them to a relationship with Jesus Christ by how we live and who we represent.

Instead of having a critical or condemning spirit, Jesus focused on His duties as a **bondservant**. After examining Jesus' life, we can observe three characteristics of a servant that we can apply in our lives: 1) a true servant does tasks that no one else is willing to do; when no one else is watching, then the servant still goes about his business; 2) a true servant is not concerned with receiving rewards or applause—a true servant is concerned with exalting God; 3) a true servant serves others because of the inward joy he or she receives from being a blessing. Let us keep these characteristics in mind as we serve God through our church by having the same perspective as did Christ.

In what ways did Jesus serve the world? How can we serve the world like He did?

Question  
# 5

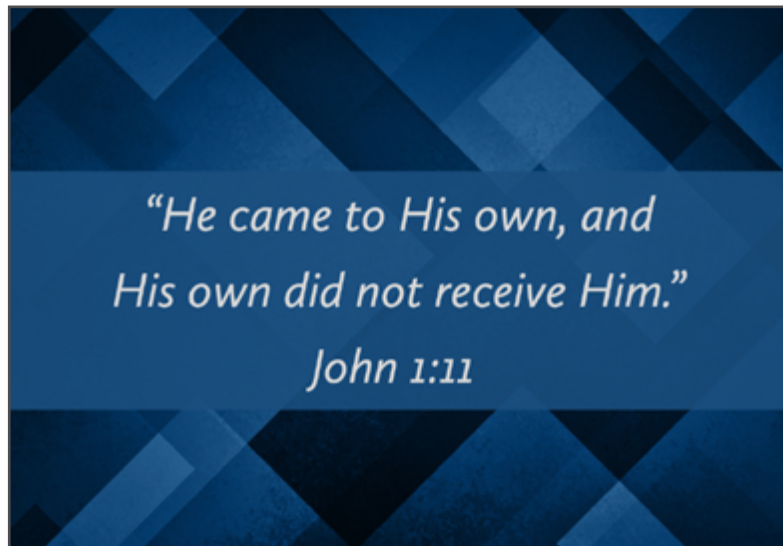
Moreover, Christ willingly abdicated His position in heaven to don human flesh and become a servant (2:7). The word translated **He made Himself no reputation** is another difficult word to translate into English. Literally, it means that He emptied Himself, so the question naturally becomes of what did Jesus empty Himself? Jesus did not empty Himself of His divinity. At no point past, present, or future did Jesus cease

## Instruct

being God. He did not become God at His baptism or die as a mere mortal as some wrongly teach.

Throughout His life, Jesus still possessed all the qualities of God, but He never exploited them. He had power over the physical realm; He could calm the winds and waves. He had power over the human realm; He could heal the sick and deformed. He knew people's thoughts. He had more wisdom than all the collective leaders of the day, for they were even amazed that He taught in the temple at twelve and again with such authority in the Sermon on the Mount. He had the power to forgive sins. He had the power to raise the dead and the Father raised Him victoriously from the dead on the third day. He could do things that only God Himself could do!

So, of what did Jesus empty himself or make Himself **no reputation**? He emptied



Himself of His privilege and position in heaven. Instead of being praised by the heavenly throng, He was mocked and ridiculed. Instead of being worshiped by the angels, He was persecuted to death by man. The very beings whom God created have now rejected Him and persecuted Him. The very ones whom Jesus came to save did not even recognize Him.

Consequently, Christ came in a humble position. He could have come in triumphal glory, but He came as a humble servant. For this reason, He made Himself no reputation which seems to be the best translation for this word. In very few instances do I agree with the New Living Translation, but in this case, the translators have gotten it right: "Instead, he gave up his divine privileges he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being."

In what ways do you need to humble yourself to become a servant of the Most High?

Question  
# 6

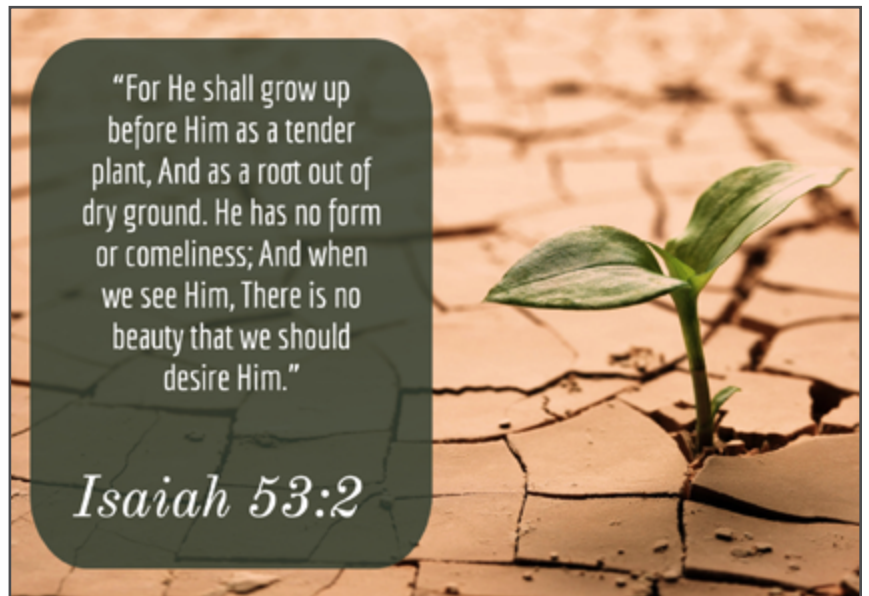
In what ways did Jesus display this humility? He focused on the objective that the Father had given Him and He showed the world how the Father equipped and empowered Him to accomplish it! Thus, in His humility, Jesus didn't seek to exalt



Himself. In fact, He left His heavenly throne around which He was worshipped day and night to come to earth. As we have learned, He always sought honor and glory for the Father! This stands in complete contrast to what most do today. Most seek honor and notoriety for themselves. People act out to get attention; they try to upstage others to toot their own horn; they do foolish things that endanger their lives—just to draw attention to themselves!

The Jews, however, misunderstood Jesus because of His humble beginnings. He wasn't a king born in a palace and laid in crib with royal raiment. He was born in a stable amongst animals because there was no room for Him among His family in His hometown. He was laid in a feeding trough. His earthly father was an ordinary carpenter who settled in Nazareth—not the home of royalty. An ordinary town in which people questioned: "What good ever came out of Nazareth" ([John 1:46](#))? Jesus lived a tough life as an itinerate teacher.

He didn't have a permanent place on which to rest His head, often depending upon the kindness and graciousness of others for food. To us, this doesn't seem like the King of kings and Lord of lords. Even Isaiah said that He would be a man of ordinary appearance and that no one would seek after Him (Isa 53:2). Jesus humbled Himself by



becoming like us in every way—confining Himself in flesh to become the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world ([John 1:29](#))!

Although Jesus did not meet the expectations nor fit the understanding of first-century Jews, He was God's chosen solution. He was the long-awaited Messiah who would bring deliverance and salvation to all. Thus, He came to offer a permanent solution—not a political solution that would last only temporarily. The Jews were looking for a political Messiah, born of royal birth in the lineage of David, which Jesus was. But they also sought one who would come to establish an earthly, physical kingdom. They wanted someone whom they perceived looked and acted like an earthly king—just like they did with King Saul which did not work well for them! Nonetheless, God in His infinite wisdom sent Him who was always a King to come personally to save His Creation.

## Philippians 2:8

### IMITATE THE WORD'S OBEDIENCE:

As a servant, Jesus **humbled Himself** by remaining focused on His primary goal which was obeying God's will even if it meant His **death on the cross**. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus maintained focus on His goal which was to honor the heavenly Father by doing His will. In [John 6:38-40](#), Jesus made His purpose explicit: "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." As a result, Jesus demonstrates the way that we ought to have lived from the very moment of creation in complete obedience and dependence upon God.

### In-Depth Information



In [Philippians 2:3](#), we saw that Paul urged the Philippians that **in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself**. We learned that humility means having the right perspective—not thinking too highly of oneself or having false humility. In 2:8, Paul uses the verb here to signify that Jesus humbled Himself which again means that He has the right perspective concerning why He came to earth in the first place according to the Father's purpose.

Jesus, therefore, surrendered Himself in complete **obedience** which meant that He had to die a horrendous death upon the **cross**. We cannot choose the areas in which we surrender; just as Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" ([Luke 22:42](#)). We also need to surrender completely to the will of God. We must surrender in everything: our relationships, our finances, our possessions, our jobs, our time, and our very lives according to God's plan. Our obedience does not depend upon our circumstances, but rather it depends upon how much we trust God and rely on Him.

In what areas of your life have you completely surrendered to the Lord and in what areas have you not yet surrendered completely?

Question  
# 7

## Philippians 2:9-11

### **EXALT THE WORD IN WORSHIP:**

Because of Jesus' right perspective, God **highly exalted** Him by elevating Him to a position of honor because He submitted to His will and was obedient in all things. On the day that Jesus returns to the earth for the second time, everyone on **heaven** and **earth** and in the grave, that is **under the earth**, will **bow** before Him, giving Him the honor and **glory** that He deserves. On that day, even the people who rejected Him here on earth will **bow** before Him along with the countless numbers of people who trusted Him as Lord and Savior. As a believer, we should seek to exalt Jesus now through our lives so that God will be glorified and honored because we live like His Son; thus, we can honor Christ by imitating His attitude, service and obedience so that we can reflect the character of our Savior to the world around us. As John the Baptist said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30); consequently, we must let others see Christ in us by humbly surrendering to the will of the Father.

### **In-Depth Information**



Paul declares that **God exalted** Jesus by giving Him **the name which is above every name**. This reflects the earliest Christian confession that "Jesus is Lord"; the name Lord is the divinely unique name of God from the Old Testament, Yahweh ([Exod 3:14](#)). Because of His obedience and through His resurrection Jesus was declared to be the Son of God (Rom 1:4). Jesus is Lord just as He declared throughout His ministry and was vindicated at His resurrection from the dead.

How are you exalting Christ in your life currently?

Question  
# 8

Scripture has clearly called us to adopt Christ-like thinking or have His same perspective because it will influence everything that we do. We must reject the pattern of this world and fill our minds with righteousness and holy thoughts from His Word. However, we face an onslaught of misguided thinking from a world which has exchanged the truth of God for a lie leading to destruction. The only way that we can resist the temptation to follow the pattern of the world is to have a relationship grounded in the knowledge and wisdom of Christ. When we think like He does, it will alter our perspective of the world and keep us from becoming distracted so that we might follow His pattern for life—living humbly and obediently as the servants whom God has called us to be.

## ***Incorporate***

How does your thinking compare to that of Christ? In which areas do you think like Christ and in what areas do you need to alter your thinking?

How do you guard your mind against the filth and degradation this world hurls at us?  
How easily can we become sidetracked in our thinking if we don't consciously and proactively combat fleshly thinking?

In what ways have you seen Christ-like thinking directly impact your life—whether in what you do or say?



*May 22, 2022*



# *Follow in Purity*

## *Philippians 2:12-18*

Focal Verse:

“That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”

Philippians 2:15

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## Introduce

Nearly a decade ago, I took the Legacy Adults on an outing to Noble Planetarium at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History. While there, we watched a fascinating documentary about the night sky over Fort Worth. The short film began by showing the current state of the sky overpowered by light pollution above one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the country. The glow of the bright city lights obscured the majority of the stars and planets. In fact, more man-made planes with their blinking lights landing at DFW filled the sky than the stars which God had created. Through technology, however, the filmmakers slowly began to reduce the amount of light pollution until it reached only 10% showing the undisputed brilliance of the heavens the way God had created them.

As the filmmakers slowly took away the light pollution, a miraculous transformation began to occur. In the clear, cloudless jet-black night sky, hundreds of thousands of twinkling celestial bodies began filling the heavens. As more and more stars became visible, it eventually produced a sight that I had never seen: The Milky Way Galaxy. The collective light of millions of stars, so brilliant and clear, congealed into a concentrated mass that produced what looked like a hazy cloud of light floating through the sky. The



light of this galaxy burst through the heavens and became the focal point which drew the eye toward it. If you have ever had the privilege of seeing the Milky Way, you can certainly relate to this description.

Since then, I have had the privilege of seeing the Milky Way for the first time in person during a camping expedition to Southeast Utah where we stayed in the remote, but beautiful, Arches National Park. With the nearest town, Moab, being relatively small and the campground around forty miles from the city, it made the sky sufficiently dark to view this spectacle. So about 2 o'clock in the morning, I made a point to rise from my slumber and brave the cold desert air to see this sight. Although man-made objects like satellites and planes at times dotted the atmosphere racing across quickly, the

## Introduce

radiance of the stars pierced the darkness with nothing to obscure them—constant and fixed in place as the earth slowly rotated.

In Philippians 2:15, Paul implores us to “shine as lights in the world.” We ought to pierce the darkness of our culture through the radiant light of the transformative power of Christ which shines through us. We should reflect His character radiantly and brightly in a culture that has been overpowered by the “pollution” of sin. As the Gospel of John describes the ministry of John the Baptist, so also should we function as “lights” in the world. We are not the True Light, but we have come to bear witness to Him (John 1:7). Therefore, may we reflect the light of righteousness by following in purity so that those who live in this “crooked and perverse generation” may be pointed to Christ—the one who saves and transforms us.

Key  
Question

In what ways do you see the church functioning as lights in the darkened world? In what areas does the church need improvement?



### Philippians 2:12-13

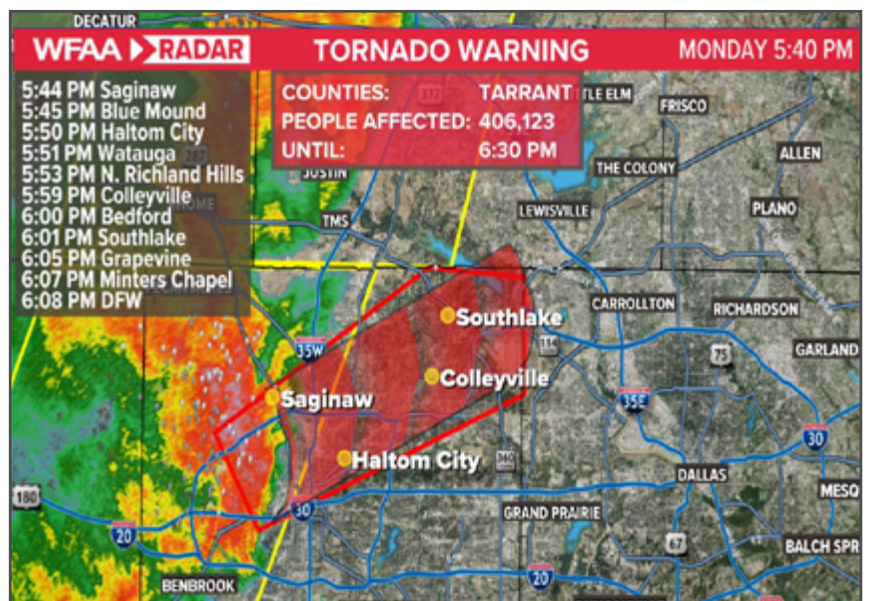
#### RECOGNIZE THE PURPOSE OF OUR SALVATION:

With Spring's arrival in North Texas, we typically see an increase in allergies and severe weather. Like the impeccable timing of an atomic clock, we experienced a weekly threat of storms, including tornadoes, back in March and April. When the National Weather Service issues a warning, we act with intention and knowledge to implement a pre-determined plan to respond to the threat. On Monday, March 31, we faced such a tornado outbreak. During the live severe weather coverage around 5:45 pm, they issued a tornado warning which took the projected path near my house as well as close to the church. And indeed, a tornado was later confirmed to have touched down in River Oaks.

I immediately sprang into action. I put on my shoes, grabbed my cellphone and computer so I would have access to the internet for reports, and stuck a couple of

pillows in my laundry room. I quickly removed the clean shirts hanging in the doorway and then sealed myself inside to ride out the storm. Each act I performed was deliberate according to a pre-determined emergency plan. Each item I took had a specific purpose: the pillows were to offer even minimal protection from flying debris, shoes were to navigate the debris field if something did indeed happen, and the cellphone was to call for assistance if required.

Similarly, we must live out our **salvation** with intention. We must be deliberate in our actions, so they reflect the character and perspective of Christ. Everything we do should have purpose according to God's pre-determined plan which He has communicated in Scripture. We must choose to carry out the plan in the way that He has designed it! In Philippians 2:12-13, Paul describes two aspects of our salvation: 1) it requires complete surrender and obedience to God and 2) it is a work of God, but is





expressed through life-change which produces good works in us.

How intentional or deliberate are you in living out your salvation before others? In what ways are you intentional?

Question  
# 1

First, Paul instructs the Philippians to continue to **obey** the Lord in their daily walk. Previously, we learned how Jesus' obedience led Him to endure the cross for our sakes ([Phil 2:8](#)). Here, in verse 12, we discover that our **salvation** necessitates this same type of obedience and complete surrender; therefore, Paul encourages the Philippians to continue to **obey** whether he is present with them or not. He doesn't mean that they ought to obey a set of rules that he has given them, nor does he establish himself as a legalistic enforcer of rules as indeed he once was in his misguided journey as a Pharisee. Rather, he describes the human tendency in most of us to conduct ourselves righteously only when we think others are watching.

To illustrate this principle, consider the tendency we have to obey the traffic laws when we spot law enforcement in relation to the times when they are not present. When motorists see a police officer, they make sure to follow the rules of the road. Almost instinctively, we hit our brakes and check our speed. More than once, I've seen cars



speeding in the left-hand lane come up on an officer and slam on their brakes, creating a traffic jam behind the squad car unwilling to pass. Personally, I will plead the fifth in saying whether I have been one of those cars! However, if no police officer is present or at least well-hidden, driving becomes a free-for-all with people driving in any way they please because they no longer fear

receiving a ticket. In life, people often act the same way. They behave only when they perceive others are watching and want to make a good impression!

Whether we perceive someone is watching or not, we should act with integrity all the time because in reality God always sees and knows. Therefore, when we are in the privacy of our own homes, we should talk and act in the same way that we do in

church. When we are at work, we should act with integrity just as much as we would around other Christians. When we are in social gatherings, we should refrain from listening to dirty jokes or describing improper situations or gossiping just as much as we do when we surround ourselves with Christian friends. Obeying God means that we live with integrity and we represent the character of His Son to those around us, so that we can have a tremendous impact on the world.

In what ways do we need to exercise integrity so that we can be a righteous representative of God?

Question  
# 2

Although only God can see the heart, people can see whether our outward actions match our talk. Even when we may feel no one is watching or even knows who we are, we can run into people who know us! While on mission to East Africa, the team was in Nairobi, Kenya, a city of three million people, where we were exchanging currency, shopping, and eating in a commercial district known as the YaYa Centre. In the parking lot, a girl walked up to me and said that she recognized me from substitute teaching her New Testament class in seminary. She indicated that she was returning home from India and stopped in Kenya to do additional mission work.

Such encounters, however, have happened several times in the most unexpected places where people have recognized me. Imagine if I had been engaged in

questionable or even illicitly sinful activity, thinking that no one would ever know since I'm so far from home. God certainly sees, but so do other human beings! We don't want to leave a bad testimony, bringing disrepute upon the name of Christ. We want to act with integrity, living consistently according to God's



Word. Whether we believe someone is watching or even knows who we are, we must shine as lights representing the Lord as His ambassadors wherever we go.

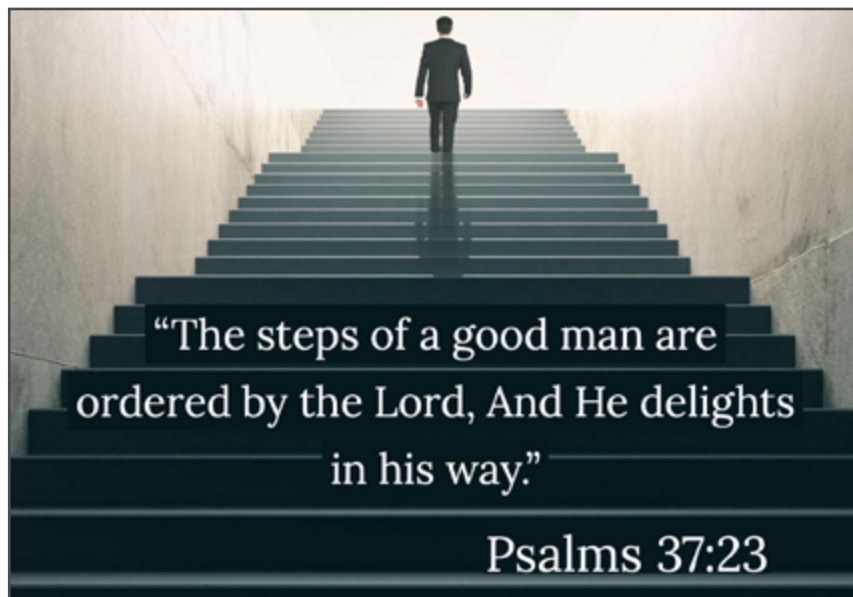
How easily do people recognize you as a follower of Christ?

Question  
# 3

## Instruct

Second, Paul explains that **salvation** is a work of God that is expressed through life-change which produces good works in us. In the second part of verse 12, he notes that we must **work out our own salvation with fear and trembling**. Some have wrongly understood this as the need to do good works in order to attain salvation; they also argue that we will never have assurance since we can't really know whether our good works outweigh our bad. Notice, however, that Paul qualifies this as **God who works in you** (v. 13). God alone is the source of our **salvation**, not our good works ([Eph 2:8-9](#)). Paul has already alluded to this in [Philippians 1:6](#) when he asserted, "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." Because God, not we, began the good work and will also complete it—that is He saves us from sin and sustains us for eternal life—we can have the utmost confidence and security in our **salvation**.

So, what does it mean to **work out our salvation with fear and trembling**? Our initial **salvation** has been fully completed and nothing else need be added to it when



we accept the gift of the finished work of Christ on the cross. After we have accepted that gift of **salvation**, however, we begin a journey to become more like Christ every day by transforming the "old" person who we once were into a new creation. Therefore, to **work out our salvation** means that we should live obediently by following the path that Jesus Himself has set

for us—hence, the reason for Paul's stressing the need to obey in verse 12.

Because there is a conflict between our "old," self-centered life and our "new" life in Christ, we must strive or **work** to live a holy and God-honoring life that pleases Him. We cannot earn our **salvation** nor can we lose it, but we still must **work** to grow in Christ every day. In other words, we must live our **salvation** in Christ by patterning ourselves after Him and participating in good works. It requires effort on our part to live by God's holy standards. This doesn't come naturally for us. Gordon Fee perhaps summarizes it best when he affirms that working **out our salvation** is "how saved

people live out their salvation in the context of the believing community and world.”

### In Reference



Gordon D. Fee, *Philippians, New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 235.

### In-Depth Information



The phrase **fear and trembling** in association with the working **out of our salvation** may seem to give the connotation of uncertainty, but in reality it means to revere and honor God by living in a way that pleases Him. Consequently, we are to respect God by obeying His commands and conducting our lives worthy of the gospel ([Phil 1:27](#); [John 14:15](#)).

For those of us who work out or train, we have an ideal or objective which we **work** to achieve. Therefore, we will engage in exercises or activities which produce specific results that propel us toward that goal. If we want to build certain muscles, for example, we will perform specific exercises geared toward using and strengthening them. We will participate in specific sports or activities designed to improve a specific skill set. When we work out or train, we even have the mantra “use it or lose it” which refers to the deterioration of muscle tone or skill based on the lack of use. Although we won’t “lose” our salvation, we must still engage in a workout that propels us toward a specific goal: to conform ourselves to the image of Christ. We must perform activities, that is to live righteously and with integrity according to God’s Word, that help us to achieve that ideal goal.

In what specific ways do we need to work out our salvation according to the Bible?

Question  
# 4

## Philippians 2:14-16

### REPRESENT THE WORD TO THE WORLD:

After understanding that the purpose of our **salvation** is to produce good works through our obedience to God’s plan, then we need to follow God’s prescription for reaching the world. How many of us would spend time going to a doctor and allowing him to analyze our condition only to ignore his advice and not fill the prescription he has written us? Most of us probably have never done this and, if we did, we learned an



unfortunate, but valuable lesson. We need to use or apply that which we have been



prescribed for it to **work** and accomplish what was intended! God has written us a prescription for reaching the world. The prescription goes something like this: “I [God] will work through your character and life so that you might draw people unto Me.” God has given us a clear prescription or plan that we must follow. Why do we have difficulty following it

at times? Paul will take time to answer this question since it is a trap in which we may often find ourselves: **complaining**.

Paul begins by painting a picture of the children of Israel in the Old Testament who became so consumed with their own circumstances as they wandered in the wilderness that they forgot their main purpose—to point people to God. As a result, Paul advises the Philippians to do everything **without complaining and disputing**. This phrase recalls what Israel did after God freed them from bondage in Egypt—they complained constantly; they lamented that God had brought them into the wilderness to die for they lacked food and water even going so far as to say that it would have been better had they stayed enslaved in Egypt ([Num 11:1-6](#)). As a believer, we should never display a negative or critical spirit either about other people or ministries, rather we should work together setting aside our personal preferences without grumbling or **complaining**. We certainly should evaluate things in our lives to see if we are headed in the right direction, but we can do so with a positive attitude seeking the Lord not self-satisfaction.

How do you show positivity in the church rather than constantly grumbling and complaining?

Question  
# 5

Because of their **complaining and disputing**, many times in Israel’s history they forgot their covenant with God and dishonored Him by serving idols and worshipping the false gods of the people around them. And they missed the blessing of serving the

only God who loved them and could deliver them in any trial. In [Deuteronomy 32:5](#), Moses points out, “They have corrupted themselves; they are not His children, because of their blemish: A perverse and crooked generation.” The pronoun “they” refers to the children of Israel who had forsaken the Lord and become like the nations around them worshipping their gods. Along those same lines, Paul urges the Philippians not to forsake God, but rather **shine as lights** by being **blameless and harmless**. In other words, they should have a distinct character from **the world** around them. Their character should show to Whom they belong. As light, we want to attract people to Christ not repel them because of our sinful, hypocritical lifestyle; we should want **the world** to see Jesus in our actions and in our speech.

### In-Depth Information



The word translated as **harmless** actually means pure or innocent. The idea that Paul stresses here is that the world cannot accuse or blame believers of wrong because they have remained pure—in other words they are not hypocritical.

How do you shine as a light for Christ in a dark and depraved world?

Question  
# 6

So, how can we demonstrate this life-change and how can we point others to Christ? In verse 16, Paul explicitly tells us that we should strive to **hold fast the word of life**. Through Scripture, we can understand God’s plan for our lives which was demonstrated visibly through His living Word—that is Jesus Christ. Although being a follower of Christ is not primarily about what we do, it is important that our character and our conduct directly reflect the One to whom we belong. Therefore, we must not only cognitively know Scripture, but we must also internalize it or apply it so that it affects the way that we live. What good would it do to have all the knowledge contained in every book in the Library of Congress without being able to apply that knowledge which we have learned? In order to **shine as lights**, we need to live by the



## Instruct

standards God has outlined in His Word and we need to pattern ourselves after His Son ([Phil 2:5-8](#)). We must stand in stark contrast to the **crooked and perverse** generation around us who is lost in its way and headed for eternal destruction.

In what ways do we need to hold fast to the word of life?

Question  
# 7

## Philippians 2:17-18

### **REJOICE IN OUR SALVATION:**

As God's representatives in the world, we can rejoice in our salvation along with the others with whom we serve. Paul acknowledges that he has given himself in sacrificial **service** along with the Philippians for which reason he is moved to **rejoice** (v. 17). It has brought him great joy to learn about how they have served the Lord by spreading the gospel from the city of Philippi to the surrounding plains; therefore, because of their testimony and witness Paul notes that they have **the same reason to be glad and rejoice** along with him (v. 18). God has created us for relationships with the church—none of us can live isolated from the rest of the body for we need each other. In [1 Corinthians 12](#), Paul reminds us that we should not only bear one another's burdens, but we should also **rejoice** with one another. If we become so wrapped up in thinking that we can do things by ourselves, we miss the joy of working with others who have come along side of us to encourage and strengthen us.

When you think of our church, what makes you rejoice?

Question  
# 8

Regardless of our circumstances, we should **rejoice** because we have life in Christ; we have something greater to which we can look forward. Yet, too frequently, we view things pessimistically. We have a negative outlook on life where we become like Israel, grumbling and **complaining**. Grumbling and **complaining** only drives us deeper into despair and increases our frustration which can cause us to act with emotion rather than rely on God. When we rejoice, we find our hope in Christ. He gives us the strength to endure and the peace to find contentment no matter how turbulent the times. Therefore, let us look to Christ and find reason to rejoice rather than follow the typical human pattern to see the negative and lament our troubles.

## ***Inspire***

Peering into the majestic heavens where we can see the light of millions of stars twinkling brightly should serve to remind us how we ought to live in a dark and depraved generation. We don't emit light ourselves, but instead we reflect the light of our Savior. As a result, our lives serve as a testimony to His transformation in us, so we ought to represent Him well. We ought to live holy lives so that others can be pointed to the One working in us to bring the salvation that He began to fruition. Although God works to save and transform us, it also requires that we put forth effort to obey and live by the commands which He has outlined in His Word. Therefore, may we follow Him in purity with integrity so that we can point others into a relationship with Him.

## ***Incorporate***

What are some things that may "pollute" your light and keep it from shining as brightly in this generation? What steps have you take to remove this "pollution?"

How have you grown in your relationship in the Lord from the moment of salvation until now? In what ways has God worked in you to conform you to His image?

Looking back on some of the difficult times in life, what valuable lessons did you learn about the Lord? How can you rejoice despite these difficult times?

*May 29, 2022*



# *Follow by Partnering*

## *Philippians 2:19-30*

Focal Verse:

“But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.”

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Philippians 2:22



## Introduce

Perhaps, the most meaningful time a parent or grandparent can spend with their children is to partner with them on a project—working alongside, hand-in-hand. Rather than simply giving verbal instruction or barking orders, parents who interact one-on-one with their children leave a more lasting impact. Children will remember the times when their parents showed them how to do something more than when they merely told them to do something.



Parents should offer compliments and praise when things go well, but encouragement and advice when things go awry. They are there to pick up the pieces in failure and gently guide in subsequent attempts.

As a child, I remember my parents constructing a retaining wall behind our home to prevent water from pooling under the foundation of the house which was situated at the mid-way point of a hill. My parents did all the work of leveling the hill, driving the fence pylons into the ground, mixing and pouring concrete to secure them, and backfilling the wall with the excavated dirt. Although I was very small, probably four or five, my parents bought me a miniature red wheelbarrow and a tiny shovel so I could help. The wheelbarrow was so small that one scoop from a regular-sized shovel would more than fill it. My father had his wheelbarrow and I had mine. I would fill it with dirt and then follow the well-worn path my father had created to dump it behind the newly constructed wall.

In the grand scheme of the project, I didn't really contribute much in terms of quantity. My dad did the lion's share of the work much more quickly than I could. Still, it had a major impact on my life. If my dad simply had told me to go do it, especially as I got older, I would have resented it and demanded a sufficient increase in my allowance to make it worthwhile. Yet, my dad worked alongside me; he allowed me to partner with him no matter how inconvenient it may have been for him with me getting in the way and, at times, being a high-spirited child. Above all, he not only showed me how to use the tools, but he also modeled for me.

## Introduce

Parents shouldn't take over the project and do it for them nor should they dismiss their children as unable to make a significant contribution. Instead, they should allow them to help as the opportunities arise, using the abilities and skill sets they have at the time. Certainly, parents need to have their own personal time and children theirs. But there must be a balance in both. Rather than always sending children to play or watch tv to get them out of your hair, spend time with them; invest in them. How else will they learn good character and the necessary skills for life as productive members of the community unless we teach them?

For this reason, Paul treats his ministry as a partnership where he invests in his co-workers "as a son with his father" ([Phil 2:22](#)). As followers of Christ, we are called to work together as God gives us opportunity, using our diverse skill sets and gifts for His glory. Moreover, maturing followers should spend time investing in younger—not just barking orders or giving directives, but working side-by-side. They should give encouragement provide direction, and offer positive feedback while at the same time modeling the same principles that they wish to teach! Therefore, let us be followers who imitate Christ and partner with one another to advance the gospel as the Lord leads.

Key  
Question

What times of partnership or mentorship have had the most impact upon your life?

### Philippians 2:19-21

#### ***PARTNER WITH OTHERS BY BEING CONSCIENTIOUS:***

In 2:19-30, Paul uses this opportunity in the letter to cite two examples of men who have the mind of Christ ([Phil 2:5](#)): Timothy and Epaphroditus. Both men exhibit unselfish character in which they serve others rather than their own interests. Indeed, Paul makes this clear when he states that everyone **seeks** his **own** interests rather than **the things which are of Christ Jesus** (v. 21) except Timothy and by extension Epaphroditus. When we have Christ's perspective, we become more acutely aware of opportunities in which we can partner with others in service ([Phil 2:3-4](#)). Although this passage reflects more of an informational section unique to both Paul and the Philippians' circumstances, we can still learn and apply the principles for an effective partnership. In 2:19-21, we observe three areas in which partners should exercise conscientiousness: they must 1) have an intimate knowledge of the situation, 2) be unified, and 3) be genuinely concerned for the other's interests.

First, in order to have an effective partnership, we must have an intimate knowledge of the situation of those with whom we partner. Under house arrest in Rome awaiting his trial before Caesar, Paul has the freedom to correspond with the Philippians, so he has heard some of what has occurred during his absence from them, including their worry about their friend Epaphroditus who almost died during his mission to help Paul ([Phil 2:26](#)), but he doesn't know their situation as intimately as he wishes. Therefore, he desires to dispatch Timothy so that he might **be encouraged** when he **knows** their **state**—in other words Paul wants to have more in-depth, first-hand knowledge of the Philippians' situation so that he can not only pray for them, but also so that he might disciple them through Timothy's presence.

In order for us to help someone effectively, we must know their situation—giving general advice can sometime not only



## Instruct

be unwelcome, but it can be harmful to the situation. Therefore, we must know the details of a situation before we attempt to help. We must know our partners' strengths and weaknesses. We must know their resources and limitations. A partner doesn't come alongside and take control, but rather he supplements the work being done and encourages the team to work together toward a common goal.

Why is intimately knowing the situation important? Has there been a time when someone didn't know the full circumstances, but yet offered advice or tried to help? How did it turn out?

Question  
# 1

Second, in order to have an effective partnership we must be united in our perspective; Paul can send Timothy because he shares the same perspective and concern for the Philippians as he does; in fact, Paul even states that he has **no one like-minded**. Recall that while in prison Paul encounters people who preach the gospel with the wrong motives ([Phil 1:15-16](#)). These people participate in ministry because of their selfish motives—they want to receive praise and accolades rather than truly helping people. Timothy, on the other hand, thinks like Paul does; he has partnered with Paul not for selfish reasons, but rather because of his genuine care and concern for people. When we partner with others, we have one goal—introduce people into a loving relationship with Jesus Christ and help them grow in their walk. Although we have one goal, we have many different avenues to achieve that singular goal. God has placed us in distinct situations in life for the express purpose of sharing the gospel. The people God has called me to reach will differ from those to whom He has sent you. Yet, our purpose and call remains the same though our opportunities and methods may differ. Therefore, let us joyfully consider “being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” just as Paul urged the Philippians ([Phil 2:2](#)) so that we might partner with each other to reach the world by seeing others through the mind of Christ Jesus ([Phil 2:5](#)).

Why do we need like-minded partners in both our daily walk and the ministry to which God has called us?

Question  
# 2

Third, in order to have an effective partnership we must be genuinely concerned for



our partners' interests. In [Phil 2:4](#), Paul writes, "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." Here in verses 20 and 21, Paul appeals to Timothy as an example of someone who has actually taken this advice to heart and applied it; thus, he explains that Timothy **will sincerely care for their state** because he seeks **the same things which are of Christ Jesus**. Exhibiting genuine care means that we have a heart for service just as Jesus did. He demonstrated His genuine care



for us when He obediently died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin ([Rom 5:8](#)). If we genuinely care about someone, we will assist them in any way possible, not making them dependent upon us, but rather liberating them through their mature growth in Christ to become productive members of the kingdom of God. Genuine care for others doesn't depend upon being recognized or thanked by others or even a glamorous position which everyone will notice, but rather it depends on how much we love God who enables us to love others unconditionally just as He does ([1 John 4:19-21](#)).

What does genuine care and concern for others look like in the church today?

Question  
# 3

## ***Philippians 2:22-24***

### ***PARTNER WITH OTHERS BY BEING GOOD CHARACTER:***

Paul commends Timothy to the Philippians because he has **proven character**. The word **proven** actually means "that which has been tested"; in other words, Timothy has demonstrated his **character** in an observable way to the Apostle Paul as they have ministered together. Paul considers Timothy like a spiritual **son** in ministry whom he has disciplined and watched mature in the Lord, so he has seen first-hand Timothy's **character** on their missionary journeys together. In anything we do in life, maintaining good **character** is of utmost importance because not only is it hard to repair if damaged but it also reflects on our heritage in Christ. In [Proverbs 22:1](#), Solomon describes the value of having good **character** or a good reputation: "A good name is



## Instruct

to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold.” Having a proven character means that we have the right motives, act with integrity, and live faithfully according to God’s Word (see [2 Tim 1:2-11](#)).

Besides the three general traits listed above, what traits should someone demonstrate who has “proven character?”

Question  
# 4

### In-Depth Information



Paul has known Timothy since his first missionary journey to Galatia when he visited Derbe and Lystra. Likely, he was saved during this time for Paul elsewhere calls him “a true son in the faith” ([1 Tim 1:2](#)). Often, Paul speaks of people who accept the gospel under his ministry as spiritual “children” ([1 Cor 4:15](#); [Gal 4:19](#); [Philemon 1:10](#)). He, therefore, has an intimate relationship with Timothy because he accepted Christ and he has had the opportunity to disciple him personally. As Paul travels to Galatia on his second missionary journey, he encourages Timothy to join him so he could disciple him in the ministry ([Acts 16:1-5](#)). Because Paul takes time to invest in Timothy, he has first-hand knowledge of his **character**.

After having been on staff for a couple of years, I was visiting with some of our Legacy Adult members before Sunday morning Bible Study. In the course of our conversation, one of the ladies revealed her true impression of me stating, “When you first started teaching, I already had my mind made up that I wasn’t going to like anything about you.” With a brief pause and a hint of a smile, she then recounted, “But I’ve grown to like you. You’re not that bad.” What changed? I certainly hadn’t changed my teaching style or the message of the gospel! My personality and approach to ministry hadn’t changed although hopefully others could see continued growth and maturity in Christ. What did change was that I had **proven** myself by acting consistently in accordance with my **character** in Christ. The Legacy Adults saw my **character** revealed through my actions and words. They had concrete evidence to which they could point that demonstrated my **character** in Christ and my love for them.

I didn’t set out to “prove” myself, but in the course of serving with others my **character** became evident to all. I don’t use this example to draw attention to myself, but to point to the transformation Christ has produce within me when He saved me. Each of us

should have this same outlook on life. We don't necessarily set out to "prove" ourselves because this may lead to inconsistency where we act a certain way only when we perceive people watching. Instead, we ought to live consistently with the principles of God's Word at all times which will demonstrate to others that He has transformed our **character** to His. Others should

see Christ in us wherever we are and whether we perceive others are watching or not.



*"A good name is to be  
chosen rather than great  
riches, Loving favor rather  
than silver and gold."  
Proverbs 22:1*


How consistent is your character with the principles God gives in Scripture by which we should live?

Question  
# 5

### Philippians 2:25-30

#### **PARTNER WITH OTHERS BY BEING COMPASSIONATE:**

In addition to Timothy, Paul also cites Epaphroditus as an example of a faithful partner in ministry who should be emulated. Paul not only describes him as a **brother**, but also as a **fellow worker** and **fellow soldier**—in other words a partner in ministry alongside of him. When the Philippians had heard of Paul's imprisonment, they eagerly sent Epaphroditus to help in any way he could (v. 25). As he **ministered** to Paul, somewhere along the way he became physically **sick** even to the point of **death** (vv. 26-27). Not only was Paul grieved while in prison, but word had gotten back to the Philippians and they became **distressed**, or worried, about the situation as well. However, **God** has **mercy** not only upon Epaphroditus by healing him, but also Paul so that He didn't add **sorrow upon sorrow**



**"THEREFORE, AS THE ELECT  
OF GOD, HOLY AND  
BELOVED, PUT ON TENDER  
MERCIES, KINDNESS,  
HUMILITY, MEEKNESS, LONGSUFFERING;"**

Colossians 3:12

## Instruct

while he was in prison. Consequently, along with this letter, Paul sends Epaphroditus back to the Philippians so that they may **rejoice** and **receive him with all gladness**. As partners, therefore, we ought to exercise compassion toward one another in the ministry. Paul, Epaphroditus, and the Philippians all express compassion toward one another in these verses. First, we see the initial act of compassion from the Philippians by rendering aid to a fellow ministry partner in need. The Philippians do not hesitate to send Epaphroditus, but do so immediately when they learn about the need. Second, we observe compassion from Paul because he is concerned about the **distress** that the Philippians have from the news of Epaphroditus' sickness. Paul could have been self-centered and looked only at his situation surmising that Epaphroditus was more useful to him in prison so he could have urged him to remain in Rome, but Paul understands the need to encourage the Philippians mutually by sending him back so that they might know that their **messenger** is well. Third, we see compassion from Epaphroditus toward Paul; even though Paul describes him as **coming close to death**, Epaphroditus put aside his personal needs **to supply what was lacking** in Paul's life at the moment (vv. 29-30).

In what ways have you shown compassion to others?

Question  
# 6

Through these two examples in Timothy and Epaphroditus, we can see what partnership in ministry should look like. In order to have an effective partnership, we must be both conscientious and compassionate—and this requires an intimate and deep relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Therefore, to be conscientious we must know our partners' situation intimately, be unified, and have genuine concern. Not only must we be conscientious, but we must also have good **character** and help in the right way—not enabling dependence, but helping our partners to mature in the Lord while assisting them in their need.

A partnership requires that we take time and invest in each other. Knowing each other doesn't just come from answering a few trivial questions about likes and dislikes, but rather it comes from working together and seeing one another's **character** on a daily basis. How can we have a true partnership if we only see our partner once or twice a week on Sundays or Wednesdays? We need to be intimately involved in each other's lives, not as gossips or busybodies, but as concerned partners who want the best for

that particular person, as well as the church as a whole. When we advance beyond the basics of what our modern society thinks is knowing someone, then we will be truly able to partner with one another and help strengthen each other in the right way.

Elsewhere, Paul pictures the church as a body which works together to accomplish the purpose for which

God has designed it. The individual parts may have particular tasks and functions even though they strive together for a single purpose in Christ. They support one another, they supplement one another, and they strengthen and encourage each member to serve as God has called him. They share in life's joys, they endure life's heartaches, and they uplift the weak. As a church, we express compassion toward one another by journeying through life together in Christ. Therefore, we must keep one another focused on Christ, knowing our ultimate provision comes from Him rather than other human beings.



How does the church show compassion to you, strengthening and encouraging you for ministry?

Question  
# 7



God created us to function as a family, not loners. He has placed us in a church to partner together. As partners, we should invest in each other's lives as God gives us opportunity. This requires that we know one another intimately, so that we can support one another in undertaking the ministry to which God has called us as a church. Therefore, we ought to spur one another to maintain good character in Christ so that the transformation He has produced within us will become evident to all. And we need to extend compassion to one another as an encouragement to remain focused on Christ, continually maturing and conforming our character to His. Therefore, as we follow Christ as His people, let us partner together to make the gospel known in the world through our testimony and good character as we help one another in whatever ways God allows.

## ***Incorporate***

How do you show genuine care for others in the church as well as in the secular community?

How do you demonstrate your transformed character in Christ to the world? Do all areas of your life reflect Christ or do some reflect the culture? If so, which ones? If they reflect culture, what must you do to be in right standing?

In what ways do you partner with others in the church to accomplish Christ's purposes? How have others walked through life together with you? How have you walked together in life with others?

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