

PHILIPPIANS 2

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

ICE BREAKER

- Think of a few famous leaders and celebrities. How would you describe their character?
- What do you think are the qualities of a great leader?
- Spend a minute or two reflecting on this quote: “Desire greatness, dear Christian! But bend your definition of greatness to the one Jesus gives us.” (Zack Eswine)

VERSES 1-11

- In verse 1, Paul uses an If-Then exhortation. *If* we believe something to be true, *then* we should respond a certain way. He wants his readers to ask themselves, “Do I believe these things are true?” How have you experienced the truths listed in verse 1?
- Paul says we should *then* respond with humility. How does he define humility?
- In verses 5-11, Paul puts the gospel story into poetry, framing it in the humility of Jesus. How did Jesus’ humility win us our salvation?
- Verse 6 says that though Jesus was fully God, he did not use this to his own advantage. Think about your own status. What status, privileges, or blessings do you have that you could be tempted to use only for your own advantage?
- Verse 4 challenges us to look not only after our own needs, but also to the needs of others. What are some ways you can look after the interests of others while we are living under the stay-home order?
- In sum, Paul is asking us to consider if our beliefs line up with our actions...
 - When others look at you, in what ways do they see Jesus in you?
 - When others look at you, in what ways do you not yet look like Jesus?
- Go back to that quote by Zack Eswine in the ice breaker section above. How does Jesus change our definitions of “greatness” based on the verses you just read?

DID YOU KNOW?

The heart of Philippians is the magnificent “hymn of Christ” in 2:5–11. Paul describes Jesus’ pre-existence and equality with God, his incarnation as a man, his death and resurrection. He is the supreme example of humility and personal sacrifice for the sake of others. Due to its poetic structure, many scholars believe it was used for worship in the early church. In fact, songs for worship can be found throughout the Paul’s letters and the rest of the Bible. Can you think of a hymn or worship song we sing today that is mostly or entirely based on a passage found in Scripture?

VERSES 12-30

- In verse 12, Paul connects Jesus' gracious salvation leads us to obedience. [Watch this video by The Bible Project](#) to think more about how this works. Pay especially close attention at the end of the video.
- It can be tempting to hear the phrase "work out your salvation" and think that it is all up to us and our own power. But look ahead at verse 13. Where does our power to obey come from?
- God saves you by grace and also helps you obey by grace. His gift of grace covers everything! How does this comfort you as you seek to follow him?
- In verse 14, Paul makes what looks like an awkward transition, but it's still connected to what he's been saying in previous verses. Why would grumbling and arguing with other people be an un-Christian way of living?
- Aside from not grumbling and arguing, what are some other examples of counter-cultural qualities and actions Christians can do to "shine among [the world] like stars" as we point people to Jesus?
- In verses 19-30, Paul uses two of his friends—Timothy and Epaphroditus—as examples of the sort of Christian humility he hopes to see in the Philippians. How does Paul describe them?
- Can you think of a person in your life that models Christian humility? What do they do that makes you want to be like them?
- Choose one quality about that humble person you thought of. Make a list of things you can regularly do in order for that quality to show up more often in your own life.

WHO IS TIMOTHY?

Timothy was from Lystra in South Galatia and was the son of a Jewish mother and a Greek father. Timothy, along with his mother and grandmother, may have been led to Christ during Paul's first visit to Lystra. Timothy joined Paul as a coworker when Paul passed through his hometown early on his second missionary journey. Paul trusted Timothy immensely and sent him on many important missions to strengthen and encourage churches as well as to deal with doctrinal and theological problems. Although he was young, Timothy proved himself to be a godly and effective leader. In Philippians 2:19–24, Paul describes Timothy as an example of a Christ-centered life. Paul also referred to Timothy by the lofty title "God's coworker," emphasizing his credentials (1 Thess. 3:2). Two books in the New Testament are letters written from Paul to Timothy.

PRAYER

Close in a time of conversation with God about the things that challenged you, and ask that he would work in you to become more humble like his Son Jesus. Below is a promise from God that he will put his Spirit in you to help you obey. You may use it to help guide your prayer. Also remember to keep up with your Philippians 2:4 Challenge by calling 2 people per day to check-in and encourage them, and pray for 4 others.

²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Ezekiel 36:25-27)