

Completed Joy

Small Group Leader Notes

We hope that your group's time in the Book of Philippians has been enriching. Paul spends most of chapter 1 proclaiming that the hope of the gospel produces joy, despite our circumstances. This week we will be moving into chapter 2, where Paul encourages his readers to complete his joy by imitating Christ. Philippians 2:1-11 is incredibly rich in the theology of Christ, while giving believers a call to unity and like-mindedness.



Read Philippians 2:1-11. When reading scripture, anytime you see the word “therefore”, you need to ask what that word is connecting the passage to. How is Paul connecting Phil. 2:1 & 2 to Phil. 1:29 & 30?

Paul finishes chapter 1 by recognizing that many believers from the Philippian church are suffering for Christ in the same way he has. Knowing what they are going through, Paul can actually empathize with them.

Thus, Paul is making a rhetorical statement in chapter 2, verse 1. You can easily substitute the word “if” with the word “since.” It might be advantageous to reread the verse using “since” in place of “if” for your group to have a better understanding of what Paul is articulating.



Looking at verse 2, how does Paul encourage us to be like-minded? What are some things in churches today that can cause division, and how do we overcome those issues?

Paul says we must be like-minded by having the same love, being one in spirit, and of one mind. To be clear, Paul is not implying that we have intellectual uniformity. Instead, he is pointing them towards their diverse giftedness to work together to bring glory to God.

This would be a good time to remind your group about the spiritual gifts they have as Christians, and how they are meant to be used in service of the Kingdom of God. Don't let the conversation get carried away on the topic, since we have a lot more to look at in our passage.



Read Phil. 2:3-5. What does it mean to have the same mindset as Christ, and how do we obtain that?

This might be a tricky question for your group to answer, but it is very important to understand the mindset of Christ since it ties directly to verses 6-8 (and even to our discussion next week) when Paul says, “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” (Phil. 2:12).

*The Greek word for mindset, *phroneo*, is used about 30 times in the New Testament. It is used by Paul all but three times. It ultimately means to develop an attitude based on careful thought.*

The reality is that there are many things in our world today that compete for our mindset. Friends, family, social media, the news, and culture are just a few things off a long list of influences that can shape our mindset, and ultimately force us to develop an attitude towards others.

The first century Philippian Christians had many things shaping their mindset that also caused division in the church. Paul’s call to a unified mindset pushed them to reorient their thinking to the way Jesus thinks. Looking at verses 3 and 4, we see we ought not do anything out of selfish ambition, or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, we should value others above ourselves, not looking to our own self-interests, but to the interests of others. In verses 6-8, we see exactly how Jesus set aside some of His godly attributes in order to achieve salvation for those that would follow Him.



Read Philippians 2:6-8. What does this passage want us to understand about the nature of Jesus?

*There are mainly two things we can pull from these verses. The first, is the fact that Jesus was both 100% man, and 100% God, at the same time. We call this the **Hypostatic Union**. David Mathis says, “the Hypostatic Union is the mysterious joining of the divine and the human in the one person of Jesus.”*

Hebrews 2:14 tells us why the Hypostatic Union is important, “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil-...”

For more detailed information on the Hypostatic Union, visit <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-is-the-hypostatic-union>

While these verses give us a great understanding of the nature of Christ, Paul’s purpose for describing Jesus in this hymn/poem was to encourage the believers to imitate Jesus’ great humility and love.



Just as Paul could empathize with the persecution of the Philippian believers, how does Jesus empathize with humanity? (Also see Hebrews 4:15)

Looking back at our first discussion question this week, we see Paul relate to the persecution of the Philippian church. As we read this early hymn/poem, it is evident that Jesus, having taken on the nature of a human servant, is able to relate and empathize with us.



Read Philippians 2:9-11. Declaring Jesus Christ is Lord flew in the face of those in a Roman/Philippian culture. Why?

To a good Roman, Caesar was lord. Declaring anyone else as lord would have ruffled some feathers. Verse 11 also does more than indicate that Caesar isn't the ultimate lord, it also points out that Jesus is the Lord of Lords.



In these verses, Paul references the Old Testament. Read Isaiah 45:18-25. Who does Paul say Jesus is?

Again, Paul makes the claim that Jesus is the Lord of Lords, that is Yahweh - the God of the Jews, and the creator of all things. The name "Yahweh" comes from the Hebrew word for "I am". In Exodus, when God met Moses at the burning bush and commanded him to go back to Egypt, and lead the people out, Moses asked who he should say has sent him. "God said to Moses, 'I am who I am.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: "I am has sent me to you."' God also said to Moses, 'Say this to the people of Israel: "The LORD [YHWH], the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you." This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations'" (Exodus 3:14-15).

This passage is important because it clearly proclaims Jesus as God.



Knowing that Jesus is God, how are we responsible to Him?

There are two ways people in your group can respond to this question. The first, is as a non-believer. A non-believer must understand that they carry the weight and punishment of their sin and will stand before God one day to receive their due consequences (which is separation from God for all of eternity, which is hell). The good news is that we do not need to stand before God condemned. We must admit that we are sinful, even on our best days, and that the wage of sin is death. We must believe in Jesus Christ as Lord, that His death on the cross was the sufficient sacrifice to make atonement for our sins, and that his resurrection conquered the death owed to us. Further, we must choose to follow Christ with our lives by submitting to His will and authority over us.

The second way to respond to this question is as a believer. This response requires an understanding that we have been bought with a price. That we are no longer our own. That we are called to live with the same mindset of Christ, with humility and sacrifice, for the sake of others.