

**EASTER SEASON:
A Time to Celebrate Resurrection Life**

Week 10 “The Humility of Christ”

“³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Phil. 2:3-11

Commentary on Philippians 2:3-11

2:3-4 Nothing whatever should be done through selfish ambition or conceit, since these are two of the greatest enemies of unity among the people of God. Selfish ambition is the desire to be number one, no matter what the cost. Conceit speaks of pride or self-display. Wherever you find people who are interested in gathering a clique around themselves or in promoting their own interests, there you will find the seeds of contention and strife. The remedy is found in the latter part of the verse. In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. This does not mean that we must consider criminals as having better moral characters than our own, but rather that we should live for others unselfishly, putting their interests above our own. It is easy to read an exhortation like this in the word of God, but quite another thing to appreciate what it really means, and then put it into actual practice. To esteem others better than ourselves is utterly foreign to the human mind, and we cannot do it in our own strength. It is only as we are indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit that it can ever be practiced.¹

How do were the Philippians to live this kind of? Paul tells them how by exhorting them to consider others before themselves. Paul explained how humility can be expressed (Phil. 2:4). Instead of concentrating on self, each believer should be concerned for the interests of others in the household of faith (cf. Rom. 12:10). Preoccupation with oneself is sin.² The self-centeredness that considers only one’s own rights, plans, and interests must be replaced by a broader outlook that includes the interests of one’s fellows... What Paul is calling for is a Christian concern that is wide enough to include others in its

¹ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1965). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² Lightner, R. P. (1985). *Philippians*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 653). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

scope. When each member of the Christian community exercises this mutual concern, problems of disunity quickly disappear.³

2: 6-11 Modern scholars call the words of 2: 6– 11 a hymn, suggesting that it may have come from the worship of the early church. The purpose and content of the hymn have produced mixed evaluations. Most scholars agree that Paul used the hymn to urge humility upon his readers. The hymn appears to divide the life of Christ into a period of preexistence, a time on earth, and exaltation to heaven. Paul taught that Christ did not regard his equality with God as a position to be used for his own advantage. He urged Christians to imitate in their relationships with one another the humility Christ showed in his incarnation and crucifixion.⁴ This account of Christ’s incarnation serves as a supreme illustration of humility, as God the Son willingly surrendered the prerogatives of deity to die as a human being for our sins. The hymn also makes another important point. The way up for us too is down. We must follow Jesus along the way of humility.⁵

2:6 “Being in very nature God” affirms that Jesus is fully God. This is one of the clearest statements of the deity of Jesus Christ found in the NT.

2:6-8

This is the Christian doctrine of the incarnation, that in Christ God became a true human being, while at the same time remaining deity. This hymn is one of several powerful affirmations of this basic doctrine. Others are found in John 1:1–14, Gal. 4:4–5, Col. 1:15–19, and Heb. 1.⁶

Paul goes on to say that Christ “... made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (vv. 7–8). We should not be able to read these words without a sense of awe and wonder stealing over our hearts. If anyone ever had the right to insist on his rights, it was the Lord Jesus. But his concern for others (those whom the Father had given him) was such that he refused to insist on his rights. He did not cling to his divine prerogatives, but willingly laid aside all the trappings of his glory and took our humanity. It is crucial for us to understand that in doing this he did not cease to be God. God cannot cease to be God! He rather laid aside the glories and riches of heaven and ‘the independent exercise of authority’ and added our humanity to his deity so he was at one and the same time fully God and fully man.⁷

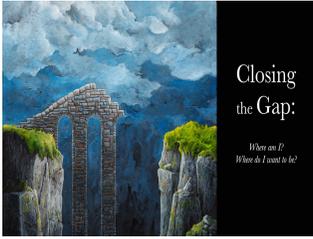
³ Kent, H. A., Jr. (1981). [Philippians](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon* (Vol. 11, p. 122). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

⁴ Lea, Thomas. *The New Testament: Its Background and Message* (pp. 443-444). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

⁵ Richards, L. O. (1991). [The Bible reader’s companion](#) (electronic ed., p. 807). Wheaton: Victor Books.

⁶ Richards, L. O. (1991). [The Bible reader’s companion](#) (electronic ed., p. 807). Wheaton: Victor Books.

⁷ Ellsworth, R. (2004). [Opening up Philippians](#) (p. 37). Leominster: Day One Publications.



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Week 10 "The Humility of Christ"

Study Guide Philippians 2:3-11

1. When we read the passage, we're hit with the challenge of "doing nothing out of selfish ambition." The reality is everything is done out of it. Yet in this passage there is the absolute demand: do nothing out of selfish ambition.
 - Does not living out of selfish ambition seem like an impossibility to you? If so, explain why?
 - Why do we tend to put ourselves first?
 - Has selfishness really ever worked well for you? Explain.
 - Consider the following statement: Jesus, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, scorning its shame. What are the implications for you personally from this statement?
2. There is a sense that we are to look out for our own interest; it's not wrong, it's normal and it's wise. We should care for our bodies and souls.
 - How would you describe the differences between being wise and being selfish? Why would this not be considered selfish ambition?
 - The attitude of Jesus was humility; he put the interests of others ahead of his own. What can we learn from Jesus about our own attitudes?
 - How can our attitudes be key indicators as to our motives?
3. Our knowledge of Christ being made in human likeness is accurate and adequate even though it is not exhaustive or comprehensive.
 - When you read the statement above, is it comforting? Why?
 - Like gravity, The Incarnation is something that is real in the world. The implications and applications are profound for human existence. Take some time and discuss those implications and applications.
 - The knowledge of the Incarnation is important for us to have, it tells us how to live our lives. What makes this knowledge so important for you? What effect does it have on our day-to-day lives?
 - What would it look like for you to grow in your understanding of the Incarnation?
4. Think about humility, how does it impact obedience? How is pride a stumbling block to obedience?
 - Consider your own life, in what ways does pride have a foothold?
 - What steps can you take to enter into a pattern of retraining your reflexes for humility? What would those steps look like?

- What would it take for you to confess pride every time it appears in your life and choose the humility of obedience?
5. Say the name of Jesus much today. Speak it to yourself and speak it to others. When He is first on your tongue and your heart, you will be positioned to bless and not merely be impressed by others. You will live to bless and not live trying to impress others. Jesus is the famous one, say so today.
- Will you live for Him today?