WEEK 03 · PHILIPPIANS 1:27-2:11

God desires us to live in unity with one another, and this can only be achieved when we humble ourselves and consider others as more important than ourselves.

Preface

Last week, we learned from Paul's example that God can use our suffering and our attitude toward it to advance the gospel and embolden others to suffer alongside Christ.

This week, we will read about the importance of unity. The key to this is demonstrated in Christ and His humility.

Background: The Philippian church was composed of diverse backgrounds and cultural practices, which certainly contributed to divisions and misunderstandings within the community. Philippians 1:15-17 also tells us that some were preaching out of selfish ambition and rivalry, which likely contributed further to the division.

Warm-up question: What is the most divided community you have been a part of? What made it so divided?

Study

Read Philippians 1:27-30 to answer the following questions.

1. What was Paul's desire for the Philippian church? What value did he emphasize for believers to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ? (1:27)

> Notes: Paul emphasized **unity**—"**one spirit**" and "**one mind**"—in striving for the gospel. A life worthy of the gospel of Christ is one that strives for the unity of the church.

2. Who are the "opponents" Paul refers to, and what might their opposition look like to the Philippian church? (1:28)

> Notes: Paul warned the Philippian church against those who attack its unity and those who are divisive.

3. How does Paul encourage the Philippians to perceive suffering? (1:28-29)

Read Philippians 2:1-4 to answer the following questions.

4. Based on this passage, how does being like-minded and of one mind look in practice? (2:1-4)

5. How would you define "selfish ambition" and "vain conceit"? What do the two share in common and what makes them distinct? (2:3)

> Notes: **Selfish ambition** refers to **selfishness**, while **vain conceit** involves the idea of **self-importance**—how we view ourselves in the eyes of others.

6. What is the difference between unity and conformity, especially in the context of a community?

Read Philippians 2:5-11 to answer the following questions.

7. What was the mindset of Christ Jesus that we should embody in our relationships? (2:6-8)

8. What do you think it means when it says that Jesus “made himself nothing”? The ESV uses the phrase “he emptied himself”. What exactly did Jesus lay aside? (2:7)

> Notes: Jesus did not give up His divinity, nor did He give up His divine attributes. Instead He laid aside the glory and freedom.

9. What is the ultimate end goal of humility? (2:5-11)

> Notes: Humility brings **unity**. The unity of the church testifies to and exemplifies Christ’s humility, declaring the **Lordship of Jesus Christ** and **bringing glory to God the Father**.

Application

1. Paul emphasizes living a life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. What does that look like in practical terms for believers today?

2. How can we demonstrate the unity that Paul encourages in these verses?

3. In what ways can we embody Christ’s humility in our everyday life?

Optional Follow-up Exercise: Sharing of Burdens

This week’s study talks about unity. We often think that unity is achieved when we can all think and act alike. However, the passage today teaches us that unity is achieved through humility. Humility does not mean to think less of oneself, but rather to consider others more. Many times we do not think of other people because we are too self-involved in our own issues.

This week’s activity involves listening to each other’s burdens and remembering them throughout the week. Oftentimes, we limit sharing our burdens to a short prayer time to close a Care Group night, but it is in **remembering it throughout the week** that we truly cultivate a culture of caring for one another.

Instructions:

- Go around the room and have each person share a particular burden in their lives. Assign a scribe to write down all the burdens.
- Together with your group, open your calendar app or any reminder app you use, and set a reminder for the middle of the week to check in with one another.
- Assign members into pairs or trios to hold each other accountable throughout the week.
- After the meeting, have the scribe copy those burdens into a text message or email and send it to the whole group. Remind members to pray over these burdens every day.
- In the middle of the week, check back with one another on how everyone is doing. Prompt each person to update the rest of the community on their progress.