

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JANUARY 14 - 18, 2019

TOU

SERMON SERIES

A Study of Philippians

MONDAY

Philippians 2:1-11

I have a friend who labored as a full-time missionary for about twenty years. I asked him, “What was the greatest obstacle that you faced in your years of missionary service.” I expected him to say something like “learning a foreign language or culture, learning to work with local native workers, etc.”

He answered, “There is one challenge that far overshadows all the other obstacles that missionaries face. The greatest problem that missionaries face on the mission field is the relationship of missionaries with one another.”

I was shocked when I heard this. I had thought that this would never be a problem, that mature Christians empowered by the Holy Spirit can easily work together in harmony. They would always love one another and be in accord. Unity would be a given! In my naivetes I was expecting perfection among imperfect people.

I had always wondered why Jesus devoted so much of His prayer in John 17 to the need for unity among His disciples and among all believers. Jesus prayed, “... protect them ... so that they may be one as we are one” (v. 11). Then He prayed for all Christians to have unity (vv. 20-23). In this section of His prayer for all believers, He devotes almost His entire prayer to the need for oneness among them. From this prayer we could conclude that Jesus considered unity as the greatest need among Christians.

In Philippians 2:1-2, Paul rejoices over the growth in Christ of the Philippians. They have experienced the indwelling of Christ and the manifestation of the Spirit's fruit in their lives. Now Paul wants his joy to be complete by their living together in unity. His joy was not finalized until they lived in harmony. Growing in Christ and being fruitful for Him is incomplete until there is unity. Unity is the capstone. Without it, the job is unfinished.

Regularly pray for unity within Glenkirk. We know how important this is. Disunity could become a weakness that the enemy would exploit. Never relax, nor sit back, nor take it for granted. Let us work hard at making unity one of our greatest strengths.

QUESTION

How has disunity adversely affected Glenkirk in the past? What could have been done to prevent disunity in Glenkirk in the past?

PRAYER

Lord, help us to maintain a spirit of unity among ourselves. Help us to be alert to the small dangers that might slowly erode our oneness. Help us to be diligent at expressing love, forgiveness, and humility within our Glenkirk family, especially in what might appear to be small, unimportant matters. Amen.

TUESDAY

Philippians 2:1-11

In verses 3-11, Paul lists specific ways for maintaining unity among believers. In verse 3 he says, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.” We need to look upon others as being better than ourselves. Humanly we tend to do the opposite; we elevate ourselves above others. We need to get a true picture of ourselves—as God sees us.

We need to see sin from God’s point of view. We tend to compare ourselves with the worst sinners and think we are rather good in comparison. But when we use God’s standard of perfection, we are no different from the worst sinners.

We think of sin as the wrong that we do. However, sin is much more than acts of commission. There are sins of omission, such as when we fail to show love when needed. When we judge others, we condemn ourselves because we commit the same sins. Sins in thought are the same as sins of commission. When we go against our conscience, we sin. There are sins embedded in our culture, such as materialism and individualism, that we commit without being aware of it. Even our best good works are tainted with sin. And finally, we do not always give God the glory He deserves.

For example, I am eighty years old. In my lifetime I have probably hated over 10,000 people. That means that in God's eyes, I have murdered over 10,000 people. Also, I have probably had lustful thoughts over 1,000 times. That means that in God's eyes, I have committed adultery over 1,000 times. In His eyes I am no different than the worst of sinners. I cannot elevate myself above others. In reality I am lower than they.

As Paul says, "consider others better than yourselves." This is the pathway to humility and unity in the church. Try to see your sin from God's point of view; then you might be able to have a spirit of humility as you relate with others. Then you will be able to help build unity within the church.

QUESTION

Why does Paul consider humility to be so important in fostering unity in the church? What can you do to help promote unity in the church?

PRAYER

Lord, help me to see my sin through Your eyes so that my attitudes of pride and boastfulness will be broken. Continue to develop within me a spirit of humility so that I can sincerely look upon others as better than myself. Amen.

WEDNESDAY

Philippians 2:1-11

In Paul's list of specific ways to maintain unity, he says, "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (v. 4). We should not just think of our own wishes but also those of others.

An example from marriage will help us. Most women's expectations of marriage are high. They expect to relate with their husbands on a very intimate level, heart to heart. While many men's expectations are lower. They want a wife who will satisfy their basic needs, and that is good enough. That's all they're looking for!

David E. Clarke (*Married But Lonely*, 2013) describes this gulf in the marital expectations between men and women. He is speaking to the wife.

"You are married but unsatisfied. You love each other. You're committed. But a lot is missing. You're not close. You're not intimate. And it looks like you never will be ..."

"The fact is many men are at least somewhat intimacy-challenged. Conversations tend toward the short, safe, and superficial, and finding out what is really going on inside can be a challenge ..."

"My research over the past two decades, as a clinical psychologist and as a speaker presenting marriage seminars nationwide, shows that 85 percent of all husbands have no clue when it comes to achieving closeness with their wives ..."

Clarke is describing my relationship with my wife. I had been content with our level of marital intimacy, but my wife was not. “Why should I have to change to meet her expectations? Why doesn’t she just lower her expectations?” That was how I used to think.

However, when the Scriptures say that you should “look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others,” I had to change my way of thinking. No longer must I just be content with looking after my own interests; I have to see what I can do to meet the interests of my wife as well as others.

This is the pathway to greater intimacy in marriage and to unity in the church. We have to consider the interests of others as well as our own.

QUESTION

How has selfishness adversely affected your relationship with someone else? If you could go back and redo some conversation with someone close to you, what would you say or do?

PRAYER

Lord, give us greater love for the Church Body so that we will be willing to overcome our singular focus on ourselves and be able to care deeply for the needs of others. Amen.

THURSDAY

Philippians 2:1-11

Humility is required to maintain unity in the church. Paul appeals to the example of Jesus humbling Himself to die on the cross as the pattern for us to follow. Jesus is equal with God. Yet, He was willing to step down from His position of divinity to become a man in order to die for the sins of the world. This was the greatest act of humility one could ever imagine. Jesus led the way for us to follow. “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (v. 5). As He humbled Himself, we are to do the same in order to maintain our oneness in the Body of Christ.

Jesus’ example of submission to servanthood is the pattern for the relationship between husband and wife. The husband and the wife are equals (Galatians 3:28). Yet, they are to submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21). How would this practice affect the harmony of your marriage?

This is the pattern for all Christians. We are to be servants to one another. If we were to bring this attitude into the church, how would it affect our relationships? Or our attitude toward issues which tend to divide us? If we were to say to ourselves, “I am here to serve the Body, not to promote my own ends,” what impact would that have on the people of the church? How would this attitude affect our leadership styles? If all the leadership of a church had this attitude, what fruit would result from their labors?

In the 1990's in the city of Rosario, Argentina, the pastors and churches were not working together. Each tended to do his or her own thing. The churches were small and weak, having little impact on their communities. The Spirit moved the pastors to begin to pray together. This unity in prayer brought about a strong spirit of oneness among them. They were led to jointly sponsor a city-wide evangelistic crusade. As a result of the crusade, so many new believers were coming into the churches that their buildings were overflowing with people. A great revival broke out in the city. Unity in the churches released the power of the Spirit to work among them.

QUESTION

Why is it so difficult to consider someone else's needs more important than your own? What steps can you take to humble yourself as Christ humbled Himself?

PRAYER

Lord, make us more like Yourself. Work in our hearts the spirit of humility, gather us together in unity, and bring about a mighty work of Your Spirit among us. Amen.

FRIDAY

Philippians 2:1-11

Jesus humbled Himself by giving up His divinity to become a man in order to face the cross. This great act of humility resulted in His greatest elevation. “Therefore, God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (vv. 9-10). His humility revealed His true position that “Jesus Christ is Lord.”

As Christians we proudly proclaim that “Jesus Christ is Lord.” This is our battle cry. This is the reason we live. He is the Sovereign Ruler over us. He wants to take full control of our lives. Because He is Lord of our lives, we are to make our decisions based on what He would want us to do.

An event from my college days might help us to more fully grasp this concept of the Lordship of Christ. During my college years, my friend and I decided to hitchhike from Denver, Colorado, to Los Angeles. (This practice is no longer lawful, so younger people may not know what hitchhiking is. We would stand beside the road holding one arm out with the thumb extended. This would be a sign to passing drivers that we would like to catch a ride with them.) It took us four days to reach Los Angeles by hitchhiking.

Suppose you were driving a car and saw Jesus standing at the side of the road hitchhiking. You jam on the brakes, fling the door open, and say, “Come on in, Jesus. I would love to give you a ride.” But Jesus just stands there without moving. Then you invite Him again. Still He does not respond. Then you ask, “Why don’t you want to get into my car?”

Jesus answers, “I don’t want to be a passenger. I want to be the driver.” Jesus does not want to be a passenger in our lives. He wants to take over the driver’s seat. He wants to make the decisions concerning where He wants you to go. Jesus Christ is Lord!

QUESTION

Why was it so important for Jesus to give control of His earthly life to God the Father? How are you doing in giving control of your life to Jesus?

PRAYER

Lord, take full control of my life. Lead me in the paths You want me to take. May I be quick to obey. Amen.



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