

Philippians

A GUIDE TO JOY

Philippians 2:1-4 – Unity Through Humility

May 31, 2020

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,...
Philippians 1:27 (ESV)

I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Philippians 4:2 (ESV)

Church unity is an important topic. Paul talks about the importance of unity in most of his letters to other New Testament churches — Romans 12:10, Romans 12:16, 1 Corinthians 1:10, 2 Corinthians 13:11, Galatians 5:6, Ephesians 4, and Colossians 3

1. Why is unity important in the church?

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind,... Philippians 2:1–2 (ESV)

“If” is not used as a question. It is used as a statement of fact. It means “since”.

A. We have received encouragement from Christ.

...any encouragement in Christ... Philippians 2:1 (ESV)

Encouragement (*paraklesis*) means to come alongside to help, encourage and counsel.

Unity was the desire of Jesus’ heart. Jesus’ prayed Christians would be known as a unified people.

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”
John 17:20–21 (ESV)

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35 (ESV)

B. We have the comfort of Christ's love.

...any comfort from love... Philippians 1:1 (ESV)

Comfort (*paramythion*) means gentle cheering. It is whispering in your ear words of encouragement.

C. We have participation in the Spirit.

...any participation in the Spirit... Philippians 1:1 (ESV)

Participation (*koinonia*) means partnership. It is friends working together toward a goal.

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:13 (ESV)

D. We have affection and sympathy from God.

...any affection and sympathy... Philippians 1:1 (ESV)

Affection (*splanchna*) means feeling from the gut. It is a feeling of loving desire like a husband has for his wife. God is not a machine. He is a person that loves us.

Sympathy (*oiktirmos*) means the tender mercies of God. It means far more kindness than we deserve.

E. A leader's joy is the unity of the people.

...complete my joy by being of the same mind,... Philippians 2:2 (ESV)

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. Hebrews 13:17 (ESV)

2. What does a united church look like?

...by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Philippians 2:2 (ESV)

A. It is a church where people have the mind of Christ about things.

...by being of the same mind... Philippians 2:2 (ESV)

Mind (*phroneo*) does not mean agreeing on every little thing. It means unity because people can think like Jesus about bigger things.

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." 1 Corinthians 1:10–12 (ESV)

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, Philippians 2:5 (ESV)

B. It is a church where people love others as Jesus loves them.

...having the same love... Philippians 2:2 (ESV)

Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Romans 12:10 (ESV)

But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. 1 John 3:17–18 (ESV)

C. It is a church where people have their souls knit-together.

...being in full accord... Philippians 2:2 (ESV)

Full accord (*sumpsuchos*) means having one soul, a soul-brother who is joined with you at your heart.

D. It is a church that operates as one.

...and of one mind... Philippians 2:2 (ESV)

3. How do we get unity in the church?

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Philippians 2:3–4 (ESV)

A. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit... Philippians 2:3 (ESV)

Selfish Ambition (*erithion*) means promoting ourselves and our interests at the expense of others or over others. Aristotle used this to describe a politician running for office.

Conceit (*kenodoxia*) means empty glory. It is thinking of ourselves as better than others or looking down on others, when in reality, we are no different from others.

B. In humility, we consider others more significant than ourselves.

...but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Philippians 2:3 (ESV)

Humility is not thinking less of yourself. It is thinking of yourself less.

C. In humility, we don't just look out for our interests, but for the interests of others.

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Philippians 2:4 (ESV)

4. Application

A. The only way to have unity in the church is to have humility in church. We need to consider the needs of other people and other ministries not just our own interests and desires.

B. The only way to have unity in multi-site is to have humility. Each campus considers the needs of the other before its own.

C. The only way to have unity in marriage is to have humility. We put the needs and desires of our spouse before our own in marriage.

D. The only way to have unity during COVID-19 is to have humility. We need to be willing to be inconvenienced as we consider the needs of others while we return to normal.

Life Group Questions

1. What stuck out to you in the message? What is one thing you will apply?
2. Read Philippians 2:1-4. What motivations does Paul give the church to focus on unity? How does that change the way you think about unity at CrossWinds? See also John 17:20-23.
3. Read Philippians 2:5-11 as a preview for our next study. How does Jesus show us how to live the Philippians 2:3-4 life?
4. Is it possible to be of one-mind and disagree on things? What truths from Philippians 2:1-4 could help you in a disagreement with a Christian brother or sister? See also Ephesians 4:1-6.
5. Paul told us to focus on cultivating humility. What does Philippians 2:3-4 teach us about how to develop humility? See James 4:6-10 for additional characteristics of a humble person.