

# Philippians 2:3-4 Commentary

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**Philippians 2:3** Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** meden kat' eritheian mede kata kenodoxian, alla te tapeinophrosune allelous hegoumenoi (PMPMPN) huperechontas (PMPMPA) heauton

**Amplified:** Do nothing from factional motives [through contentiousness, strife, selfishness, or for unworthy ends] or prompted by conceit and empty arrogance. Instead, in the true spirit of humility (lowliness of mind) let each regard the others as better than and superior to himself [thinking more highly of one another than you do of yourselves]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**BBE:** Doing nothing through envy or through pride, but with low thoughts of self let everyone take others to be better than himself

**ICB:** When you do things, do not let selfishness or pride be your guide. Be humble and give more honor to others than to yourselves. ([ICB: Nelson](#))

**NLT:** Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**KJV:** Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

**Phillips :** Never act from motives of rivalry or personal vanity, but in humility think more of each other than you do of yourselves. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** Doing nothing impelled by a spirit of factiousness, nothing impelled by empty pride, but in lowliness of mind consider one another as excelling themselves, this estimation resting, not upon feelings or sentiment, but upon a due consideration of facts.

**Young's Literal:** nothing in rivalry or vain-glory, but in humility of mind one another counting more excellent than yourselves--

#### **DO NOTHING FROM SELFISHNESS: meden kat eritheian:**

- Phil 2:14; 1:15,16; Pr 13:10; Ro 13:13; 1Cor 3:3; 2Co 12:20; Gal 5:15; 5:20,21, 5:26, Col 3:8; 1Ti 6:4; Jas 3:14, 15, 16; 1Pe 2:1,2
- See Torrey's Topic [Selfishness](#)

Do nothing to promote the ends of party faction. (Lightfoot)

Do nothing in a spirit of selfish ambition (Barclay)

Doing nothing impelled by a spirit of factiousness (Wuest)

nothing in rivalry (Young's)

Do nothing out of selfish ambition (NIV),

Never act from motives of rivalry (Phillips)

When you do things, do not let selfishness or pride be your guide (ICB),

Do nothing from factional motives [through contentiousness, strife, selfishness, or for unworthy ends] (Amp)

**Do** - This verb is not present in the original Greek which reads simply "**nothing by selfish ambition**" or "nothing according to factions or strife".

**Nothing** ([3367](#)) (**medeis** from **medé** = and not, also not + **heis** = one) means not even one, no one. **Medeis** is a negative reference to an entity, event, or state— no one, none, nothing. Pertaining to there not being any selfishness.

To paraphrase **Wiersbe**, the secret of **joy** in spite of circumstances (Chapter 1 Paul in prison) is maintaining a single mind and the secret of **joy** in spite of people is maintaining a submissive mind. In chapter 1 we find "**Christ first**" and in chapter 2 we see "**others next.**" Using "**J.O.Y.**" as an acrostic we see "**J**" for Jesus first, "**O**" for others next and finally "**Y**" for yourself last. A good order in order to maintain order but a "tall order" to carry out consistently. (cf Php 4:13 for how it is possible) Let this formula rule in your life (enabled by Php 2:13) and the "fruit" you will bear (Gal 5:22-note) will be supernatural "**J.O.Y.**"!

**Selfishness** ([2052](#)) (**eritheia** from **eritheúo** = work for hire, usually in a bad sense of those who seek only their own)

**Eritheia** - 7x in 7v- Ro 2:8; 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:20; Phil 1:17; 2:3; Jas 3:14, 16. NAS = ambition(3), ambitious(1), disputes(2), selfish(3), selfishly(1), selfishness(1)

- [Selfishness - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)
- [Selfishness - Nave's Topical Bible](#)
- [Selfishness - Torrey's Topical Textbook](#)

Selfishness is an inordinate self love, prompting one, for the sake of personal gratification or advantage, to disregard the rights or feelings of other men. It is a negative quality — that is, it consists in not considering what is due to one's neighbors through a deficiency of justice or benevolence. Selfishness is contrary to the Scriptures, which command us to have respect for the rights and feelings of others, and forbids us to encroach thereupon. ([Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature](#))

The root meaning of **eritheia** may have been that of a hireling. The idea is of a mercenary, who does his work simply for money, without regard for the issues or any harm he may be doing. Everything he does is for the purpose of serving and pleasing self. Certainly this fits the Bible's emphasis that the basic problem of unregenerate man is his being totally wrapped up in himself and having no place in his life for God.

**Eritheia** connotes strife, contentiousness, extreme selfishness, intriguing for office, a desire to put one's self forward, a partisan and factious spirit, self-seeking.

**Eritheia** is found outside the NT uses only in a writing by Aristotle where he uses it to denote a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means. It represents a motive of self-interest and is sometimes rendered "**strife**" (KJV) because it refers to factionalism, rivalry, and partisanship & speaks of the pride that prompts people to push for their own way. Paul had experienced the effects of "selfish ambition" in ([Php 1:17](#)).

Many commentators feel that from the nature of Paul's exhortation (against selfishness) one can infer that there were budding factions among the saints at Philippi. In a gracious way, Paul is saying to the church, "Your disagreements reveal that there is a spiritual problem in your fellowship. It isn't going to be solved by rules or threats. It's going to be solved when your hearts are right with Christ and with each other."

Paul wanted them to see that the basic cause was selfishness, and the cause of selfishness is pride.

**Pentecost** explains that the word **selfishness** "has to do with a party spirit; it has to do with a faction in the church that wants to promote its aims and ambitions as opposed to another group. When the assembly is divided into different groups, following different men, then there will be a party spirit, and the first party is competing with the second party for power and prominence. There is competition in reaching the same ends and the same goals. The apostle says that, if his joy is to be filled up, there cannot be factions and divisions and party spirit or competition within groups in the assembly. ([Pentecost, J. D. The Joy of Living: A study of Philippians. Kregel Publications](#))

**Barnes** has some stinging comments on the things we do "**with a spirit of contention**" writing that "This command forbids us to do anything, or attempt anything as the mere result of strife. This is not the principle from which we are to act, or by which we are to be governed. We are to form no plan, and aim at no object which is to be secured in this way. The command prohibits all attempts to secure anything over others by mere physical strength, or by superiority of intellect or numbers. or as the result of dark schemes and plans formed by rivalry, or by the indulgence of angry passions, or with the spirit of ambition. We are not to attempt to do anything merely by outstripping others, or by showing that we have more talent, courage, or zeal. What we do is to be by principle, and with a desire to maintain the truth, and to glorify God. **And yet how often is this rule violated!** How often do Christian denominations attempt to outstrip each other, and to see which shall be the greatest! How often do ministers preach with no better aim! How often do we attempt to outdo others in dress, and in the splendor of furniture and equipment! How often, even in plans of benevolence, and in the cause of virtue and religion, is the **secret aim to outdo others**. This is all wrong. There is no holiness in such efforts. Never once did the Redeemer act from such a motive, and never once should this motive be allowed to influence us. The conduct of others may be allowed to show us what we can do, and ought to do; but it should not be our sole aim to outstrip them"

#### OR EMPTY CONCEIT: kata kenodoxian :

nothing to gratify your own personal vanity (Lightfoot)

and in a search for empty glory (Barclay)

Doing ... nothing impelled by empty pride (Wuest)

Never act from motives of ... personal vanity (Phillips)

don't live to make a good impression on others (NLT)

or for unworthy ends] or prompted by conceit and empty arrogance (Amp)

**Empty conceit** ([2754](#)) (**kenodoxia** from **kenos** = empty, vain, hollow, groundless + **doxa** = glory, praise or opinion) is used only here in the NT and literally means "vain glory", "empty praise" or "hollow opinion" all describing in essence something which has an appearance but lacks the reality. It is a graphic description of the glory this world affords us which to the natural man appears "beautiful" and desirable, but which is literally devoid of any good or any eternal value. Kenodoxia describes the person who is conceited without reason, deluded, ambitious for his own reputation, challenging others to rivalry, jealous himself and willing to fight

to prove his idea is right.

The idea of **kenodoxia** includes a highly exaggerated self-view. It is a passion for empty personal glory which contrasts sharply with **humility**. It is that attitude of personal vanity and self-promotion, as might be seen for example in someone in a position of leadership, who is trying to build a personal following for their own faction, and by so doing does not manifest love of the brethren or love of Christ but to promote themselves. John gives us an example of such a person writing that "Diotrephes... loves to be first (he sought preeminence) among (the church and) does not accept what we say (his desire for preeminence led him to discount the doctrine taught by John)" (3John 1:9)

**Warnings** against conceit - Proverbs 3:7 Proverbs 26:5 Proverbs 26:12 Isaiah 5:21 Romans 12:16 1 Corinthians 8:2 Galatians 6:3

Although James doesn't use the word **kenodoxia**, he does describe the essence of empty glory and it's passing "fruit" declaring that "the sun rises with a scorching wind, and withers the grass; and its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away." (James 1:11)

Indeed, one day (soon) all the glory of natural, unregenerate men will wither away like a scorched flower when the light of God's glory rises over the whole earth (cf Hab 2:14). In that fateful day all the glory of men will be seen as absolutely vain and empty. Jesus contrasted empty conceit (vainglory) with eternal glory asking "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God? (John 5:44)

To live for the empty glory of this day is a hollow pursuit.

It is notable that the root word **kenos** when used not of things but of persons, predicates not merely an absence and emptiness of good, but, since the moral nature of man endures no vacuum, the presence of evil.

**KJV** translates it "**vainglory**" which is defined as an excessive or ostentatious pride especially in one's own achievements. Persons who seek to advance themselves usually enjoy glorying in their success. But there can be no genuine **joy** in the life of a Christian who puts "**self**" above "**others**".

Paul says saints are to have nothing to do with the pursuit of personal praise, which is the motivation or root cause of their selfish ambition (cf "**selfish ambition**" in Php 1:17-note). Paul uses the related adjective **kenodoxos** in (Gal 5:25, 26-note) to help us understand what it means to walk in the Spirit writing that "**If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful (kenodoxos), challenging one another, envying one another.**"

The sad truth is that the man who is wrapped up in himself makes a pretty small package!

**MacArthur** explains how **kenodoxia** contrasts with "**self ambition**" (eritheia) - Whereas selfish ambition pursues personal goals, **empty conceit** seeks personal glory and acclaim. The former pertains to personal accomplishments; the latter to an over inflated self-image. Understandably, a person with such conceit considers himself always to be right and expects others to agree with him. The only unity he seeks or values is centered on himself. ([MacArthur, J. Philipians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**Vine** adds "There are true grounds for Christian glorying (Php 3:3), but these are not found in the man himself, nor in his religious attainments, nor in the observance of laws and ordinances, but in what he is by God's grace and what God's grace does through him. Empty glory, or conceit, is carnal and stupid."

The **NIV Study Bible** rightly calls **selfishness** (selfish ambition) and **empty conceit** = "The mortal enemies of unity and harmony in the church."

**Barnes** writes that the essence of **kenodoxia** "seems to be that of mere self-esteem; a mere desire to honor ourselves, to attract attention, to win praise, to make ourselves uppermost, or foremost, or the main object. The command here solemnly forbids our doing anything with such an aim - no matter whether it be in intellectual attainments, in physical strength, in skill in music, in eloquence or song, in dress, furniture, or religion. **Self** is not to be foremost; **selfishness** is not to be the motive. Probably there is no command of the Bible which would have a wider sweep than this, or would touch on more points of human conduct, it fairly applied. **Who** is there who passes a single day without, in some respect, desiring to display himself? **What** minister of the gospel preaches, who never has any wish to exhibit his talents, eloquence, or learning? **How** few make a gesture, but with some wish to display the grace or power with which it is done! **Who**, in conversation, is always free from a desire to show his wit, or his power in argumentation, or his skill in repartee? **Who** plays at the piano without the desire of commendation? **Who** thunders in the senate, or goes to the field of battle; who builds a house, or purchases an article of apparel; who writes a book, or performs a deed of benevolence, altogether uninfluenced by this desire? If all could be taken out of human conduct which is performed merely from "strife," or from "vain-glory," how small a portion would be left!"

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## BUT WITH HUMILITY OF MIND: *alla te tapeinophrosune*:

- Lk 14:7-11; 18:14; Ro 12:10; 1Co 15:9; Eph 4:2; 5:21; 1Pet 5:5
- See Torrey's Topic "[Humility](#)")

but in lowliness of mind. (Wuest),

instead, in the true spirit of humility (lowliness of mind) (Amp)

Now Paul proceeds to give the Scriptural "antidote" for selfish ambition and the pursuit of empty glory. We are to view others as being "held above" and thereby to hold ourselves as lower than them, which is exactly the opposite of what our flesh nature (see note on the "**flesh**") desires to do.

**But** (235) (**alla**) is an adversative (expresses antithesis or contrast) particle indicating a difference with or contrast to what precedes. Paul contrasts the preceding two "negatives" with a "positive" exhortation to pursue humility. **Humility** before God and man is a virtue every child of God needs to strive for and which will go far toward minimizing and removing disharmony in the body of Christ.

**Humility of mind** (5012) (**tapeinophrosune** from **tapeinos** = low lying, then low or humble + **phren** = to think) literally means to think or judge with lowliness and thus speaks of humiliation of mind, lowliness of mind, lowly thinking, the quality of unpretentious behavior, a humble attitude, modesty (modesty = unassuming in the estimation of one's abilities) or without arrogance. The word indicates the esteeming one's self as small or recognizing one's insufficiency but at the same time recognizing the powerful sufficiency of God!

John Wesley observed that "neither the Romans nor the Greeks had a word for humility." The very concept was so foreign and abhorrent to their way of thinking that they had no term to describe it. When, during the first several centuries of Christianity, pagan writers borrowed the term **tapeinophrosune**, they always used it derogatorily—frequently of Christians—because to them humility was a pitiable weakness.

**Vine** writes that **tapeinophrosune** "indicates, not a merely moral quality, but the subjection of self under the authority of, and in response to, the love of the Lord Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit to conform the believer to the character of Christ. In contrast to the world's idea of being "poor-spirited" (in Classical Greek *tapeinos* commonly carried that imputation), the Lord commends "the poor in spirit" (Mt 5:3-note).

**Humility** is not thinking less of ourselves but is really not thinking of ourselves at all.

**Barclay** - Basil was to describe it as "the gem casket of all the virtues"; but before Christianity humility was not counted as a virtue at all. The ancient world looked on humility as a thing to be despised... In classical Greek there is no word for humility which has not some tinge of servility; but Christian humility is not a cringing thing. It is based on two things. First, on the divine side, it is based on the awareness of the creatureliness of humanity. God is the Creator, man the creature, and in the presence of the Creator the creature cannot feel anything else but humility. Second, on the human side, it is based on the belief that all men are the sons of God; and there is no room for arrogance when we are living among men and women who are all of royal lineage. ([Philippians 2 Commentary](#))

**Humility** as discussed below always had a negative connotation in classical Greek. Christianity elevated this term to the supreme virtue, in fact providing the ultimate antidote for self-love that poisons all relationships.

**John MacArthur** explains that " In secular Greek literature, the adjective **tapeinos** ("lowly") was used exclusively in a derisive way, most commonly of a slave. It described what was considered base, common, unfit, and having little value. Thus, it is not surprising that the noun *tapeinophrosune* has not been found in any extra-biblical Greek literature before the second century. It seems, therefore, to have originated in the New Testament, where, along with its synonyms, it always has a positive connotation. Humility of mind is the opposite of pride, the sin that has always separated fallen men from God, making them, in effect, their own gods. Humility is also a dominant virtue in the Old Testament. "When pride comes, then comes dishonor," warns Solomon, "but with the humble is wisdom" (Pr 11:2). Later he declares, "It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Pr 16:19). ([MacArthur, J. Philippians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**Edwards** observes that "True humility is not putting ourselves down but rather lifting up others. If we concentrate on lifting up others, putting down ourselves will take care of itself. As we go through life exalting Christ and others, then genuine humility will be inevitable. If we exalt ourselves then God will take care of our humiliation for He promises to humble the proud. It is much less painful to do it the first way.

**Tapeinophrosune** - 7x in 7v- Acts 20:19; Eph 4:2; Phil 2:3; Col 2:18, 23; 3:12; 1 Pet 5:5. NAS = humility(4), humility of mind(1), self-abasement(2).

All of the uses convey a good connotation. See also word study on root word **tapeinos**.

Here are some of the other NT uses of tapeinophrosune...

**Acts 20:19** serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews;

**Ephesians 4:2** (note) (Context = Eph 4:1 Paul charges saints to walk worthy) with all **humility** (**What is the first stepping stone of a worthy walk in Christ?**) and gentleness (prautes), with patience (makrothumia), showing forbearance (anechomai) to one another in love (agape),

**1 Peter 5:5** (note) You younger men, likewise, be subject (hupotasso) to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

**Colossians** has 3 of the 7 NT uses of **tapeinophrosune**. Paul condemns false **humility** in his letter to the Colossians where there were individuals in their midst who were

"delighting in **self-abasement** (**tapeinophrosune**) They were delighting in it, meaning their supposed humility was nothing but ugly pride. It was like that of Uriah Heep, one of the most contemptible characters of English literature, who said, "*I am well aware that I am the 'umblest person going*" Chapter 16 of Charles Dickens's David Copperfield)... inflated without cause by his fleshly mind... (Col 2:18-note)

matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and **self-abasement** (**tapeinophrosune**) -- it was often used in connection with fasting, and several Jewish Christian writings state that a consequence of this ascetic practice is entrance into the heavenly realm - this is false teaching - see the true teaching about believers in the heavenly realm even now in Eph 2:6-note) and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence... (Col 2:23-note)

So (now Paul is exhorting believers to manifest a genuine supernaturally Spirit empowered, Christ centered, God glorifying humility) as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, **humility** (**tapeinophrosune**), gentleness and patience" (Col 3:12-note)

**Plato** defined humility as follows

That state of mind which submits to the divine order of the universe, and does not impiously exalt itself. (And excellent definition for one who as far as we know denied the Creator!)

**Humility** was considered to be a vice with Greek pagan moralists, but a virtue with Christian apostles. The Greco Roman world considered humility to be groveling or abject and thus held it in considerable contempt. So Paul is going counter to his culture which said that to be low on the social scale, to know poverty, or to be socially powerless was shameful.

**Pentecost** adds that...

The Greeks prided themselves on being better than other men, and they considered it something to be proud of to acknowledge their superiority. A man so perverted not to think of himself as being a superior person was called by this word. If the army, successful in battle, took a number of captives whose lives they spared to become servants, these servants might rightly think of themselves by this word "humble-minded." But for a Greek, never! ([Pentecost, J. D. The Joy of Living: A study of Philipians. Kregel Publications](#))

**Lenski** - "The pagan and the secular idea of manhood is self-assertiveness, imposing one's will on others; when anyone stooped to others he did so only under compulsion, hence his action was ignominious [disgraceful]. The Christian ethical idea of humility could not be reached by the secular mind; it lacked the spiritual soil."

Scripture sees the universe as measurable only against God. Compared to him, human beings are rightly viewed as humble or those who should think of themselves as "low lying".

**Jesus** taught that "everyone who **exalts** himself will be **humbled**, but he who **humbles** himself will be **exalted**. (Lk 18:14, - This truth which the fallen, proud world abhors is one of the baseline principles in the Kingdom of God = Lk 1:52, 14:11, Ps 138:6, Pr 3:34, Pr 15:33, 18:12, 29:23, Jas 4:10)

With this (and other teaching of course) Jesus thus elevated **humility** as a supreme virtue and providing an antidote for self-love that poisons relationships and creates disunity.



**Vine** describes **humility** as "the subjection of self under the authority of and in response to the love of the Lord Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit to conform the believer to the character of Christ. In contrast to the world's idea of being "poor-spirited" (in Classical Greek tapeinos commonly carried that imputation), the Lord commends "the poor in spirit" (Mt 5:3-note)." ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

**ISBE** - The word tapeinophrosunē is not found in classical Greek (Lightfoot); in the New Testament (with the exception of 1 Peter 5:5 ) it is Pauline. In Greek pre-Christian writers tapeinos is, with a few exceptions in Plato and Platonic writers, used in a bad or inferior sense - as denoting something evil or unworthy. The prominence it gained in Christian thought indicates the new conception of man in relation to God, to himself, and to his fellows, which is due to Christianity. It by no means implies slavishness or servility; nor is it inconsistent with a right estimate of oneself, one's gifts and calling of God, or with proper self-assertion when called for. But the habitual frame of mind of a child of God is that of one who feels not only that he owes all his natural gifts, etc., to God, but that he has been the object of undeserved redeeming love, and who regards himself as being not his own, but God's in Christ. He cannot exalt himself, for he knows that he has nothing of himself. The humble mind is thus at the root of all other graces and virtues. Self-exaltation spoils everything. There can be no real love without humility. "Love," said Paul, "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up" ( 1 Corinthians 13:4 ). As Augustine said, humility is first, second and third in Christianity. ([Humility - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#))

Someone has described **humility** as "insight into one's own insignificance". It is the mind-set of the person who is not conceited but who has a right attitude toward himself. Humility before God and man is a virtue every child of God needs to strive for. A spirit of pride in human relations indicates a lack of humility before God.

**Wuest** has this note on tapeinophrosune " Trench says of this word: "The Christian lowliness is no mere modesty or absence of pretension, nor yet a self-made grace. The making of ourselves small is pride in the disguise of humility. But the esteeming of ourselves small, inasmuch as we are so, the thinking truly, and because truly, therefore, lowly of ourselves." The word is used in an early secular manuscript of the Nile River at its low stage, "It runs low." Expositors defines it: "the lowliness of mind which springs from a true estimate of ourselves—a deep sense of our own moral smallness and demerit." ([Philippians Commentary - Verse by Verse Comments Online](#))

**Andrew Murray** quipped that "The humble person is not one who thinks meanly of himself; he simply does not think of himself at all!"

**Humility** is that grace that, when you know you have it, you have lost it! The truly humble person knows himself and accepts himself (Ro 12:3-note). He yields himself to Christ to be a servant, to use what he is and has for the glory of God and the good of others. "**Others**" is a key idea in this section as the believer's eyes are turned away from himself and focused on the needs of others.

**Richards** adds that "This (section) is perhaps Scripture's clearest portrait of the "**humility**" called for in the Gospel. It is not a weak man's surrender, but a strong man's rejection of selfishness and determination to be actively concerned with the needs and interests of others." (He adds) It is good to know as we humble ourselves to follow Jesus that our "labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1Co 15:58). In Christ there are no empty, meaningless lives. ([Richards, L O: Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Regency](#))

**Barnes** has an interesting description of **humility** as the estimation of "ourselves according to truth. It is a willingness to take the place which we ought to take in the sight of God and man; and, having the low estimate of our own importance and character which the truth about our insignificance as creatures and vileness as sinners would produce, it will lead us to a willingness to perform lowly and humble offices that we may benefit others. ([Philippians 2](#))

- [Humility - Bridgeway Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Humility - Nave's Topical Bible](#)
- [Humility - Thompson Chain Reference](#)
- [Humility - Torrey's Topical Textbook](#)
- [Humility - American Tract Society Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Humility - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)
- [Humility - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)

**Greg Parsons** - Biblical humility is grounded in the character of God. The Father stoops down to help the poor and needy (Psalm 113:4-9; 138:6-7 ); the incarnate Son exhibits humility from the manger to the cross (Matthew 11:29; Acts 8:32-33; Philippians 2:5-8 ) ([Humility - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#))

**Humility** - A personal quality in which an individual shows dependence on God and respect for other persons. ([Humility - Holman Bible Dictionary](#))

HUMILITY.—This virtue or grace distinguished the leaders of OT history like Abraham and Moses (Genesis 18:27, Numbers 12:3), and was inculcated by the prophets as a chief duty (Micah 6:8). It belongs even to the earlier revelation of God's character ('that humbleth himself,' Psalms 113:6), and is the key to man's communion with Him (Isaiah 57:15). ([Humility - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#))

HUMILITY . Trench defines 'humility' as the esteeming of ourselves small, inasmuch as we are so; the thinking truly, and because truly, therefore lowly, of ourselves. A man may be small and may realize his smallness, and yet be far from being humble. His spirit may be full of envy instead of humility. He may be depressed in spirit because he sees his own meanness and general worthlessness, and yet he may be as rebellious against his lot or his constitutional proclivities as he is clearly cognizant of them. Low-mindedness is not lowly-mindedness. The exhortation of Philippians 2:3 does not mean that every man ought to think that everybody else is better than himself in moral character, or in outward conduct, or in natural or inherited powers. That would be impossible in some cases and untruthful in many others. It is not an exhortation to either an impossibility or an untruthfulness. A better definition of the Christian grace of humility is found in the union of highest self-respect with uttermost abandon of sacrifice in service. A man who knows his own superior worth and yet is willing to serve his inferiors in Christian love is a humble man. The classic example in the NT is John 13:3-15 . ([Humility - Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible](#))

**ILLUSTRATION** - When **F. B. Meyer** pastored Christ Church in London, Charles Spurgeon was preaching at Metropolitan Tabernacle, and **G. Campbell Morgan** was at Westminster Chapel. Meyer said, "I find in my own ministry that supposing I pray for my own little flock, 'God bless me, God fill my pews, God send me a revival,' I miss the blessing; but as I pray for my big brother, Mr. Spurgeon, on the right-hand side of my church, 'God bless him'; or my other big brother, Campbell Morgan, on the other side of my church, 'God bless him'; I am sure to get a blessing without praying for it, for the overflow of their cups fills my little bucket."

**ILLUSTRATION** - The opposite of **humility of mind** is illustrated by the story of the young Scottish minister who walked proudly into the pulpit to preach his first sermon. He had a brilliant mind and a good education and was confident of himself as he faced his first congregation. But the longer he preached, the more conscious everyone was that "the Lord was not in the wind." He finished his message quickly and came down from the pulpit with his head bowed, his pride now gone. Afterward, one of the members said to him, "If you had gone into the pulpit the way you came down, you might have come down from the pulpit the way you went up."

**LET EACH ONE OF YOU REGARD (continually esteem) ONE ANOTHER AS MORE IMPORTANT THAN HIMSELF: allelou hegoumenoi (PMPMPN) huperechonatas (PAPMPA) heauton:**

- Torrey's Topic "[Self Denial](#)"

esteem your neighbors more highly than yourselves (Lightfoot)

but in humility let each consider the other better than himself. (Barclay)

consider one another as excelling themselves this estimation resting, not upon feelings or sentiment, but upon a due consideration of facts. (Wuest)

one another counting more excellent than yourselves (Young's)

in humility think more of each other than you do of yourselves (Phillips),

let each esteem others better than himself (NKJV),

let each regard the others as better than and superior to himself [thinking more highly of one another than you do of yourselves]. (Amp),

be moved to treat one another as more important than yourself (NET)

**Let...Regard (2233) (hegeomai** from **ago** = to lead, carry, bring) (used in Phil 2:3, 6, 25; 3:7, 8) has two basic meanings in the NT. One is to lead as one would do in a supervisory capacity as when describing men in any leading position - ruler, leader, governor (Ac 7:10) and stands opposite of a diakonos or servant in (Lk 22:26). In the apocryphal writings hegeomai was used of military commanders. It was also used to describe leaders of religious bodies, both pagan and Christian (latter in Heb 13:7, 17, 24, "leading men" in Acts 15:22, "chief speaker" in Acts 14:12). In secular Greek **hegeomai** was used to describe the pagan god [Hermes](#) as "the leader of the word"

The second meaning which is the intended meaning in Php 2:6 means to engage in an intellectual process (2Co 9:5, Php 2:25, Php 3:8, 2Pe 1:13. In this latter sense, **hegeomai** conveys the picture of leading out (note the root verb of origin = ago = to lead) before



the mind, and thus to regard, esteem, count, reckon. Hegeomai was a secular mathematical term which meant "Think about it and come to a conclusion" In this sense, **hegeomai** pictures one giving careful thought to something and not making a quick decision. This is a belief that rests, not on one's inner feelings or sentiment, but on the due consideration of external grounds, on the weighing and comparing of facts. The word implies a conscious, sure judgment resting on a careful weighing of the facts

**Hegeomai** - 14x in 12v - Matt 2:6; Luke 22:26; Acts 7:10; 14:12; 15:22; 26:2; 2 Cor 9:5; Phil 2:3, 6, 25; 3:7, 8; 1 Thess 5:13; 2 Thess 3:15; 1 Tim 1:12; 6:1; Heb 10:29; 11:11, 26; 13:7, 17, 24; Jas 1:2; 2 Pet 1:13; 2:13; 3:9, 15. NAS = chief(1), consider(3), considered(2), considering(1), count(4), counted(1), esteem(1), governor(1), leader(1), leaders(3), leading(1), led(1), regard(5), regarded(1), Ruler(1), thought(2).

**Wuest** picks up the idea translating it as "consider one another as excelling themselves this estimation resting, not upon feelings or sentiment, but **upon a due consideration of facts.**" ([Philippians Commentary - Verse by Verse Comments Online](#))

The Greek word order places "**one another**" before "**regard**" for emphasis.

**Stuart Briscoe** comments on "**one another**" writing that "It does not mean that everybody should be more interested in promoting others, encouraging others and caring for others than himself. It means that we should so relate to others that we are considerably more "others-centered" than self-centered."

**Henry Morris** has a pithy comment writing that...

A modern psychological ploy is to attribute many personal and social problems to individual lack of self-esteem. The Scriptures, however, urge each of us to have other-esteem, not self-esteem. Our real problem is self-centeredness and too much self-esteem. However, Paul urges us to be lowly-minded, not high-minded, seeking the good of others, not concerned with ourselves. ([Morris, Henry: Defenders Study Bible. World Publishing](#))

Paul is desirous for the saints at Philippi to manifest unity, but to do that these believers must put off the "dirty" old garment of selfishness, personal vanity, haughtiness and self-interest. Paul knows that a preoccupation with one's **self** is a sin which will destroy the **unity** of the body. The paradox is that when Christ is Lord, **self** is dead and we are set free to be His bondslaves.

**Guzik** - Esteem others better than himself rebukes much of the world's concept of self esteem; the idea that we should - and must - carry with us an attitude of confident superiority in every situation, and that this is the foundation for a healthy human personality. While we recognize the intrinsic value of every human life, we can't deny that the low self-esteem of some is justified, and based in reality - when we are in rebellion against God, it is fitting for us to have a low self-esteem. As we esteem others better, we will naturally have a concern for their needs and concerns; this sort of outward looking mentality naturally leads to a unity among the people of God If I am considering you above me, and you are considering me above you, a marvelous thing happens: we have a community where everyone is looked up to, and no one is looked down on. ([Philippians 2](#))

**One another** ([240](#)) (**allelon**) means each other and speaks of a mutuality or sharing of sentiments between two persons or groups of persons. **Allelon** is a reciprocal pronoun which denotes that the encouragement and edification is to be a mutual beneficial activity. As each submits, encourages, loves, etc, the other members benefit. This is the God's description and prescription for a body of believers.

**One another** is a common NT phrase (especially in Paul's letters) with most uses relating to the building up of the body of Christ. As such the "**one anothers**" in the NT would make an excellent Sunday School study (or topical sermon series), taking time to meditate on each occurrence, asking whether it is being practiced (in the Spirit-note) in your local church and seeking to excel still more (cp Php 1:9, 10, 11 -notes; 1Th 3:12-note, 1Th 4:1-note, 1Th 4:10-note). Below is a list of the NT uses of **one another** (be sure to check the context for the most accurate interpretation).

Ro 12:10, 16; 13:8; 14:13, 19; 15:5, 7, 14; 16:16; 1Co 6:7; 7:5; 11:33; 12:25; 16:20; 2Co 13:12; Ga 5:13, 15, 26; Ep 4:2, 25, 32; 5:19, 21; Php 2:3; Col 3:9, 13, 16; 1Th 3:12; 4:9, 18; 5:11, 13, 15; 2Th 1:3; Heb 3:13; 10:24, 25; James 4:11; 5:9, 16; 1Pe 1:22; 4:8, 9, 10; 5:5, 14; 1Jn 1:7; 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2Jn 1:5

**More important** ([5242](#)) (**huperecho** from **hupér** = above, over + **écho** = have) literally means to have or hold over over, to have over and beyond, to excel, to be exceptionally valuable, to surpass in value, to be better or superior. In secular Greek it was used to describe a protector.

It means to stand out, rise above, overtop (Homer Iliad 3, 210). Figuratively it means to be in a controlling position, have power over, be in authority (over), be highly placed, to be above, be superior in rank, authority, power (1Pe 2:13), of magistrates (higher power as in Ro 13:1), of prominent men, such as rulers and kings (Polybius). The other sense of huperecho is to excel, to be superior (to someone), to be better than (Php 2:3) or excellency/surpassing worth (Php 3:8).

Paul's use of the **present tense** speaks of a "holding more important" as one's habitual attitude (which may be manifest in one's action) as a lifestyle (like it was with Christ - who continually had this attitude!). The **active** voice calls a volitional choice to be made, a choice of my will to continually hold others to be better. To regard others as more important than ourselves is completely foreign to our fallen human nature and can only be accomplished by the power of the indwelling Spirit in believers who surrender to His control.

**Huperecho** - 5x in 5v - Ro 13:1-note; Phil 2:3; Php 3:8-note; Php 4:7-note; 1Pet 2:13-note. NAS = governing(1), in authority(1), more important(1), surpasses(1), surpassing value(1).

**Huperecho** - 13x in the non-apocryphal **Septuagint (LXX)** - Ge 25:23; 39:9; 41:40; Ex 26:13; Lev 25:27; Jdg 5:25; 1Kgs 8:8; 2 Chr 5:9; Dan 5:11; 7:23

Don't misinterpret what Paul is saying. His exhortation does not mean that we are to have a denigrating or disparaging view of our own gifts or talents. For example, you may be a much better singer than someone else. Paul is not saying to think of yourself as an inferior singer but to consider the other person as deserving of preferential treatment in general. The upshot is that our consideration for others must precede our concern for ourselves. You've probably seen the little acronym for "**joy**" - **J** (Jesus) **O** (others) **Y** (yourself).

Paul calls for a similar attitude in (Ro 12:10-note)

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor (leading the way in showing the honor that is due). (NRSV puts it "**outdo one another in showing honor**") (Ro 12:10-note)

The parallel thought is expressed in (Gal 5:13, Eph 4:2-note; Ep 5:21-note; 1Pet 5:5-note).

**Jamieson** gives this advice on putting this rule into practice: Instead of fixing your eyes on those points in which you excel, fix them on those in which your neighbor excels you: this is true "humility.

**Henry** adds that we need to "be severe upon our own faults and charitable in our judgments of others, be quick in observing our own defects and infirmities, but ready to overlook and make favourable allowances for the defects of others. We must esteem the good which is in others above that which is in ourselves; for we best know our own unworthiness and imperfections.

The **Wuest** translation says that when regarding one another as more important, we should rest this estimation "not upon feelings or sentiment, but upon a due consideration of facts." ([Philippians Commentary - Verse by Verse Comments Online](#))

**Barnes** has a well worded note explaining that **regarding one another as more important than self** "is one of the **effects** produced by **true humility**, and it naturally exists in every truly modest mind. We are sensible of our own defects, but we have not the same clear view of the defects of others. We see our own hearts; we are conscious of the great corruption there; we have painful evidence of the impurity of the motives which often actuate us - of the evil thoughts and corrupt desires in our own souls; but we have not the same view of the errors, defects, and follies of others. We can see only their outward conduct; but, in our own case, we can look within. It is natural for those who have any just sense of the depravity of their own souls, charitably to hope that it is not so with others, and to believe that they have purer hearts. This will lead us to feel that they are worthy of more respect than we are. Hence, this is always the characteristic of modesty and humility - graces which the gospel is eminently suited to produce. A truly pious man will be always, therefore, an humble man, and will wish that others should be preferred in office and honor to himself. Of course, this will not make him blind to the defects of others when they are manifested; but he will be himself retiring, modest, unambitious, unobtrusive. This rule of Christianity would strike a blow at all the ambition of the world. It would rebuke the love of office and would produce universal contentment in any low condition of life where the providence of God may have cast our lot. ([Philippians 2](#))

**Henrietta Mears** - What is the most important social accomplishment? Elegant manners? The ability to always know what to say? No, it is courtesy of heart, not mere fashion. D. L. Moody once said, "Strife is knocking others down; vainglory is setting oneself up." "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" is an astonishing phrase; in other words, "Be willing to be third" (Philippians 2:3). (What the Bible is All About)

**Wiersbe** sums up this section with the thought that "Paul is saying to the church, "Your disagreements reveal that there is a spiritual problem in your fellowship. It isn't going to be solved by rules or threats; it's going to be solved when your hearts are right with Christ and with each other." Paul wanted them to see that the basic cause was selfishness, and the cause of selfishness is pride. There can be no joy in the life of the Christian who puts himself above others. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

If we have the **single mind** of Philippians 1, then we will have no problem with the **submissive mind** of Philippians 2.

To further bring home his point to the saints at Philippi, Paul proceeds to give four illustrations of those who obeyed the command to

have a submissive (humble) mind -- Jesus Christ (Php 2:5-11), **Paul** himself (Php 2:17), **Timothy** (Php 2:19-23); **Epaphroditus** (Php 2:25-30). What a contrast this prevalent mindset that characterizes the "last days" that we are living in today! (2Ti 3:1,2, 3, 4-ee notes 2Ti 3:1-2, 3-5)

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**NOTHING THROUGH SELFISH AMBITION** - The aquatic creature called the blowfish has no particular value to the one who catches it—except that it may help to develop the angler's patience because it often seizes bait intended for better fish. The blowfish is unattractive; it has a large mouth and a wrinkled body that looks like worn-out leather. When you turn it over and tickle it, the flabby fish puffs up until it is swollen like a globe.

People can be like that. A little flattery, a little tickling of their vanity and they swell up, giving the semblance of greatness. Pride inflates them, and they puff up like the blowfish. But there's nothing substantial about them; they are all air.

This condition takes other forms with more serious consequences. For example, the Christians to whom Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 5 were tolerating immorality. Instead of being grieved over sin in their midst, they were actually "puffed up" (1Cor 5:2). Here was a sure sign of carnality and immaturity—they were proud when they should have been mourning. God desires that we be "built up" in Christ—never "puffed up" with pride.

The continual attitude of God's children should be the one Paul recommended to the Philippians. He said, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself" (Phil. 2:3). If we take this seriously, we won't have the characteristics of the puffed-up blowfish. —P. R. Van Gorder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**The smaller we become, the more room God has to work.**

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**Running For Others** - Tom Knapp never won a race during his entire high school track career. Tom was a "pusher." It was his task to set the pace for his fellow team members, who would then beat him to the finish line. When he ran a successful race, he was enabling a fellow teammate to win. Even though Tom never had enough reserve energy for the final sprint to victory, the coach considered him a valuable member of the team.

In a similar way, the New Testament tells us to run our race of faith with the success of others in mind. "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3, 4). Our example of such living is Jesus Christ, who left the glory of heaven to share our humanity and die on the cross so that we can have eternal life (Php 2:5-8).

If the encouragement of our example helps another person to flourish and be successful, we should rejoice. When the eternal prizes are awarded for faithful service to God, a lot of "pushers" will be wearing blue ribbons. Until then, let's keep running so that others can win. —David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Oh, to see the needs of others  
More important than our own,  
Following our Lord's example  
When He left His heavenly throne. —Sper

**You can't lose when you help others win**

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EACH year a small number of baseball superstars think they aren't being properly appreciated by their teams' owners. They are dissatisfied with their salaries even though they make more money in one year than most of us do in a lifetime. Their discontent is based on comparison. Each player considers him-self the best at his position and therefore thinks he should receive the largest salary.

Before the advent of multimillion dollar sports contracts, C. S. Lewis made this insightful, almost prophetic, comment: "We say that people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better looking than others. If everyone else became equally rich, or clever, or good-looking, there would be nothing to be proud about."

Pride afflicts all of us, not just the rich and famous. It is pride that causes us to feel hurt when someone snubs us, ignores us, or takes credit for something we did. Pride is behind the envy we feel toward people who are more successful than we are.

Christ's solution for pride is the only cure: consider others better than ourselves.—H V Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**GAIN BY GIVING** - "The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself."-- Proverbs 11:25

A visitor to a lighthouse said to the keeper, "Aren't you afraid to live here with the storms and high winds constantly lashing the walls?"

"Oh, we have to be more concerned about those out on the sea," the man replied. "We think only of having our lamps burning brightly and keeping the reflectors clear so that those in greater danger may be saved."

We too are to be more concerned about others than we are about ourselves (Phil. 2:3, 4). Generosity and selflessness produce an abundant life of joy and rich reward. According to the Scriptures, if we give freely to others, we will receive abundant blessing.

Proverbs 11 teaches that a person who gives to others will gain even more (Pr 11:24, 25). Pr 11:25 paints a word picture to make the point. It states that "he who waters will also be watered himself."

The 19th-century preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "Let me consider the poor, and the Lord will also recompense me. Let me water His garden, and He will make a well-irrigated garden of my soul."

As we focus our attention on giving refreshing help to the needy, we will be refreshed by the Lord. -- Henry G. Bosch ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Service is working and giving,  
And not regretting the cost;  
It's knowing and understanding  
That no good deed will be lost.

When it comes to helping others,  
some people stop at nothing.

**Philippians 2:4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. (NASB: Lockman)**

**Greek:** me ta [heauton hekastos](#) skopountes, ([PAPMPN](#)) alla [kai] ta [heteron hekastoi](#).

**Amplified:** Let each of you esteem and look upon and be concerned for not [merely] his own interests, but also each for the interests of others. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

**Phillips :** None of you should think only of his own affairs, but should learn to see things from other people's point of view. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Robertson:** Not keeping an eye on the main chance for number one, but for the good of others.

**Wuest:** Not consulting each one his own interests only, but also each one the interests of others.

**Young's Literal:** each not to your own look ye, but each also to the things of others.

**DO NOT MERELY LOOK OUT FOR YOUR OWN PERSONAL INTERESTS: me ta heauton hekastos skopountes (PAPMPN) me ta heauton hekastos skopountes (PAPMPN):**

- Mt 18:6 Ro 12:15 14:19, 20, 21, 22, 15:1 1Co 8:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 10:24,32,33, 12:22, 23, 24, 25, 26)

Let not every man regard his own wants, his own interests (Lightfoot)

Do not be always concentrating each on your own interests (Barclay)

Don't think only about your own affairs (NLT),

Not looking everyone to his private good (BBE),

Let each of you esteem and look upon and be concerned for not [merely] his own interests (Amp),

Not keeping an eye on the main chance for number one (Robertson)

In this passage Paul continues his discourse on **selflessness**. His point is that if we are truly looking out for interests of other we will be exalting them and lowering ourselves and this will facilitate unity in the body.

As **Edwards** rightly observes "What hard words these are! Our souls know they are true but plead with us not to take them seriously. If we followed these injunctions it appears that all we hold precious would be thrown out the window. After all, if we no longer exalted ourselves then who would there be to exalt us? And if we lived only for the benefit of others, who would watch out for us? Our problem is that we want to be called a "living sacrifice" without dying on the altar of servanthood." (Philippians Sermon)

**Look** (4648) (**skopeo** from **skopos** = distant mark looked at, goal or in view; cf our English word "scope") means to look at and is not just a casual glance but indicates a fixing of one's attention upon with desire for and interest in. It means to regard as one's aim.

**Skopeo** - 6x in 6v - Lk 11:35; Ro 16:17; 2Cor 4:18-note; Gal 6:1; Phil 2:4; 3:17 **NAS** - keep your eye on(1), look(2), looking(1), observe(1), watch(1).

**Look** is in **present tense** which means we are **not** to make this the habit of our life (to look after our own affairs to the exclusion of everyone else's). The verb form in context conveys the force of an **imperative** or a command. One could paraphrase it

Don't continually let your care and attention be wholly absorbed by your own concerns". Don't fix your focus on your needs and importance but on that of others.

The thought is that

one must not fix his eye (like the runner does on the goal) upon his own interests to the exclusion of those of others. ([A T Robertson](#)).

Paul is explaining how humility can be expressed as he exhorts the saints not to keep keeping their eye on the main chance for number one but on those things which are for the good of others. This action is not natural but only supernaturally possible.

**Henry** adds that

a selfish spirit is destructive of Christian love. We must be concerned not only for our own credit, and ease, and safety, but for those of others also; and rejoice in the prosperity of others as truly as in our own. We must love our neighbour as ourselves, and make his case our own

**Augustine** got close to Paul's meaning in this section describing "Two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self." (Augustine, The City of God)

#### **BUT ALSO FOR THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS: alla (kai) ta heteron hekasto:**

- 1Co 13:4,5 2Co 6:3, 11:29, Jas 2:8

but let him consult also the interests and the wants of others. (Lightfoot)

but let each be equally concerned for the interests of others. (Barclay)

but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing (NLT)

but keeping in mind the things of others (BBE)

Paul is saying that our consideration for others must precede concern for ourselves and will go far toward removing disunity and disharmony.

The **KJV Bible Commentary** writes that believers are to...

Keep an eye for the good of others. Have respect for, fix your attention upon with a desire for an interest in others. They were to be attentive to the interests of others as well as their own. Every member of the church should practice unselfishness and due consideration for all the others. Others is the keynote of these verses. This was the dominant feature in the life of our Lord who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). A man of the flesh "looks out for number one," but a man of the Spirit lives in submission to Christ and in service to his fellowman. ([Dobson, E. G., Charles Feinberg, E Hindson, Woodrow Kroll, H L. Wilmington: KJV Bible Commentary: Nelson](#))

**Vine** adds that "to look with earnest consideration upon the interests of others, is to enter into their feelings and hopes, and to act for their welfare in the spirit of self-forgetfulness. And yet the **"also"** indicates that one's own welfare is not entirely to be ruled out of consideration. We are to subordinate our own interests to those of others, but our own are not to be completely ignored; they are to be considered in the spirit of complete unselfishness.

**F B Meyer** sums up Philippians 2:3-4 observing that...

It recalls the sentence in the book of Chronicles which tells us that every day men came from all Israel with one mind to make David king. So the deepest thought in Christian fellowship, and that which makes us truly one, is the desire to make Jesus King, that He may be loved and honoured, that thousands of souls may bow the knee and confess that He is Lord. Oh! that this were ever the prominent thought among us.

In such an atmosphere, where all love one another and live for the common object of the glory of Jesus, three things follow:

Three Results.

(1) **Party spirit dies.**--"Let nothing be done through strife or partisanship." (Phil 2:3a). One cannot say, I am of Apollos; another, I am of Cephas; because all are of Christ.

(2) **There is absolute humility.** (Phil 2:3b) Each thinks the other better than himself. Why? Because each looks upon the best things in another and the worst things in himself; and it is only when you compare what you know yourself to be with what you think others are, that you become absolutely humble. By comparing what we sadly deplore in ourselves with what we admire in others it is not difficult to think everybody better than ourselves. Out of this there comes:

(3) **The habit is formed of looking upon other men's things and not upon our own.** (Phil 2:4) We acquire a wide sympathy. When we know God we begin to see something of Him in people who have been accustomed to very different surroundings from ourselves. We realise that those who do not belong to our fold may yet belong to the same flock. When we love Christ best it is wonderful how soon we discover Him in people who do not belong to our Church, or denomination, or system, but who also love Him best, are living the same life, and filled with the same spirit. We never relax our loyalty to our special Church, but we enlarge our sympathy to embrace the great Church, the Body of Christ.

Perhaps you have not yet entered the life of love! You do not know what the love of God is--your sin has made you evil and selfish. But if you are willing to abandon your selfish, sinful life, and kneel at the foot of the Cross, asking for forgiveness and salvation, step by step you will enter that experience which we have been describing, and which is in this world as an oasis amid wastes of wilderness sand. ([The Epistle to the Philippians](#))

**BibleTeachingNotes.com** writes that...

The meaning of this passage can be illustrated by one of Jesus' most famous stories: "The Good Samaritan" (Lk 10:30ff). This is the story of the unfortunate traveler who was mugged on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem ... thieves beat him, took his money, and left him lying in a ditch. In varying degrees, each one of us is represented by the three groups of people in the story. There were the crooks whose attitude was, "I'll take from you. What's yours is mine. I'll take it." There were the calloused and uncaring ecclesiastics whose attitude was "I'll keep from you. What's mine is mine. I'll keep it." Then there was the one whom Christ said is to be our example, the caring Samaritan whose attitude was "I'll give to you. What's mine is yours. I'll share it." It is the caring Samaritan that teaches us the meaning of looking beyond ourselves, of looking past our own interests and importance to truly see and respond to the needs and worth and interests of others.

Chart from [Thomas Constable](#) -





## CONTRASTS BETWEEN A HELPER AND A SERVANT

A HELPER	A SERVANT
A helper helps others when it is convenient.	A servant serves others even when it is inconvenient.
A helper helps people that he or she likes.	A servant serves even people that he or she dislikes.
A helper helps when he or she enjoys the work.	A servant serves even when he or she dislikes the work.
A helper helps when the circumstances are convenient.	A servant serves even when the circumstances are inconvenient.
A helper helps with a view to obtaining personal satisfaction.	A servant serves even when he or she receives no personal satisfaction.
A helper helps with an attitude of assisting another.	A servant serves with an attitude of enabling another.

**Are you looking out for the interests of others?** A young nurse's story illustrates Paul's point...

"During my second month of nursing school, our professor gave us a pop quiz. I was a conscientious student and had breezed through the questions, until I read the last one: "What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?" Surely this was some kind of joke. I had seen the cleaning woman several times. She was tall, dark-haired and in her 50's, but how would I know her name? I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank. Before class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our quiz grade. Absolutely, said the professor. "In your careers you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say hello". I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learned her name was Dorothy." Who is the "Dorothy" in your life who needs your attention?

Others, Lord, yes, others,

Let this my motto be;

Help me to live for others,

That I might live like Thee.

— Charles D. Meigs

**Love Speaks Loudest** - Missionary Doug Nichols was a patient in a tuberculosis ward in India in 1967. Patients and staff saw him as a rich American taking up space in their hospital. Their hostility was evident as they refused the gospel tracts he offered them.

One morning at 2 o'clock, a very sick Indian man struggled to get out of bed to go to the bathroom, but he was too weak to make it. Soon the stench from his bed filled the room. Other patients yelled at him. Nurses showed their anger for having to clean up the mess. One slapped him.

The next night the old man tried again to get up, but again fell backward. He began to cry. Doug, weak himself, went over, picked him up, and carried him to the bathroom and back to his bed.

What a change came over that hospital ward! One patient gave Doug a steaming cup of Indian tea, motioning that he wanted a tract. Nurses, interns, and doctors asked for booklets or gospels of John. And several eventually received Christ.

What changed their attitude? Doug had exemplified the Savior, who "made Himself of no reputation" but took "the form of a bondservant" and "humbled Himself" (Phil. 2:7, 8).

We are called to do the same. Sometimes loving is unpleasant, but that's when it speaks the loudest. --D J De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Add to your believing, deeds that prove it true--  
Knowing Christ as Savior, make Him Master too;  
Follow in His footsteps, go where He has trod,  
In the world's great trouble, risk yourself for God. --Leech

Love without action is not love.

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## ILLUSTRATIONS OF BIBLE TRUTH by Harry A. Ironside - THE PREACHER AND FRIED CHICKEN

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others (Phil. 2:4)

I have never been able to forget a story I heard evangelist Paul Rader relate on one occasion. I may not now be able to recall all the details, but so nearly as I remember, it was as follows:

Mr. Rader mentioned having known three ministers, all of whom came from a particular part of the South and were all characterized by a spirit of intense self-abnegation and kindly interest in the needs of others. To one of these Mr. Rader said, "I have known two other men from your part of the country and you have all commended yourselves to me by your unselfishness. How come that you are all so much alike?"

Modestly the preacher answered, "If we have any such marks as you speak of, we owe our unselfishness to a circuit-rider. When we were just boys he used to come to our section every two weeks."

He then went on to describe him as a lean, cadaverous-looking man of the Abraham Lincoln type who, on the first Sunday he preached in the country schoolhouse, gave a sermon in the morning and another in the afternoon. Between the services the ladies of the congregation served a picnic lunch in the open air. Great platters of fried chicken, ham, and other meats were laid out on gleaming white tablecloths; these were surrounded by stacks of biscuits, corn pone, hard-boiled eggs, cakes and other delicacies. When all was ready, the assembled group sat down on the greensward to enjoy the repast.

A number of lively boys were always at the front, hoping to get nearest to the platter of chicken. But on this particular occasion, so great was the crowd, the boys were told to wait until their elders were all served. Angrily they went off back of a nearby shed and indulged in the pastime of shooting dice, in revenge for the unkind way they felt they had been treated. They appointed one lad as a watcher, to keep tab on the way the viands were disappearing.

Ruefully, he told of piles of chicken disappearing: still, more came in from nearby wagons. Suddenly, in great excitement he exclaimed, "Say, look at that preacher! The old squirrel! He's eaten all he could and now when he thinks no one sees him, he's filling those big pockets in the tail of his long coat." All looked angrily and saw it was indeed true.

Just then one of the women exclaimed, "Why, look at the preacher's plate. You all are neglecting him. Hand over the fried chicken." And she heaped his plate up with appetizing pieces; he nibbled a few minutes -- then surreptitiously took two bandana handkerchiefs out of each breast pocket and, filling them with select pieces, stored them away.

Rising with the rest, the preacher backed off, as the boys thought, to hide his "loot" in his baggage. But after moving away from the crowd he turned, and hurried down to the back of the barn where the angry boys were waiting for the second call to lunch. "Boys," he exclaimed, "I was afraid they were forgetting you, so I saved a lot of the white meat and the drumsticks for you." Out came the four clean handkerchiefs and he passed the tender morsels around. The boys were captured. Amazed, they eagerly accepted the proffered dainties.

"This was characteristic of that preacher," said Mr. Rader's friend. "We felt we had found a real friend -- a man who loved other people better than he loved himself. He could do anything with us. He led us all to CHRIST during the years of his ministry among us, sent several out as foreign missionaries, and we three into the ministry at home. It was the unselfish spirit he manifested that gripped our hearts and won our confidence; so that his sermons reached our consciences and brought us to know his SAVIOUR as ours."

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**Explanation - These are notes organized by verse that you might find of help in preparing your sermon on Philippians 2:1-4.**

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#### **SEVERAL TITLES ON PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4**

- THE FOUNDATION STONES FOR SPIRIT ENERGIZED UNITY
  - ONE IN THE SPIRIT
  - HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIPS
  - UNITY THROUGH (CHRIST-LIKE) HUMILITY
  - AN APPEAL TO THEIR CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE
  - UNITY THROUGH HUMILITY
  - UNITY THROUGH CONFORMITY
  - CONFORMED TO UNITY
- 

#### **PRAYER**

- Every Christian has the choice of being humble & being humbled. Lord You never crushed a soul that was laying prostrate at Your feet.
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#### **OUTLINE - Brian Bill**

- Phil 2:1 **Fathom** the **Excellence** of what we have
- Phil 2:2-4 **Fulfill** the **Expectations** of what we must do

##### **(a) Resolve to pull together (Php 2:2).**

Strong appeal to unity.

##### **(b) Resist selfishness (Php 2:3a).**

"...but in humility consider others better than yourselves." This is a tough one because most of us secretly believe that we're better than those around us and that our music preference should be prescribed for everyone. But humility is a prerequisite for unity. "To consider others better" is a mathematical term which means, "Think about it and come to a conclusion." We are to count what is really there, add it up, and find out what is true. A wonderful biblical example is found in Genesis 13 where we read that Abraham allowed Lot to choose whatever land he wanted. He thought more highly of his nephew than he thought of himself and verse 8 says Abraham did it for the sake of unity: "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers." When's the last time you specifically did something to avoid an argument?

##### **(c) Remember the needs of others (Php 2:4) -**

"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." **Tolbok** is to fix one's attention on, with great interest in. Some of us need to take our eyes off ourselves and literally lift them to look at others.

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#### **ANOTHER OUTLINE - Jack Arnold**

- Appeal for Unity - Php 2:1-2
  - Appeal for Humility - Php 2:3-4
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#### **ANOTHER OUTLINE - Brian Bell**

- 4 - Fold Incentive for Unity (Php 2:1)
- 4 - Fold Directive for Unity (Php 2:2)

**Look at how the 4 Incentives (Php 2:1) link with the 4 Directives (Php 2:2).**

[1] Since there is consolation in Christ - be like-minded.

[2] Since there is comfort of Love - having the same love.

[3] Since there is fellowship of the Spirit - being of one accord. {accord = "harmony of souls", souls that beat together in tune w/Christ & w/each other}

[4] Since there is affection & mercy - be of one mind. {like clocks that strike at the same time}

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## **ANOTHER OUTLINE - Chris Benfield - Title - CONFORMED TO UNITY**

### **1. Admonition for Unity (Php 2:1-2a)**

- (a) The Lord we serve - consolation in Christ
- (b) The Love we Share - comfort of love
- (c) The Life we Live - fellowship of the Spirit
- (d) The Load we Bear (1) – if any bowels and mercies.

### **2. Attributes of Unity (Php 2:2-4)**

- (a) Harmony - Php 2:2
  - (b) Humility - Php 2:3
  - (c) Hospitality - Php 2:4
  - (Source - has more detail under each point and subpoint - [Conformed to Unity](#))
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## **ANOTHER OUTLINE - J B Phillips - Paul's Approach to the Example of Christ (Php 2:1-4)**

### **A) His Distress (Php 2:1-2a)**

#### **1) The Basis of His Appeal (Php 2:1)**

First there is *the supreme basis* - "Consolation in Christ... comfort of love."

Second there is *the supernatural basis*: "Fellowship of the Spirit"—

Third there is *the supporting basis*: "Bowels and mercies"—

#### **2) The Burden of His Appeal (Php 2:2) "Make my joy complete"**

### **B) Their Discord (Php 2:2b-4)**

#### **1) The Need for Likemindedness (Php 2:2b)**

#### **2) The Need for Lowliness (Php 2:3)**

The Cause of their Discords - Php 2:3a

The Cure for Their Discords (Php 2:3b)

#### **3) The Need for Largeness (Php 2:4)**

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## **INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS**

An ad in the Lawrence, Kansas, *Journal-World*, purported: "**We will oil your sewing machine and adjust the tension in your home for only \$1.**" (In *Reader's Digest* [5/85], p. 190.) Who cares if they oil the sewing machine--if only someone could adjust the tension in our homes, I'll bet we'd all gladly pay \$100! We all crave harmonious relationships, but they seem to be a rare commodity. We enter marriage with high hopes for harmony: "This adorable creature I'm marrying is so easy to get along with! We're in love, so we won't have any serious problems!" But then a few months into reality, I discover that she's not quite as adorable as I had thought! In fact, she's got a few problems that I need to help her work on. One of her main problems is that she doesn't see things my way! As I seek to help her with her problems, I discover that she has another problem, namely, that she is stubborn and won't change.

We want harmonious relationships with our children, and yet the alienation between parents and their teenagers is proverbial. We want harmony in our church, but those people at church are so unloving! “Why, do you know what so-and-so said to me? I don’t know who she thinks she is! After all the times I’ve helped her, and then she acts like that toward me! See if I ever do anything for her again!”

I’m glad that the Bible was written to real people with real problems. It doesn’t paper over their problems and offer superficial answers. The church at Philippi was a good church, but it wasn’t perfect. None is. If its first three converts were any gauge, it was a motley crew that gathered for worship in Philippi: a sophisticated, wealthy businesswoman; a career Roman military man; and, a former slave girl who had been into the occult. It was a built-in formula for conflict, and some tensions were surfacing among the members (Phil 4:2). So Paul gently urges them to work through their differences and he gives some principles for harmonious relationships that apply both to the church and to the home.

But, I’ll warn you: It’s a painful, difficult cure! Like chemotherapy, you may wonder at times if the cure is worth it. But it’s the only cure and if you don’t take it, the disease will ultimately cause great suffering and result in death. Briefly stated, the principle is: The key to harmonious relationships is to put self to death and to regard others more highly than myself for Jesus’ sake. (Source: Pastor Steven Cole)

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**INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 2** - The apostle Paul was a menace to the devil. Satan did not know What to do with him. *Lock him up in prison*, the evil one may have thought, *and he will win his jailers to Christ and write letters that will influence the thinking of millions for ages to come. Set him free and he will win whole continents to Christ. Kill him and he will win a martyr’s crown.* Paul’s triumphant spirit rang out in the first chapter of Philippians as he pealed the bells of our joy in Christ. In the second chapter he introduced other triumphant figures into his letter. (John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring Philippians: An Expository Commentary)

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**Adrian Rogers description of UNITY** – You know, there are three words that sound alike: one is **unity**; one is **union**; and one is **uniformity**. Now, it’s **unity** that we’re looking for, not **union**. Somebody has well said, “You can take two tomcats, tie their tails together, and hang them over a clothesline, and you have **union**, but you don’t have **unity**.” And, you can kind of conjure up that picture in your mind. We want more than **union**. We want to be more than wired together, or rusted together, or frozen together—that’s **union**. And then, **uniformity**. What is uniformity? Uniformity comes from without—everybody saying the same thing, looking alike, and doing the same things. That **uniformity** comes by pressure from without. **Unity** comes from within, where we have the same Spirit and the same Lord. We’re not brought together by rules. We’re not brought together by threats. We are bound together by love of the Lord Jesus. And so, there’s to be harmony. i

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**OPENING ILLUSTRATION ON HUMILITY** - Dr. Harry Ironside was once convicted about his lack of humility. A friend recommended as a remedy, that he march through the streets of Chicago wearing a sandwich board, shouting the scripture verses on the board for all to hear. Dr. Ironside agreed to this venture and when he returned to his study and removed the board, he said “I’ll bet there’s not another man in town who would do that.”

1. Our pride is as silly as the donkey that had Jesus on his back, thinking that they put garments & palm fronds on the ground for him!
  2. Perspective: How to stay humble? Picture yourself as simply a kite in a hurricane. When Jesus is the hurricane, it’s kinda hard not to fly!
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**Last Chapter** - Good Ol Paul: Lock him up in prison - & he’ll win his jailers to Christ & write letters that will influence the thinking millions for ages to come! Set him free - & he’ll win whole continents to Christ! Kill him - & he’ll win a martyr’s crown! (Phillips)

**This Chapter** - Paul’s goal here is Unity for the Philippian church.

To get Unity you need Humility! To get Humility, you need an Example...the best example is Jesus!

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The words of Jesus from John 17:20-23: “I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

Ephesians 4:2-6: “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity

of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit- just as you were called to one hope when you were called- one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” and verse 13: “Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

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By way of background, the Philippian Church had very few problems. There was no doctrinal heresy or immoral conduct. However, if the Devil cannot reach Christians one way, he will try another. In the church at Philippi, there were some insipient forms of fighting and feuding among the congregation so that their testimony to the world was being hindered. In 1:27, Paul appeals to these Christians to stop wrangling and “stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.” Christian unity is not an option but a necessity if the local church is going to make an impact upon the world for Christ. NOTE: As much as we Christians intellectually know we should be striving for unity, many of us are not doing much about it. We somehow rationalize that our critical attitude is all right, our negative spirit is acceptable, and our gossip is not so bad as long as we are doing it against someone else but not he to us. Unity comes when there is one mind, one spirit, one heart and one bond in the gospel cause. Fighting within the local church destroys the power of Christ in the midst of His people, and the outside world mocks Christ because of the carnal actions of Christians.

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H. A. Ironside used to tell a story that is appropriate to the rights question. When he was a boy of only eight or ten years of age, his mother took him to a business meeting of Christians. Two men were having a quarrel -- he didn't remember what it was about - - but one of them stood up and pounded on the desk and said, “I don't care what the rest of you do, all I want is my rights.” sitting in the front row was a dear old Scottish man, somewhat hard of hearing, who cupped his hand behind his ear, leaned forward and said, “Aye, brother, what's that you say? What do you want?” The fellow said, “Well, I just said that all I want is my rights, that's all.” And the old Scot replied, “Your rights, brother, is that what you want, your rights? If you had your rights, you'd be in hell. The Lord Jesus didn't come to get his rights, he came to get his wrongs. And he got them.” The fellow who had been bickering stood transfixed for a moment. Then he sat down and said, “You're right. Settle it any way you like.”

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In Philippians 1:27 Paul makes a major shift in this letter, going from information to exhortation. Prior to this he has been explaining to the the worried saints at Philippi that prison has not hindered him, but to the contrary has provided and opportunity for the progress of the Gospel. Paul was imprisoned but as he wrote in 2 Ti 2:9 "word of God (Gospel) is not imprisoned." Prison became his pulpit for proclamation of Jesus. In fact in the first 26 verses Paul mentions Jesus or Christ some 15 times out of a total of 36 times in the entire letter. Clearly Paul's focus in prison was on the Person of Christ and as we have seen in the mnemonic for "J.O.Y." Philippians 2 then moves to the "O" of JOY - Others!

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#### **DEFINITION OF UNITY AND DISTINCTION FROM UNIFORMITY:**

**Unity** - an undivided or unbroken completeness or totality with nothing wanting. The quality of being united into one. When there is unity, people are in agreement and act together for a particular purpose. The quality of being one in spirit and purpose. Harmony. We are to be like a symphony, composed of many different instruments, but all focused on one goal or purpose -- to create a beautiful sound to the hearer. The church is to be like that because the world is listening, and sadly they hear (and see) much disharmonious music coming from churches because of divisions and discord.

Unity is not uniformity. Think about this -- the word **Uniformity** has within it the word **uniform**. The idea then of that word is we dress alike, look alike, sound alike, think alike, act alike. But that is neither healthy nor biblical. **Unity** comes from deep within as Paul writes in Ephesians exhorting the church at Ephesus to be "diligent to preserve **the unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace. (Eph 4:3). It is the inner desire to conduct oneself in a cooperative manner, to be on the same team, to strive together for the same objectives, for the benefit of one another. Phil 1:27

That “one heart and mind and purpose” suggests unity, a genuine Spirit-filled unselfishness that breeds strength and spreads cheer. Is this suggesting **uniformity**? Does it mean we always have to agree on everything? Is that what harmony is all about? No. There is a difference between unity and uniformity. Uniformity is gained by pressure from without. As **Harry A. Ironside** said, "It is very evident that Christians will never see eye to eye on all points. We are so largely influenced by habits, by environment, by education, by the measure of intellectual and spiritual apprehension to which we have attained, that it is an impossibility to find any number of people who look at everything from the same standpoint. How then can such be of one mind? The apostle himself explains it elsewhere when he says, “I think also that I have the mind of Christ.” ([1 Cor 2:16KJV](#)) The “**mind of Christ**” is the lowly mind. And, if we are all of this mind, we shall walk together in love, considering one another, and seeking rather to be helpers of one another's faith, than challenging each other's convictions."

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## APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

- What types of attitudes threaten the unity and solidarity of our local assembly?
- Are we secure enough in our unity together that we can be aggressive in reaching out to others with the gospel and contending for the faith or are we primarily passive and focused on protecting ourselves?
- What difference is there between union and unity?
- Think of the parallel to a soccer team ... what types of attitudes make for a good player vs. a player who actually hurts the team?

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### Steven J. Cole [Philippians 2:1-4 Harmonious Relationships](#)

1. In any conflict, I need to look to my own relationship with Christ: Am I motivated by His great love (Php 2:1)?
2. In any conflict, I must look to my attitude: Am I seeking unity or am I seeking my own way (Php 2:2)?
3. In any conflict, I must look to my view of myself: Am I being selfish and conceited or humble (Php 2:3)?
4. In any conflict, I must look to my view of others: Am I putting their interests above my own (Php 2:4)?

A secular psychologist did a study in which he asked his subjects to list ten people he knew best and to label them as happy or not happy. Then they were to go through the list again and label each one as selfish or not selfish, using the following definition of selfishness: "A stable tendency to devote one's time and resources to one's own interests and welfare--an unwillingness to inconvenience one's self for others." The results showed that all of the people labeled *happy* were also labeled *unselfish*. He wrote that those "whose activities are devoted to *bringing themselves happiness* ... are far less likely to be happy than those whose efforts are devoted to making others happy" (emphasis in original, cited by Martin & Deidre Bobgan, *How to Counsel from Scripture* [Moody Press], p. 123).

The key to harmonious relationships is not to esteem self, assert self, or stand up for self. It is, rather, to put self to death and to regard others more highly than myself for Jesus' sake. If we would apply this to our homes and church, we would experience much more harmony and much less conflict. It's a painful cure; but it's the only cure given by God's Word of truth. ([Philippians 2:1-4 Harmonious Relationships](#))

**PHILIPPIANS 2:1 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,**

Other translations:

**Amplified** - Therefore if there is any encouragement *and* comfort in Christ [as there certainly is in abundance], if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship [that we share] in the Spirit, if [there is] any [great depth of] affection and compassion,

**Barclay** - If the fact that you are in Christ has any power to influence you, if love has any persuasive power to move you, if you really are sharing in the Holy Spirit, if you can feel compassion and pity,

The key to understanding this and other statements about love is to know that this love (the Greek word *agape*) is not so much a matter of emotion as it is of doing things for the benefit of another person, that is, having an unselfish concern for another and a willingness to seek the best for another.

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### Encouragement in Christ

In Christ is a key Pauline doctrine, one that is intensely practical. When you see this phrase (**in Christ Jesus**) in many of Paul's uses, the first thought that should pop in your mind is your "union with the Lord." When the Father looks at you, He sees your "position" in His Son. You are in oneness with His Son Christ Jesus. You are in covenant with Jesus today and throughout eternity. Nothing can change that great truth. He is the Vine and we are the branches and just as His very life flows through us via His indwelling Spirit, we have the glorious potential to do everything in total dependence upon His power. This is a learning process, but it is our privileged position. In total dependence on the Spirit of Christ is the only way to life a supernatural life, a life on a "higher plane!" There is simply no possibility apart from practicing this simple phrase of "in the Lord" – don't want you to leave frustrated or discouraged ... what we are talking about is

totally unrealistic and unattainable apart from being plugged into the Lord's grace and power and mindset and purposes

Examples of **in Christ** in Philippians

Php 1:1 - Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints **in Christ Jesus** who are in Philippi,

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**Chris Benfield on Encouragement in Christ** - That is very simple and yet strikingly profound. An awareness of the Lord should be reason enough to strive for unity among the church. We too have received great consolation from the Lord. He has been faithful to meet our needs and continually deals with us according to His grace and mercy. Our love for the Lord ought to create a burning desire to serve alongside fellow believers in unity. We cannot please our Lord apart from unity. He remained committed to the will of the Father, going all the way to the cross, bearing our sin and securing our salvation. There was no rebellion or lack of unity within Christ. That alone should motivate our unity!

**b. The Love we Share (1)** – If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love. Paul also mentions the comfort of love possessed by those in Christ. Here the word comfort speaks of “strength.” Paul admonishes – if your love is strong, if it is real for one another, then unity will come natural. Those who share a common love, being strengthened by that love, would strive to maintain unity, and grow together! This presents a great challenge to the church today. I fear that far too many of our churches lack genuine love for one another. If our love is lacking, we will not possess unhindered unity. If our love is strong, and we are being strengthened through that love, we will possess unity. Our love for one another will dictate our lives and unity will be a natural by-product of our love. Genuine love will create an atmosphere of unity among the church. 1 John 4:11 – Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. John 15:12 – This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

**c. The Life we Live (1)** – If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit...Next Paul mentioned their fellowship in the Spirit. As believers they all shared the same Spirit, not a similar spirit, but they all possessed the Spirit within. Such a common bond would create a common fellowship through the Spirit and directly affect the lives they lived. With the Spirit abiding within, and guiding their lives, He would keep them united in fellowship. When one experienced pain, the others felt it too. When one rejoiced, the others were compelled to rejoice as well. As long as they walked in fellowship with the Lord, they would enjoy fellowship with one another. Sadly it doesn't always work this way because we tend to allow sin into our lives which clouds our vision and creates division, but I am thankful for the fellowship I have experienced within the church. As we walk in awareness of the Lord, focusing on our love for one another, the Spirit leads us according to the divine will of God. As we follow His lead, we enjoy fellowship with one another and great unity in the faith. We have the guidance and help necessary to possess continual fellowship and unity if we will follow the Spirit.

**d. The Load we Bear (1)** – If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies. Finally Paul deals with our compassion and care for one another. He refers to a phrase – bowels and mercies. This literally speaks of “our tender mercies for one another.” It deals with being so united in our zeal for the Lord and love for one another that we feel the hurts and burdens of fellow believers. When they are under a heavy load, we are compelled to come alongside them and help carry their load. It is motivated action generated by love. There are those outside the church who seek to help others when they are burdened, but this is amplified within the church. We are united within the family of God, being filled with the Spirit, and walking together in the faith. Such a close relationship creates a heart that is moved with tender mercies toward those who are struggling. I have experienced it many times in my life and witnessed such mercies being shown from you. When others hurt, we hurt; when they are under a heavy load, we feel the weight as well and want to lighten their load if possible. Gal.6:2 – Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. ([For full exposition see Conformed to Unity](#))

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To paraphrase **Wiersbe**, the secret of **joy** in spite of circumstances (Chapter 1 Paul in prison) is maintaining a **single mind** (focused on Christ) and in Chapter 2 the secret of **joy** in spite of people is maintaining a **submissive mind**. In chapter 1 we find “**Christ first**” and in chapter 2 we see “**others next.**” Using “**J.O.Y.**” as an acrostic we see “**J**” for Jesus first, “**O**” for others next and finally “**Y**” for yourself last. A good order in order to maintain order but a “tall order” to carry out consistently. (cf Php 4:13 for how it is possible) Let this formula rule in your life (enabled by Php 2:13) and the “fruit” you will bear (Gal 5:22) will be supernatural “**J.O.Y.**”!

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Every Christian, regardless of their praise preferences, has received these blessings. Paul's point is this:

**Since you've been given all this, shouldn't you grant grace to others and do whatever it takes to promote peace and embrace unity?**

**PHILIPPIANS 2:2** **make** my joy **complete** by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

**Make my joy complete** - this is a command (aorist imperative) which conveys the sense of urgency and can be rendered "Do this now!" "Don't delay!" "The need is urgent!" The spiritual **wealth** Paul reminds them of Philippians 2:1 calls for a "worthy**walk**" (same thing we say in Php 1:27). Our **spiritual privileges** call for appropriate **spiritual practice**. The **revelation** in 2:1 gives us the **responsibility** of Php 2:2-4. Remember that the only way to obey God's commandments (like make my joy complete) is by rejecting our tendency to do it in our natural strength and to learn to rely wholly on the Holy Spirit's supernatural power.

So Phil 2:1 gives "Four **reminders** of their **resources**". After telling the saints their spiritual resources, then Paul issues the command in Php 2:2. In essence Paul was saying in Php 2:1 these 4 items are the grounds on which you will be able to fulfill my command to make my joy complete.

When believers are not rejoicing in the Lord they will be marked by divisiveness, pride, and selfishness. To correct the situation, Paul issued a direct command: 'Fulfill ye my joy' (Php 2:2)."

- Phil 2:1 = How God sees us in Christ
- Phil 2:2-4 = How the world should see Christ in us

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**Joy** - A good definition of joy is this: it's the flag that flies on the castle of the heart when the King is in residence.

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What kind of church pleases God and man? A church where there is harmony, love and fellowship among the Christians. This can happen in a small church or a large church because it is a matter of attitude not circumstances.

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Robertson on **being of the same mind** – (**Ed**: sumpsuche - makes me think of a symphony) "harmonious in soul, souls that beat together, **in tune with Christ and with each other**" (**Ed**: Bring a tuning instrument to show what happens to the sound of a piano or guitar that is out of tune! Now think about the "music" made by a local Body of Christ which is OUT OF TUNE! Instead of a "**symphony**" [a harmony of sounds!] it becomes a "**cacophony**" [loud confusing disagreeable sounds]!" Woe!

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To have the "same love" gets to our feelings and our unconditional commitment to every Christian, whether we like them or not – and whether we like their music or not. To be "one in spirit and purpose" touches on how we relate to one another. The Greek is helpful here because this phrase literally means, "**same-souled**."

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**Henry** adds that we need to "be severe upon our own faults and charitable in our judgments of others, be quick in observing our own defects and infirmities, but ready to overlook and make favourable allowances for the defects of others. We must esteem the good which is in others above that which is in ourselves; for we best know our own unworthiness and imperfections.

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**Wiersbe** sums up this section with the thought that "Paul is saying to the church, "Your disagreements reveal that there is a spiritual problem in your fellowship. It isn't going to be solved by rules or threats; it's going to be solved when your hearts are right with Christ and with each other." Paul wanted them to see that the basic cause was selfishness, and the cause of selfishness is pride. There can be no joy in the life of the Christian who puts himself above others.

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### **Illustration We need to be a team**

Lee Iacocca once asked legendary football coach Vince Lombardi what it took to make a winning team. The book Iacocca records Lombardi's answer: There are a lot of coaches with good ball clubs who know the fundamentals and have plenty of discipline but still don't win the game. Then you come to the third ingredient: if you're going to play together as a team, you've got to care for one another. You've got to love each other. Each player has to be thinking about the next guy and saying to himself "If I don't block that man, Paul is going to get his legs broken. I have to do my job well in order that he can do his." The difference between mediocrity and greatness, Lombardi said that night, is the feeling these guys have for each other.

In the healthy church, each Christian learns to care for others. As we take seriously Jesus' command to "love one another," we contribute to a winning team.

-- Christopher Stinnett, Leadership Magazine, Vol. 15:3, Walled Lake, Michigan, Summer 1994, p. 49.

**PHILIPPIANS 2:3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;**

**NOTHING!** - How many? Now just try to accomplish this relying on your own power! Flesh will not cast out flesh! We absolutely must depend on the Spirit's supernatural power to "do nothing...!"

The phrase "selfish ambition" means strife that comes from ugly self-promotion and a competitive spirit that destroys unity by dividing the church into groups and cliques. Selfishness and pride are at the root of every sin.

Paul doesn't promote **self-hate**, but advocates **self-forgetfulness!**

### **Illustration - Cross-country Drive**

Four men are driving cross-country together: one from Idaho, one from Iowa, one from Florida, and the last one is from New York. A bit down the road the man from Idaho starts to pull potatoes from his bag and throws them out the window. The man from Iowa turns to him and asks, "What are you doing?" The man from Idaho says, "Man, we have so many of these darned things in Idaho. They're laying around on the ground, I'm sick of looking at them!" A few miles down the road, the man from Iowa begins pulling ears of corn from his bag and throwing them out the window. The man from Florida asks "What are you doing that for?" The man from Iowa replies, "Man, we have so many of these darned things in Iowa. I'm sick of looking at them!" Inspired by the others, the man from Florida opens the car door and pushes the New Yorker out.

Many commentators feel that from the nature of Paul's exhortation (against selfishness) one can infer that there were budding factions among the saints at Philippi. In a gracious way, Paul is saying to the church, "Your disagreements reveal that there is a spiritual problem in your fellowship. It isn't going to be solved by rules or threats. It's going to be solved when your hearts are right with Christ and with each other."

**D. L. Moody** said, "Selfishness is tearing others down and vain conceit is building ourselves up."

**J B Phillips** on **with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves** - Paul was not saying that we should consider everyone else to be more gifted or more capable than we are. It is a false humility that depreciates any acknowledgment of one's gifts. C. S. Lewis showed that true humility is evident when a man who designs the most beautiful cathedral in the world—and knows it is the most beautiful cathedral in the world—would have been just as pleased if someone else had designed it (Screwtape's Letter XIV).

To pretend not to have abilities we know we do have is not humility, but hypocrisy. If we esteem others better than ourselves, we do not consider everyone else to be superior to ourselves, but we do want everyone else to have preferential treatment.

Humility is the opposite of conceit and selfish ambition. Humility is concern for the advancement of others. The man who reigns in the affections of God's people is not the bossy, pushy man, but the quiet, godly, unassuming man who is always seeking the good of other people. Barnabas was such a man. (The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring Philippians: An Expository Commentary)

**Humility of mind** - Do you know how to forget others' faults? By remembering your own! Woe!

**Humility** you might say, "that's for weasels, I'm an eagle!" Then this quotes for you {"Eagles may soar,...but weasels aren't sucked into jet engines!"}

Here in Php 2:3 Paul gives us practical advice on how to integrate a Christlike Attitude into every day living.

[1] Never let selfishness or conceit be your motive!

[2] Regard others as more important than yourself.

- Php 2:3 deals w/our Attitude;
  - Php 2:4 deals w/our Actions!
- 

Don't misinterpret what Paul is saying. His exhortation does not mean that we are to have a denigrating or disparaging view of our own gifts or talents. For example, you may be a much better singer than someone else. Paul is not saying to think of yourself as an inferior singer but to consider the other person as deserving of preferential treatment in general. The upshot is that our consideration for others must precede our concern for ourselves. You've probably seen the little acronym for "joy" - **J** (Jesus) **O** (others) **Y** (yourself).

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The local church which pleases God must have a spirit of oneness, unity and harmony. This is a oneness around the gospel or the work of Jesus Christ. If all are submitted to Christ, there will be submission to one another. Paul is calling for unity of thought, unity of feeling, unity of Spirit and unity of purpose.

We have all heard the saying, "Idle hands are the Devil's tools." This can apply to spiritual activity as well. Christians soaking in God's Word and not giving it out will become the Devil's tool, for they will develop a stagnate and critical attitude. Christians should be very active in spiritual works such as praying studying the Bible, teaching, visiting, witnessing and socializing.

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**Empty conceit (kenodoxia** from **kenos** = empty, vain, hollow, groundless + **doxa** = glory, praise or opinion) is used only here in the NT and literally means "vain glory", "empty praise" or "hollow opinion" all describing in essence something which has an appearance but lacks the reality. It is a graphic description of the glory this world affords us which to the natural man appears "beautiful" and desirable, but which is literally devoid of any good or any eternal value. Kenodoxia describes the person who is conceited without reason, deluded, ambitious for his own reputation, challenging others to rivalry, jealous himself and willing to fight to prove his idea is right.

The idea of **kenodoxia** includes a highly exaggerated self-view. It is a passion for empty personal glory which contrasts sharply with **humility**.

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#### **Illustration - Merv Griffin and the body builders – what do they do with all that muscle?**

One afternoon on the Merv Griffin Show, years ago, Merv interviewed some body builders. Merv was standing there, looking at those guys who had muscles on their muscles, and he asked the obvious question, "What do you use all these muscles for?" One guy answered by flexing his muscles in a typical body-building pose. Merv, taken back by the response, replied "You don't understand me. I asked, what do you use all those muscles for?" The same guy said, "Here, I'll show you." And he posed again for the camera. For the third time Merv asked the question again. He was obviously growing irritated. "No, No. You still don't understand my question. Read my lips. What do you use those muscles for." And for a third time the guy posed again. -- Tim Hansel, Holy Sweat, p. 26-27.

Be careful when you find yourself seeking attention. Attention really doesn't do that much for you. It's just something to show off. - [Rich Cather](#)

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**Wuest on humility of mind** "The word is used in an early secular manuscript of the **Nile River at its low stage**, "It runs low." Expositors defines it: "the lowliness of mind which springs from a true estimate of ourselves—a deep sense of our own moral smallness and demerit."

John gives us a good pattern in Jn 3:30 "He must (present tense - continually) increase, but I must (present tense - continually) decrease." The order is important for as we see Jesus higher and higher we get a proper perspective of our self. True humility is not putting ourselves down but rather lifting up others. If we concentrate on lifting up others, putting down ourselves will take care of itself. As we go through life exalting Christ and others, then genuine humility will be inevitable. If we exalt ourselves then God will take care of our humiliation for He promises to humble the proud. It is much less painful to do it the first way. The true way to be humble is not to stoop until you are smaller than yourself, but to stand at your real height against some higher nature that will show you what the real smallness of your greatness is. Humility is not simply feeling small and useless—like an inferiority complex. It is sensing how great and glorious God is, and seeing myself in that light.

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#### **Illustration - Key to unity - humility**

R.C. Chapman, a pastor and teacher back in 19th century England, wrote a book called "Agape Leadership". He has a couple of

great quotes about "unity":

"Pride nourishes the remembrance of injuries: humility forgets as well as forgives them."

"When mutual intercession takes the place of mutual accusation, then will the differences and difficulties of brethren be overcome."

"Humility is the secret of fellowship, and pride the secret of division". - [Rich Cather](#)

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**Illustration - regard one another as more important** - Honor others Leave your crown at home.

At a reception honoring musician Sir Robert Mayer on his 100th birthday, elderly British socialite Lady Diana Cooper fell into conversation with a friendly woman who seemed to know her well. Lady Diana's failing eyesight prevented her from recognizing her fellow guest, until she peered more closely at the magnificent diamonds and realized she was talking to Queen Elizabeth! Overcome with embarrassment, Lady Diana curtsied and stammered, "Ma'am, oh, ma'am, I'm sorry ma'am. I didn't recognize you without your crown!" "It was so much Sir Robert's evening," the queen replied, "that I decided to leave it behind."

**Illustration**

President Reagan used to have a sign on his desk that read: "There is no limit to what a man can do or where he can go if he doesn't mind who gets the credit." - [Rich Cather](#)

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**Selfishness kills relationships It's what separates marriages.**

**Illustration**

A reader of People Magazine wrote a letter to the editor about actor Kevin Costner's plans for divorce from his wife Cindy after 16 years of marriage. She wrote: Kevin is quoted as saying, "I wish I could stop and raise my family, but this is my time." Poor Kevin. When was Cindy's time? When she helped him form his career, when she had his three kids, or when she raised them by herself?

-- Sally Wood, People Magazine, November 28, 1994, p. 6.

God wants to stretch our hearts, not shrink them.

**Illustration**

The widest thing in the universe is not space; it is the potential capacity of the human heart. Being made in the image of God, it is capable of almost unlimited extension in all directions. And one of the world's greatest tragedies is that we allow our hearts to shrink until there is room in them for little besides ourselves. -- A.W. Tozer in The Root of the Righteous. Christianity Today, Vol. 34, no. 3. - [Rich Cather](#)

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**D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones** - The way to become poor in spirit is to look at God.

**Andrew Murray** quipped that "The humble person is not one who thinks meanly of himself; he simply does not think of himself at all! Humility is that grace that, when you know you have it, you have lost it.

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**Humility** is that grace that, when you know you have it, you have lost it! The truly humble person knows himself and accepts himself (Ro 12:3-note). He yields himself to Christ to be a servant, to use what he is and has for the glory of God and the good of others. "**Others**" is a key idea in this section as the believer's eyes are turned away from himself and focused on the needs of others.

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**ILLUSTRATION - Think of others**

The greatest illustration of this is the Lord Jesus Christ.

He thought more of our needs than His own.

He saw that we needed someone to deal with our sin, and He stepped in and paid the price by dying on the cross in our place.

It's actually a very healthy thing for us.

**Illustration -**



Years ago, Dr. Karl Menninger of the Menninger Clinic was asked, "If someone felt a nervous breakdown coming on, what would you suggest that he do?" "If you feel a nervous breakdown coming on, I would urge you to find somebody else with a problem—a serious one—and get involved with that individual, helping him solve his problem." In helping him to solve his problem, then in reality your own problem is going to disappear. You're no longer thinking internally. You're no longer letting things gnaw at your stomach. You're no longer getting disturbed about yourself because you're not thinking about yourself. You're thinking about others. I don't know what your objective in life might be, but there is something each one of us can do.

I think this is one of the keys to a healthy marriage, learning to think more of the other person's needs than of your own. [Rich Cather](#)

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**Illustration** - Dr. Willard Harley in his book entitled His Needs, Her Needs points out the priorities of the sexes in the order of importance:

**A man desires:**

1. Sexual fulfillment
2. Recreational companionship
3. An attractive spouse
4. Domestic support
5. Admiration of his wife

**A woman desires:**

1. Affection
2. Conversation
3. Honesty and Openness
4. Financial Support
5. Family Commitment

I find it interesting that none of the "needs" on "his list" are the same as the "needs" on "her list". If these were your spouse's needs, how well are you doing at meeting them? What do you think your spouse would say? These may not be your spouse's exact needs, but do you know what your spouse's needs are? We must learn to understand each other's needs and work to meet those needs. - [Rich Cather](#)

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It should also be remembered that the minds of different believers are not to be pressed into a single mold of thinking--this is not what is meant by being "likeminded" (Phil. 2:2).

Rather, God imparts to us the matchless mastermind of Christ, so each believer will be a distinct person in himself.

Believers will be likeminded inasmuch as they will seek to reach similar goals, but they will not each seek the same way, and they may not always agree as to how a particular goal can best be reached.

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Rom. 14:19).

**Christ's solution for pride is the only cure:  
consider others better than ourselves.**

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**HUMILITY** - The word "humility" really means "lowliness of mind." In lowliness of mind, Christians are to consider others better than themselves. How do we interpret the thought of "better?" Obviously, some Christians are smarter than others, some are more educated than others, some are more talented than others. Are we to ignore these facts? No, because Paul is talking about "importance." The NASB translates this, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each one regard one another as more important than himself." We are to view every other Christian as more important to the body of Christ than we are. It is very difficult to say, "That person is better than me" when he may not be in various ways, but we can say, "That person's interests are more important than mine." NOTE: Each Christian must realize that all he has is by the grace of God and if he is in any

way superior to another Christian, it is all God's doing (*1 Cor. 4:7: For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?*). Each Christian is to think of himself as the least important Christian in the church. This is what real humility is. Humility is not, "Ah, shucks, I'm really nothing. I'm nobody. I'm a worm." NOTE: A mind of humility is giving up personal rights and wants for the rights and wants of others. So often we hear Christians say or imply, "I have my rights and I'm going to cling to my rights no matter what any other Christian does or says!" That is not a mind of humility.

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**Unselfish** - who comes to mind when you here that word? Maybe this "unknown man in the water" from 1982. As disasters go, this one was terrible but not unique, certainly not among the worst on the roster of U.S. air crashes. There was the unusual element of the bridge, of course, and the fact that the plane clipped it at a moment of high traffic, one routine thus intersecting another and disrupting both. Then, too, there was the location of the event. Washington, the city of form and regulations, turned chaotic, deregulated, by a blast of real winter and a single slap of metal on metal. The jets from Washington National Airport that normally swoop around the presidential monuments like famished gulls were, for the moment, emblemized by the one that fell; so there was that detail. And there was the aesthetic clash as well—blue-and-green Air Florida, the name a flying garden, sunk down among gray chunks in a black river. All that was worth noticing, to be sure. Still, there was nothing very special in any of it, except death, which, while always special, does not necessarily bring millions to tears or to attention. Why, then, the shock here? But the person most responsible for the emotional impact of the disaster is the one known at first simply as "the man in the water." (Balding, probably in his 50s, an extravagant mustache) He was seen clinging with 5 other survivors to the tail section of the airplane. This man was described by Usher and Windsor as appearing alert and in control. Every time they lowered a lifeline and flotation ring to him, he passed it on to another of the passengers. "In a mass casualty, you'll find people like him," said Windsor. "But I've never seen one with that commitment." When the helicopter came back for him, the man had gone under. His selflessness was one reason the story held national attention.

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**Rich Cathers on Becoming "other" centered.** - The sad thing about marriage counseling is that you rarely ever get to talk to people who are having a happy marriage. Instead, you always get to talk to people who are having trouble in their marriage.

One of the common things that I come across whenever there is conflict is that usually one or both parties are thinking strictly about their own needs.

If I ask a husband and a wife to write down what they think they need in a marriage, they can fill up a couple of sheets of paper with their own needs. But if I ask them what their partner needs in the marriage, there is usually a lot of silence and scratching of the head.

Do you know what the needs of your partner are? Do you REALLY know, or would your list of things just be what you hoped they would be?

For example, husbands, what would you say your wife's needs are? Would you tell me that she has this great need to cook you a great supper every night, to have it ready when you come home from work, that she needs to greet you with a great big wet, juicy kiss and just stare silently at you with goo-goo eyes all night while you watch football? Those might be some of your wife's needs, but more likely they're just your needs.

If we played that old "Newlywed Game", and I had each of you make up a list of what the wife's needs were in a marriage, would your two lists agree at all? How about the husbands needs?

This is much great than just dealing with marital problems. Paul is talking about people in the church getting along with each other.

When you have a conflict with any other person, how often do you stop and think to yourself, "What is that person needing right now?"

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**Rich Cathers on Put others ahead of you.** Think of others first.

It goes against our nature to think of others. We all tend to be by nature very selfish people. We tend to be mostly concerned about one person – "me".

They say that if you want to be successful in learning to carry on a conversation with another person, just learn to get them to talk about themselves. Ask them to tell you all about themselves.

Yet doing this is pretty hard, especially when you want to be talking about yourself!

God wants us to be concerned for the other person and not just thinking about what we're going to get out of a relationship.

## Illustration

A story is told of Jesus and His disciples walking one day along a stony road. Jesus asked each of them to choose a stone to carry for Him. John, it is said, chose a large one while Peter chose the smallest. Jesus led them then to the top of a mountain and commanded that the stones be made bread. Each disciple, by this time tired and hungry, was allowed to eat the bread he held in his hand, but of course Peter's was not sufficient to satisfy his hunger. John gave him some of his.

Some time later Jesus again asked the disciples to pick up a stone to carry. This time Peter chose the largest of all. Taking them to a river, Jesus told them to cast the stones into the water. They did so, but looked at one another in bewilderment.

"For whom," asked Jesus, "did you carry the stone?"

One of the scary things about selfishness is to think that others are watching me and copying me.

## Illustration

There's a story told of a pastor who was officiating at a funeral. When he was done, he was asked to lead the funeral procession as it made its way to the cemetery. So he got into his car, and he started driving at the head of the funeral procession. He flipped on his radio and became preoccupied, lost in thought; he forgot where he was going. About that time, he passed a K-Mart and thought about something he needed to pick up.

So he turned into the parking lot. As he was looking for a parking space, he just happened to glance into the rear-view mirror—and saw a string of cars following, all with their lights on! So self-absorbed, and then so humbled.

-- Mary Graves, "Getting Sober for Christmas," Preaching Today, Tape No. 135.

Are there people following your example? Jesus gave us the example that we ought to follow.

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### Pastor Brian Bill on Humility - Humility - tough subject.

1. I don't claim to be there, nor as having been there.
2. So like Paul, I'll use Jesus as our example this evening.
3. Let's commit to Pursue humility together; Practice humility together; Grow in Humility together.
4. We cannot attain full Humility here. The best we can say is, "as a proud person I am pursuing humility."
5. Augustine said, Pride is the mother of all sin. It is pregnant w/all sin. a) Pride is the root sin that leads to the fruit of sin.
6. Conversely then Humility is the mother of all Joy!

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### SOME QUOTES ON HUMILITY

- Humility is to the Christian what ballast is to the ship; it keeps him in his proper position and regulates all his thoughts and feelings.
- Swallowing of pride seldom leads to indigestion.
- The easiest way to dignity is humility.
- God can only fill valleys, not mountains. (Think of filling with His Spirit)
- If we learned humility it might spare us humiliation.
- The lowliest Christian is the loveliest Christian.
- The true secret of spiritual strength is selfdistrust and deep humility. J. C. Ryle
- It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels. - Augustine
- Humble hearts lie in the valleys where streams of grace are flowing, and hence they drink of them. C. H. Spurgeon
- The higher a man is in grace, the lower he will be in his own esteem. C. H. Spurgeon
- Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil's reach as humility. Jonathan Edwards
- All God's thrones are reached by going downstairs. C. Campbell Morgan
- Not until we have become humble and teachable, standing in awe of God's holiness and sovereignty ... acknowledging our own littleness, distrusting our own thoughts, and willing to have our minds turned upside down, can divine wisdom become ours. J. I. Packer

- I sometimes think that the very essence of the whole Christian position and the secret of a successful spiritual life is just to realize two things ... I must have complete, absolute confidence in God and no confidence in myself. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones
- Think as little as possible about yourself. Turn your eyes resolutely from any view of your influence, your success, your following. Above all speak as little as possible about yourself. Samuel Wilberforce

## APPLICATION

"Ambition" - You may get to the very top of the ladder and find it has not been leaning against the right wall.

Q: Do these 2 verses go against our natural tendencies?

Q: How do they go against the spirit of society?

**WOULD MAKE A GOOD CLOSING ILLUSTRATION - DO WE HAVE AS MUCH SENSE AS BIRDS?** (We often hear the term "bird brain" - well, here is a story that counters that statement! It's called Geese Sense! **"Why the V formation?"**)

As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in a V formation, the whole flock adds at least 71 percent greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own. Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone, and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front. (If we have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation with those who are headed the same way we are going.) When the lead goose gets tired, he rotates back in the wing and another goose flies point. The geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. (What do we say when we honk from behind?) Finally, when a goose gets sick, or is wounded by a shot and falls out, two geese fall out of formation and follow him down to help and protect him. They stay with him until he is either able to fly, or until he is dead, and then they launch out on their own or with another formation to catch up with their original group.

**ILLUSTRATION** - When **F. B. Meyer** pastored Christ Church in London, Charles Spurgeon was preaching at Metropolitan Tabernacle, and **G. Campbell Morgan** was at Westminster Chapel. Meyer said, "I find in my own ministry that supposing I pray for my own little flock, 'God bless me, God fill my pews, God send me a revival,' I miss the blessing; but as I pray for my big brother, Mr. Spurgeon, on the right-hand side of my church, 'God bless him'; or my other big brother, Campbell Morgan, on the other side of my church, 'God bless him'; I am sure to get a blessing without praying for it, for the overflow of their cups fills my little bucket."

**ILLUSTRATION** - The opposite of **humility of mind** is illustrated by the story of the young Scottish minister who walked proudly into the pulpit to preach his first sermon. He had a brilliant mind and a good education and was confident of himself as he faced his first congregation. But the longer he preached, the more conscious everyone was that "the Lord was not in the wind." He finished his message quickly and came down from the pulpit with his head bowed, his pride now gone. Afterward, one of the members said to him, "If you had gone into the pulpit the way you came down, you might have come down from the pulpit the way you went up."

Below are six ways to encourage someone - When was the last time you encouraged someone in any of the following ways? Have you ignored some gentle promptings by the Spirit to encourage someone? Perhaps today you might ask God to whom you might send a note or make a call? Yes, dear brother or sister in Christ, it does cost to encourage another (eg, it always costs our time, our "agenda", etc), but it might just be the most wisely invested moment of your day!

- 1) Provide materially – meet their material needs.
- 2) Drop a line – send notes of encouragement.
- 3) Reach out and touch – give an appropriate touch such as a pat, hug, etc.
- 4) Listen up – listen actively. (Oh my, I need to heed this one!)
- 5) Empathize – comfort others in their pain.
- 6) Give of your time – give your undivided attention.

**ILLUSTRATION** - After being married for over 50 years, a man revealed the secret to his successful marriage. He said, "Well, the wife and I had this agreement when we first got married. When she was bothered about something, she jus' tell me and git it off her chest. And if I was mad about somethin', I was to take a long walk. I 's'ppose you could attribute our successful marriage to the fact that I have mostly led an outdoor life." This man was committed to unity!

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If we are looking after the interests of others, we would have very few conflicts. What is strife? It is conflict of interests. Two parties wanting their rights, their way, their desires, their goals. Why conflict in the local church? Because Christians are doing their own thing which ultimately results in a spiritual collision. We cannot collide with another Christian if we put his interests first. NOTE: Each Christian has the same position before God, each is loved equally by God and each is equally precious to God. Christians differ only in personality, cultural status and IQ. But, even these are from God, so we can't boast about them. God wants us to use these things to glorify Him and to serve others. We are basically what we are and that cannot be changed. Our personality can be refined and mellowed by the Holy Spirit but not changed. NOTE: Christians also differ in spiritual gifts and each Christian needs the gift of the other Christian. One time I heard a man speak and he opened his sermon with the words, "Every Christian is in some way my superior." That hit me like a ton of bricks, for it is true. Every other Christian has something to teach me. (Jack Arnold)

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**NOTHING THROUGH SELFISH AMBITION** - The aquatic creature called the blowfish has no particular value to the one who catches it—except that it may help to develop the angler's patience because it often seizes bait intended for better fish. The blowfish is unattractive; it has a large mouth and a wrinkled body that looks like worn-out leather. When you turn it over and tickle it, the flabby fish puffs up until it is swollen like a globe.

People can be like that. A little flattery, a little tickling of their vanity and they swell up, giving the semblance of greatness. Pride inflates them, and they puff up like the blowfish. But there's nothing substantial about them; they are all air.

This condition takes other forms with more serious consequences. For example, the Christians to whom Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 5 were tolerating immorality. Instead of being grieved over sin in their midst, they were actually "puffed up" (1Cor 5:2). Here was a sure sign of carnality and immaturity—they were proud when they should have been mourning. God desires that we be "built up" in Christ—never "puffed up" with pride.

The continual attitude of God's children should be the one Paul recommended to the Philippians. He said, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself" ([Phil. 2:3](#)). If we take this seriously, we won't have the characteristics of the puffed-up blowfish. —P. R. Van Gorder

**The smaller we become, the more room God has to work.**

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**Running For Others** - Tom Knapp never won a race during his entire high school track career. Tom was a "pusher." It was his task to set the pace for his fellow team members, who would then beat him to the finish line. When he ran a successful race, he was enabling a fellow teammate to win. Even though Tom never had enough reserve energy for the final sprint to victory, the coach considered him a valuable member of the team.

In a similar way, the New Testament tells us to run our race of faith with the success of others in mind. "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3, 4). Our example of such living is Jesus Christ, who left the glory of heaven to share our humanity and die on the cross so that we can have eternal life (Php 2:5-8).

If the encouragement of our example helps another person to flourish and be successful, we should rejoice. When the eternal prizes are awarded for faithful service to God, a lot of "pushers" will be wearing blue ribbons. Until then, let's keep running so that others can win. —David C. McCasland

Oh, to see the needs of others  
More important than our own,  
Following our Lord's example  
When He left His heavenly throne. —Sper

**You can't lose when you help others win**

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**GAIN BY GIVING** - "The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself."-- Proverbs 11:25

A visitor to a lighthouse said to the keeper, "Aren't you afraid to live here with the storms and high winds constantly lashing the walls?"

"Oh, we have to be more concerned about those out on the sea," the man replied. "We think only of having our lamps burning brightly and keeping the reflectors clear so that those in greater danger may be saved."

We too are to be more concerned about others than we are about ourselves (Phil. 2:3, 4). Generosity and selflessness produce an abundant life of joy and rich reward. According to the Scriptures, if we give freely to others, we will receive abundant blessing.

Proverbs 11 teaches that a person who gives to others will gain even more (Pr 11:24, 25). Pr 11:25 paints a word picture to make the point. It states that "he who waters will also be watered himself."

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EACH year a small number of baseball superstars think they aren't being properly appreciated by their teams' owners. They are dissatisfied with their salaries even though they make more money in one year than most of us do in a lifetime. Their discontent is based on comparison. Each player considers him-self the best at his position and therefore thinks he should receive the largest salary.

Before the advent of multimillion dollar sports contracts, C. S. Lewis made this insightful, almost prophetic, comment: "We say that people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better looking than others. If everyone else became equally rich, or clever, or good-looking, there would be nothing to be proud about."

Pride afflicts all of us, not just the rich and famous. It is pride that causes us to feel hurt when someone snubs us, ignores us, or takes credit for something we did. Pride is behind the envy we feel toward people who are more successful than we are.

Christ's solution for pride is the only cure: consider others better than ourselves.

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**PHILIPPIANS 2:4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.**

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**Matthew Henry** - a selfish spirit is destructive of Christian love. We must be concerned not only for our own credit, and ease, and safety, but for those of others also; and rejoice in the prosperity of others as truly as in our own. We must love our neighbour as ourselves, and make his case our own

**Edwards** observes "What hard words these are! Our souls know they are true but plead with us not to take them seriously. If we followed these injunctions it appears that all we hold precious would be thrown out the window. After all, if we no longer exalted ourselves then who would there be to exalt us? And if we lived only for the benefit of others, who would watch out for us? Our problem is that we want to be called a "living sacrifice" without dying on the altar of servanthood."

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**John Phillips on Php 2:4** - To seek one's own advancement is worldly. To seek the prosperity, good, and promotion of others is divine. Philippians 2:4 expresses the essence of the spirit of the Lord Jesus. Those who heed these words of Paul have the larger view of life. The view that seeks one's own things tends to narrowness, selfishness, bigotry, smallness, and meanness of soul. The view that seeks to promote the interests and well-being of others leads to largeness of life both here and hereafter.

Lot sought to promote his own interests when he chose the well-watered plains of Jordan. How shortsighted he was in his selfish desire to take the best and most fertile part of the country for himself. God could already see those green valleys and prosperous cities buried in salt and sulfur, a smoking ruin of desolation. Lot lost fortune and family in Sodom and almost lost his faith; certainly he lost his testimony.

All the land of Canaan had been deeded by God to Abraham, yet that noble unselfish servant of God simply stood there saying, "We be brethren," while Lot took what looked like the best. But when the separation was accomplished, who was the bigger man? Who was marked by largeness of heart?

And Abraham did not lose anything because of his largeness. Lot journeyed *east* and once his caravan had gone over the hill and down into the valley toward those well-watered plains, God spoke. He said to Abraham, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, *and eastward*, and westward: For *all* the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Genesis 13:14-15, italics added).

All the comments in Philippians 2:1-4 are merely Paul's approach to the example of Christ. Php 2:5-11 present the example itself, by far the greatest example of all. (The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring Philippians: An Expository Commentary)

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**Are you looking out for the interests of others?** A young nurse's story illustrates Paul's point...

"During my second month of nursing school, our professor gave us a pop quiz. I was a conscientious student and had breezed through the questions, until I read the last one: 'What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?' Surely this was some kind of joke. I had seen the cleaning woman several times. She was tall, dark-haired and in her 50's, but how would I know her name? I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank. Before class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our quiz grade. Absolutely, said the professor. "In your careers you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say hello". I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learned her name was Dorothy." Who is the "Dorothy" in your life who needs your attention?

Others, Lord, yes, others,

Let this my motto be;

Help me to live for others,

That I might live like Thee.

— Charles D. Meigs

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**Love Speaks Loudest** - Missionary Doug Nichols was a patient in a tuberculosis ward in India in 1967. Patients and staff saw him as a rich American taking up space in their hospital. Their hostility was evident as they refused the gospel tracts he offered them.

One morning at 2 o'clock, a very sick Indian man struggled to get out of bed to go to the bathroom, but he was too weak to make it. Soon the stench from his bed filled the room. Other patients yelled at him. Nurses showed their anger for having to clean up the mess. One slapped him.

The next night the old man tried again to get up, but again fell backward. He began to cry. Doug, weak himself, went over, picked him up, and carried him to the bathroom and back to his bed.

What a change came over that hospital ward! One patient gave Doug a steaming cup of Indian tea, motioning that he wanted a tract. Nurses, interns, and doctors asked for booklets or gospels of John. And several eventually received Christ.

What changed their attitude? Doug had exemplified the Savior, who "made Himself of no reputation" but took "the form of a bondservant" and "humbled Himself" (Phil. 2:7, 8).

We are called to do the same. Sometimes loving is unpleasant, but that's when it speaks the loudest. --D J De Haan

Add to your believing, deeds that prove it true--  
Knowing Christ as Savior, make Him Master too;  
Follow in His footsteps, go where He has trod,  
In the world's great trouble, risk yourself for God. --Leech

Love without action is not love.

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## **CONCLUSIONS:**

The key to harmonious relationships is not to esteem self, assert self, or stand up for self. It is, rather, to put self to death and to regard others more highly than myself for Jesus' sake. If we would apply this to our homes and church, we would experience much more harmony and much less conflict. It's a painful cure; but it's the only cure given by God's Word of truth.