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Yield



QUESTION 1:

When have you really wanted to be first in line?

THE POINT

Humbly place the needs of others before your own.

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

I get amused when I see a news story about people who camp out overnight to be one of the first to purchase the latest phone, tablet, or gadget. On the other hand, I am saddened when I see reports of people pushing, shoving, and even punching to be the first in the store for the black Friday sales during Thanksgiving weekend.

We don't always want to be first though.

- ▶ The four-year-old will gladly let his sister go first when lining up for shots.
- ▶ The adventurer will step back and let someone else volunteer for the boring assignment.

These examples share one thing, whether it's to be the first in line or the last: selfishness. It's about what I want . . . or what I want to avoid. A desire for something is not necessarily wrong, but when I push to get it at the expense of others, I have placed myself first and damaged my relationships.

In this session, we learn of a better way. Paul contended that we are called to be first in line for one thing: looking out for others. And when we do that, we get the benefit of strong relationships.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4

¹ If then there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. ⁴ Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Paul challenged the church at Philippi to strive for a new level of maturity in relationships. He encouraged believers to “make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose” (v. 2). Live in harmony! Unity among His people pleases God (Ps. 133:1), just as a well-rehearsed song becomes “music to our ears.” If your church is like most, the members will not agree on every single line item in the annual budget, but you can agree to stay together, work together, pray together, and serve together. You can choose to push your differences aside and interact with each other with “affection and mercy.”

Paul’s emphasis on unity and oneness with Christ feels warm and inviting, and in verses 3-4 he spelled out the challenging realities of

how believers are to maintain that love and unity. He stated this truth in both negative and positive terms. Negatively, he instructed, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit” (v. 3) and don’t look out only for our own interests. On the positive side, Paul counseled believers to practice humility, “consider others as more important than yourselves,” and “look out . . . for the interests of others.”

QUESTION 2:

What circumstances in life tempt you to ignore the instructions in these verses?

This is not an invitation to be a doormat and let others walk all over you! Paul was not suggesting that you ignore your own needs or stifle your own interests. It's good to tend to whatever you're responsible for in your life, but don't do it at the expense of others. Work to help and meet the needs of others just as you work to meet your own needs. Jesus said the second greatest commandment was to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39)—not instead of yourself. Still, we shouldn't consider our interests as more important than those of others.

Do you "look out" for others . . . or do you mainly "look out" for yourself? If you are like me, you probably have no trouble at all thinking about your own desires—what you want. Most of us don't need alarms on our phones to remind us to eat, sleep, or play. We serve ourselves without thinking. However, we do need frequent promptings to keep our minds focused on others. Paul offered that prompt here, urging his Philippian friends—and us—to make the needs of other people a major focus of our lives.

PHILIPPIANS 2:5

⁵ Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus.

Watching someone else perform a task may be the best way to learn. It's not surprising that demonstration videos on YouTube® have multiplied exponentially. Wouldn't you rather learn by observation rather than reading an instruction manual?

Paul challenged believers to observe Jesus to learn what humility looks like. We are to follow His example. Christ provided a perfect sacrifice for our sins, and He offers a perfect model for navigating our way through personal relationships. It all comes down to attitude: "Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus."

Jesus is the quintessential example for us. Verses 6-11 show us how Jesus perfectly demonstrated humility and provided us the ultimate service: He died for us to bring us to God. "He emptied himself." Jesus is completely God, but He humbly emptied Himself of the glory and privileges that are rightfully His.

We've all met someone who was "full of himself." You may have fit that description a time or two yourself. When a person is full of himself, he leaves no room for others. His opinions are the cleverest and his experiences are the richest. He tries to fill the

room with his own self-importance. Jesus' attitude calls us to empty our egos and put others first. This is the essence of submission.

Jesus taught humility in His parables as well. In Luke 14:7-14, Jesus used a parable of a wedding banquet to challenge His followers to humbly select the worst seat in the house. Leave the coveted seat for someone else and consider yourself unworthy of such honor. "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:11).

Don't buy into the lie that greatness comes only when an ever-growing number of people know your name, follow you on Twitter®, or place you at the head of their table. Kill this attitude before it kills your connection with others.

QUESTION 3:

How do we balance our responsibility to ourselves and to others?

PHILIPPIANS 2:13-15

¹³ For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose. ¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling and arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world.

"Do everything without grumbling and arguing" (v. 14).

C'mon, Paul. You surely don't expect me to stand in line for over an hour without griping! We can't truly accept our circumstances without raging against those responsible—



can we? Yes, we can. Jesus did it . . . and He expects us to follow His example. By the power of His Spirit, we can live without grumbling and arguing—or griping and raging. It means you must make the choice to remove all whining from your world.

QUESTION 4:

How have you seen relationships strengthened through acts of humility?

Jonathan Edwards was a pastor who had a prolific writing career. He became world famous for his role in the First Great Awakening in the 1730s-40s. His life was busy and full, yet like nearly all of us, he experienced great heartache along the way. After twenty-three years of serving his church, his flock fired him, sending him and his family out on the streets. While he was in the midst of being fired, badgered, and backstabbed, the people of the town paid close attention to his demeanor. As they observed his behavior, one man said:

“I never saw the least symptoms of displeasure in his countenance the whole week, but he appeared like a man of God, whose happiness was out of the reach of his enemies . . .”¹

Edwards had found what Paul had found: a joy that soars above the ups-and-downs of life. Like an airplane that flies above the turbulence, we can fly above our stormy

circumstances. Our joy can be placed beyond the reach of our enemies.

Paul was showing us how to “shine like stars in the world” (v. 15). The world is brimming over with whiners, haters, critics, and cynics. Be the breath of fresh air our culture is so desperately longing for. How? By being convinced that God is up to something great in your life! I’m not talking about having a blind optimism, but rather living in the reality of what God is doing. “For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose” (v. 13).

When you start taking Paul’s words seriously, your relationships will be affected.

- ▶ When you take the focus off yourself and your circumstances . . .
- ▶ When you look for ways to humbly serve others . . .
- ▶ When you stop complaining and start loving others through service . . .
- ▶ When you take on the same attitude as Christ . . .

. . . all your relationships will be affected. And those same people will discover you have stumbled upon a treasure they desperately long to find: inner peace and fixed joy.

QUESTION 5:

How can our group serve as a safe place for honest conversation?

LEARNING TO YIELD

In the following arenas of your life, how can you act without grumbling or arguing? (choose 3) Jot down some ways of responding that would be so countercultural that you would certainly shine like a star.

while driving hanging at a sports event functioning in your home
choosing what you wear choosing entertainment options
speaking to others spending money working at the office

*“Humility is nothing but the disappearance
of self in the vision that God is all.”*

ANDREW MURRAY

