

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Philippians: A Choice to Rejoice

Lesson 5: United by God's Spirit

Bible Text
Philippians 2:1-4

Memory Verse

"Nothing should be done because of pride or thinking about yourself. Think of other people as more important than yourself." (Philippians 2:3)

Word List

conflicts: strong disagreements between people or groups that often result in angry arguments

humble: not proud; not thinking of yourself as better than other people

united: working together to achieve the same purpose or goal

pandemic: an event in which a disease spreads very quickly and affects a large number of people over a wide area or throughout the world

My children are growing up in a large family. My husband and I have six children. There are three boys and three girls in our family. There are many blessings that come from living in a large family. The children always have someone to play with. There is a sense of belonging that comes from being part

of a large group. A large family can provide a large support system. There are many people in our home to share the workload. We make a whole cheering section whenever the kids play sports or perform on stage. We have made many good memories together.

But living in a large family is not always easy. All eight of us are different. Sometimes we want different things. We do not always agree. Living in a large family means there are many chances for **conflicts**. For example, it can be difficult to get everyone to agree on a restaurant. It can be hard for us to find a movie that everyone will enjoy. It can be a challenge for everyone to follow the same schedule. It is not always easy for family members to show kindness and patience to each other. These are the kinds of conflict we face every day in our family.

In a large family, not every person can have what they want all the time. Family members often have to sacrifice what they want for the sake of the family group. This might mean sacrificing time or money. This might mean sacrificing something they want or need. It takes a lot of work for any family to stay **united**.

God's church is like a family. Families are a beautiful blessing. That does not mean that living in a family is always easy. Paul

understood this when he wrote to the church in Philippi. He knew it was important for the church to be united. And he offered wise advice to the Philippians about staying united through God's Spirit.

God Unites His Church (Philippians 2:1-2)

1 Are you strong because you belong to Christ? Does His love comfort you? Do you have joy by being as one in sharing the Holy Spirit? Do you have loving-kindness and pity for each other?

2 Then give me true joy by thinking the same thoughts. Keep having the same love. Be as one in thoughts and actions.

Paul started the church in Philippi with a small group of people in Lydia's home (Acts 16:40). He wrote this letter to the Philippian church about ten years later. The church was small when it first started. By the time Paul wrote this letter, it had grown. The church was bigger now. And the church faced new problems as it grew. In the first chapter of Philippians, Paul gave some important advice to this growing church. He said the Philippians should:

- work together as one to preach the Good News (Philippians 1:27).

- not be afraid of those who hate them (Philippians 1:28).
- trust God and be willing to suffer for Him (Philippians 1:30).

Paul asked the Philippians some important questions. These questions could only be answered with a *yes* or a *no*. Paul knew how the Philippians would answer these questions. He knew that the answer was a strong *yes*. He asked these questions to remind the Philippians about some important things they already knew:

- Christ made them strong and comforted them.
- God's Holy Spirit brought them joy.
- God wanted them to show kindness to each other.

These were things they did not argue about. These were things they all knew were true. These were important things that would keep them together.

Yes, these truths would keep the Philippian church united. These truths would help them to keep "thinking the same thoughts" and "having the same love" for each other (v. 2). Paul reminded them that God's church should "be as one in [their] thoughts and actions" (v. 2). The church is the family of God. Paul knew that the church could only stay together if it focused on God.

The people of God are members of His family, the church. People often want to do their own thing and go their own way. They often want to please themselves. When that happens in the church, God's family cannot stay together. When that happens, the church cannot stay strong. But God never changes. He is strong and steady. When God's church stays focused on Him, they stay strong together. God wants His church to act and think like He does. Then God's church will be united.

Being Humble Brings Unity (Philippians 2:3-4)

3 Nothing should be done because of pride or thinking about yourself. Think of other people as more important than yourself.

4 Do not always be thinking about your own plans only. Be happy to know what other people are doing.

Things to Think About

1. How is God's church like a family?
2. What do you think are some of the biggest challenges to unity in the church?
3. Have you ever known a person who showed true humility? Tell the class about that person
4. Have you ever known a deeply prideful person? Describe how you experienced this person.
5. What are some needs in your community that local churches could unite to meet?

What does it mean to be **humble**? Paul answered this question clearly. Being humble means that "nothing should be done because of pride or thinking about yourself" (v. 4). Pride makes a person focus only on himself or herself. Pride causes people to make their own needs more important than the needs of others. Pride makes people think they are better than other people. Pride takes the focus off God. Pride makes people place the focus on themselves. Sadly, pride keeps God's church from having unity.

People who focus only on themselves find it hard to get along with others. They fight for what they want. They argue when someone disagrees. They may even hurt others just to get their own way. Pride often causes division and pain. These things are not part of God's character. These things do not show the world what God is truly like. Paul knew these are not the things God wants for His church.

Even more, Paul knew that pride never brings joy. He knew that focusing on "other people" is the only way to really "be happy" (v. 4). Those who focus only on themselves are often the most unhappy people you will ever meet. A life of pride is not a life that honors God. When God's people live humble lives, they experience both unity and joy.

Things to Remember

Paul gave strong reminders and wise advice to the church in Philippi. His advice made the church strong. His advice helped the church minister to others. A humble church is a healthy church. A humble church has a better chance to see and meet the needs of others. Without unity, the church cannot reach the world. Without being humble, the church cannot have unity. Paul understood this was God's will for His church.

As this lesson is being written, there is a worldwide **pandemic** happening. Businesses have closed. Schools have closed. Events are cancelled. Laws are changing. Nothing seems safe or secure. People are sick. People are hurting. People are afraid. People are alone. People are in need.

Paul's advice to the Philippians is important for the church today. God wants to use His church to meet the needs of the world. Now is the time for God's people to be united. It is not the time for God's people to focus only on themselves. It is not the time to be selfish. It is time to be generous. It is time to meet the needs of others in the name of Jesus. May God strengthen and unite His church around the world through the power of His Holy Spirit!

Philippians 2:1-4

- 1 Are you strong because you belong to Christ? Does His love comfort you? Do you have joy by being as one in sharing the Holy Spirit? Do you have loving-kindness and pity for each other?**
- 2 Then give me true joy by thinking the same thoughts. Keep having the same love. Be as one in thoughts and actions.**
- 3 Nothing should be done because of pride or thinking about yourself. Think of other people as more important than yourself.**
- 4 Do not always be thinking about your own plans only. Be happy to know what other people are doing.**