

## **Digging Deeper**

February 4

Philippians 2:1-4

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**Intro:** This week read Philippians 2:1-4 each day. Allow God to impress upon your heart what Paul was saying would make his joy complete. Ask yourself this important question, “Am I willing or even interested in bringing joy to anyone else? And if so, what do I need to do?”

### **DAY ONE: What’s in a word? Philippians 2:1**

As you read the passage did you notice there are several small words in this passage? Let me list them: *so*, *if* and *any*. *So* is a conjunction, *if* is a conditional conjunction, *any* is an adjective without specification of whom is performing the action.

This passage starts with the conjunction *so*. Whenever you see such a word is referring back to what came just before its use. What was that use? Living a life that was worthy of the gospel of Christ (see Philippians 1:27). If you missed Pastor Jim’s sermon January 28 on Philippians 1:27-30, go to MACC’s website and watch the message. Just a reminder, the points were 1) Stand firm in the One Spirit; 2) Strive side by side for the faith of the Gospel; 3) Do not be frightened in anything; and 4) suffer without shame.

After this Paul goes onto his important list: comfort from love, participation in the Spirit, affection and sympathy. This is a list of actions Paul sensed was made available to him from other believers. We need to learn from Paul’s experience. Remember he was in prison and what do prisoners need? Comfort, being in unity with the prisoner, affection that is given and a genuine sympathy for the prisoner. See Matthew 25:35-40 as Christ reminds us of what we should be doing towards not only the prisoner but also the hungry, the thirsty and the stranger. Christ was talking about how we respond to others. Paul reminds us of the way the “any” ministered to him.

The big question for us today is “How well are we ministering to others around us, especially those who are in great need?” What does our action say about our faith, or more pointedly, about our Savior? As you pray today ask God to point out that person or family that needs the comfort your love can provide. Ask God who needs your affection and your sympathy. Then find a way to do something about it!

### **DAY TWO: Complete the joy Philippians 2:2 and 3**

“Make my joy complete” (NIV Philippians 2:1) Do you remember the saying you heard in Sunday School when you were a child about joy? Jesus, others and you is the pathway to joy. That is precisely what Paul is saying here in this short passage. By meeting the needs of the prisoner, Paul, his joy could be made complete.

How does that happen? By the believers “being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.” Do you catch the focus? It is a focus on others and not ourselves.

We do live in a world where we are constantly being bombarded by advertising and social media to fulfill our own interests or desires. When we succumb to this blitz, we are unable to really focus on the needs of others. While there is nothing wrong with meeting our needs, all too often our needs become the focus of our lives leaving little room for meeting the needs of others.

Jesus gave us an impetus to meeting the needs of others. Read Matthew 22:39. Do you see what that impetus is? Not giving anything away here, (you need to really read the verse) ask yourself who is it that you need to bring joy to?

OK, if that isn't enough, go to John 15:12 and see what Jesus instructs his followers to do. Can you begin to imagine how obeying would change our world? Would there be more of an incentive for those who do not know Christ to want to know him?

Pray God opens the door for you today and this week to bring joy to those around you, both those of the faith and those without a faith!

### **Day Three: Unity and Purpose in the Church (Philippians 2:2)**

Read the passage for this week again today. As you read verse 2 note the concluding words "united in spirit, intent on one purpose" (NASB). Interestingly enough, the Greek literally says *united in spirit, intent on one*. The translators added the word *purpose*. Can you imagine why they would do that? One possible reason is when the church is united it moves in one direction. In other words, the whole church has one *purpose*!

This would undoubtedly bring joy to the greatest evangelist of the early church, Paul! Later in this same book he would tell us of his purpose. Read Philippians 3:8-11. The first words of that passage give Paul's purpose for life, "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things."

Nothing could bring greater joy to Paul than to see those whom he dearly loved united in spirit and intent on one thing – reaching others with the good news of the gospel! This was the heart of the early church leader – unity. Read Peter's remarkably similar words in 1 Peter 3:8 – 9. "Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing."

Let's be honest with ourselves. For the church to impact our community there will have to be unity of spirit and purpose. That implies a need for the church to continually allow the Spirit of God to work in our hearts and lives. Satan wants to divide believers from one another. We can't allow that to happen.

Warren Wiersby in his commentary on Philippians wrote, "Paul knew what some church workers today do not know, that there is a difference between *unity* and *uniformity*. True spiritual unity comes from within; it is a matter of the heart. Uniformity is the result of pressure from without."

Today as you pray, ask God to point out to you the things that can cause division. As God reveals those things to you, purpose in your heart to correct them. Let Psalm 133:1 be a motivation to you. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

### **Day Four: A Call to Humility Philippians 2:3 - 4**

Read our passage for the week once again. As you read ask God to open his word in your heart, mind and soul.

"For those who would learn God's ways, humility is the first thing, humility is the second, humility is the third." (Augustine of Hippo) It sounds like Augustine sensed humility was necessary to discover God's way!

What gets in the way of humility? Pride, selfishness, conceit, self-centeredness, and the list goes on. Humility is like a garment. A. W. Tozer wrote, "Because Christ Jesus came to the world clothed in humility, he will always be found among those who are clothed with humility. He will be found among the humble people."

A major dose of grace is needed for God's people to maintain an attitude of humility. Paul as he writes Romans reminds us, "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned." (ESV Romans 12:3)

Notice Paul says the grace given to him he instructs us to exercise sober judgement of ourselves *according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.* Grace and faith are key components of humility. Humility is not a decision or a trait or a habit. It is the product of God working within us as we live out our faith.

Today will you take on a dangerous request? Will you dare to ask God to create within you a humble spirit? If you take on this task there will be significant revelations to you in your walk with Christ. It will affect your home, work and church life. Your community will eventually notice and might even question it. If they do the door is open to you to share your faith and expose God's grace to them.

#### **Day Five: Where is Your Interest? Philippians 2:4**

Once again read the passage for this week. As you read verse 4 begin to focus on what are your interests? One way to discover your interests is to evaluate what you spend your time doing, especially your "free time".

It is interesting and quite revealing, Paul does not tell you not to think of your own interests, but he reminds us to look to the interests of others. For that to happen we are going to have to observe what the interests of others may be. The Message puts it this way, "Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand."

Once again in just these few verses we are reminded to be thinking and helping others. Do you catch Paul's vision of what the Gospel does to believers? It makes them conscious of others! When Paul wrote to the Galatians he put it this way, "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." (ESV Galatians 6:10)

Warren Wiersby wrote, "It is easy to make excuses when we ought to be making opportunities." Opportunity knocks more often than we probably can imagine. Opportunities to encourage, to help others, to pray with others, to share our faith with others. We simply have to look for the opportunities recognizing that God often is arranging them!

Challenge for today and for the future – Look for the opportunities to do good that God is placing before you. And then remember the Nike slogan "Just do it!" (trademarked slogan from Nike Shoe Company)

