

STUDY 2. NOTES FOR LEADERS.

The passage that forms most of our study (Philippians 2:1-11) is one of the “purple” passages in the scriptures. In later studies we will deal with the aspect of Christology but our focus for this week is on relationships within the church. Last week we featured the excellent relationship that Paul enjoyed with the church (partnership) and how it featured as one of the great churches of the New Testament. However, the fact that they are being urged to “rejoice”, or settle differences, and work without complaining suggest that there may have been some relationship problems. There are also some hints about rivalry and troublemakers (1:15-17). All was not well!

1. Name a person to whom you relate really well. What is it about them that forms the basis of your friendship?
2. **Read Philippians 1:15-18, 2:1-5, 14-15, 4:2-3.**
 - a. What do these verses have in common?
 - b. What do they tell us about the Philippian Church?

Even though it is renowned as a positive church there are a few “storm clouds” on the horizon. Some of the problems alluded to in these verses may be external, such as the preachers who were giving Paul a hard time, but most are internal tensions and strains that are being addressed. Paul does not want the church’s unity to be under threat.

3. **Read Philippians 2:1-5**
Paul argues for unity. What is the starting and finishing point of his argument for unity within the church?

Note how Paul starts with the fact that they had experienced the encouragement of Christ, the love of Christ and Holy Spirit inspired fellowship. He finishes with the example of Christ (and then goes on with the wonderful hymn about Christ that we will study more fully in a few weeks’ time). Unity is to be based on the experience and example of Christ.

4.
 - a. Paul asks that the church be of “one mind.” Is he asking for the impossible?
 - b. Think of our church where the people have different age groups and different backgrounds. Could we possibly be of “one mind”?

It is argued that Paul is looking for “one direction” rather than unanimity of thought.

5. Think about your family situation.
 - a. Would it be easy to be of “one mind”? Consider the differences related to gender, age groups, stepfamilies, single parent families. What struggles do you have with this concept of being of “one mind”?
 - b. Is it impossible to relate this concept to families?
6. **Note verses 3-4.**
 - a. Do these verses present an impossible standard? (Don’t people who give themselves in service to others become door mats! Aren’t those who try to please everyone eventually bound to fail?)
 - b. Do you know anyone who has come close to the qualities presented in verse 3?

7. In verse 3 Paul encourages “humility.” Discuss what you think that word means. (Isn’t humility the enemy of healthy self esteem? Is it true to say that others are better than us? Isn’t that putting ourselves down?)

Humility is the willingness to serve others and is based on healthy self esteem. It not to be equated with false modesty or the “trying to please everybody” syndrome. In fact, some research suggests that those who have developed the gift of empathy and act on it improve their own sense of well being. Paul understands that while we may be better than others, he is asking us to act in a way that recognizes that others have abilities and feelings as well.

8. **Read Philippians 2:14**

- a. Why was it necessary for Paul to say this?
- b. What does it tell us about human nature?
- c. Why is it that some people end up in more conflict than others?
- d. Are you one of those people?

9. **See Philippians 4:1-3**

What do you think may have been the problem with these two women?

Paul is distressed about their conflict as it seems as if they were well known to him. They could have been leaders of the church and their fall out might have had the potential to damage the church.

10. **See Philippians 4:4, 8**

What do these verses have to do with relationships?

To rejoice is to maintain a consistent and positive awareness of the presence of God in all circumstances. People who can do that make relating much easier. The way we think, meditate and see the world impacts the way that we relate to others.

11. **See Philippians 2: 5-8**

- a. What does this passage tell us about the example of Christ?
- b. What are the key words in this passage?
- c. What aspect is the greatest challenge to you personally?