

STUDY 3. NOTES FOR LEADERS. CHRIST THE LORD.

As mentioned last week, Philippians 2:5-6 is regarded as one of the “purple passages” of the New Testament. Some commentators feel that Paul here is quoting a Christian hymn that he or somebody else might have written. Poetry of the time normally featured “doublets” where a thought is reinforced in the next line.

*E.g.: “Did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,
And being found in human form he humbled himself.”*

This magnificent hymn reflects a high view of Christ but also fits in perfectly with Paul’s argument that Christ stands as a model for human relationships and the need for humility. You will hear in the sermon a question as to whether Paul simply means in verse 5 that Christ is a model or whether this is an encouragement for the readers to be “immersed” in the mind and thought of Jesus.

1. Have you ever bought some equipment that you have had to put together yourself? What did you find the most helpful? Reading the directions? Using the diagram on the box? Finding someone who is better at reading directions than you? Getting someone who has done it before to help?
2. **Read Philippians 2:5-11**
 - a. In last week’s reading Paul told us to look out for each other, to put other people first, and to be of “one mind.” Be honest! Do you find that easy to do?
 - b. Last week we said that Christ was to be an example of relationships (verse 5). Can you see in this week’s passage a verse where Christ:
 - i. Did not mind being “demoted?”
 - ii. Was “demoted” to the lowest level?
 - iii. Where the “demotion” caused pain?
 - c. Have you ever gone through a process where you have been “demoted?” What happened? What was it like?

The purpose of these questions is to get the group to consider verses 6-9.

3. **See Mark 3:1-6, 20-22, 6:1-6**
 - a. What do you think the human reaction of Christ may have been to these situations?
 - b. How do you cope with rejection? What is the most powerful rejection that you have experienced? How did you cope?

These passages are a few examples of the many times that Jesus could have been “hurt” by the rejection and misunderstanding. The group leader may make the point that the pain of the incarnation was not only felt at the cross.

4. Paul is asking us to follow the example of Christ. What has he asked us to do so far?

Paul is explaining in this passage that becoming a slave, becoming part of our world involved pain that also included the cross. Humility, seeing the needs of others, putting self second, might involve pain and rejection. Christ went the path of deliberate demotion.

5. **React to the following statement:** “Hang on. This passage is asking me to become a door mat. If I took this seriously people would walk all over me and I would be used for their purposes. This is not good advice.”
- Have you ever become a door mat and been “used”? Does resentment burn you up in circumstances like that? Does that sometimes happen within your family?
 - Do you think this is what Paul is suggesting?

Jesus didn't allow himself to become a door mat. He spelt out boundaries. At times the best way to serve people is to help them take responsibilities for their situation. You might like the group to reconsider Mark 3:5 where Jesus asks the man to stretch out his hand before healing occurs. His way of helping them was to help them to help themselves. See also Mark 2:11, Mark 5:19, John 5:8.

6. **Read Philippians 2:9-11**

- What is your favorite part of this magnificent passage?
- After describing the demotion of Jesus, why do you think Paul gives us such powerful teaching about Jesus?

*The whole hymn is a statement of contrasts. The pre-existent Christ is in the **form** of God, then takes the **form** of a slave and then is **exalted** back to his former glory.*

7. What is the significance of the title “LORD” for Jesus? Why was it treasured by the early Church?

See the sermon where it is explained that the title would have a slightly different significance for Jews, Greeks, slaves and Romans.

8. The sermon mentions that the term, “At the name of Jesus,” could be translated, “In the name of Jesus”. What difference do you think that makes?

It is not only hearing the name of Jesus that could cause people to bow to Jesus, but it is also in the power of Jesus that people will come to acknowledge that Christ is Lord.

9. **See verse 5.** “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.”
- What does this mean to you?
 - Is Paul simply saying that Jesus is a good example of how we are meant to be humble and think of others, or do you think he has something more in mind?
 - Do you ever stop and think about whether your behaviour has been Christlike?

Tease this one out of the group. A paraphrase could be, “Immerse yourself in the mind of Christ,” or “Be permeated with the way that Christ was thinking.” This is about the Holy Spirit! It is not just a model or a diagram! Refer the group back to the assembling furniture etc question. It is not just reading the directions but having somebody alongside to help you.

10. **Reconsider the whole passage (2:1-11).**

In what ways does this passage inspire you to:

- Pray for yourself?
- Thank God for others?
- Praise God?