

Connect360: The Great Example

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- *Lesson 6 in the BaptistWay Press Connect360 unit “Pure Joy” focuses on Philippians 2:5-11.*

In chapter 2:1-4, we saw the Apostle Paul’s heartfelt encouragement for the Philippian believers caught in the fray of discouragement and conflict. Surprisingly, when we turn the page to see Paul complete his thoughts, we find a song. Paul wants the church to have the mind of Christ in their midst (2:5). The opening verse stands as the introduction to a song known as the “Kenosis Hymn” (hymn of emptying). Amazingly, a song will give us all we need in the heat of the battle. However, it is a song about the most critical moments of Jesus’ passion on Earth. This song gives the Philippian church the tools required to live in unity.

The task laid out in verse one of chapter two requires that believers redefine their outlook regarding the very definition of a “good” life. Paul is on a mission to redefine the Christian mind and, consequently, the Philippians’ outlook on life and purpose. He first commands the Philippians to have Christ’s mindset saturate their attitudes (2:5). This mental reprogramming is easier said than done. The Philippian church members found unity and humility difficult to practice on a daily basis. We can relate to that in our churches today. Centuries upon centuries have passed since Paul penned this letter to the Philippian church, and a wealth of good information is available to assist us in our walks and discipleship, yet we continue to find divisions and narcissism nearly inescapable, even among believers. Thank God, Paul provides a clear answer—a remedy for the human mind.

The Philippian believers are commanded to let the mindset of Christ rule their attitudes. Paul wrote, “Have this mind among yourselves, which is

yours in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). This “same mind” does not refer solely to intellectual uniformity in the matters of doctrine. The phrase “same mind” further refers to believers’ daily attitudes and absolute loyalty to Christ’s goals for life and community. Hence, the life of Christ has huge impact on believers’ lives and thinking. Mental redefinition is ours because of the ongoing reverberations of the example of Christ’s life and teachings while he walked this Earth. Jesus exemplified what a close walk with the Father entailed amidst the pressures of daily living.

The Son of God opted for servanthood

Before the weary eyes and ears of the divided Philippian church members, Paul unveils the inner workings of the life of Jesus: Christ emptied himself— he chose not to grasp his divine persona and position as something to enjoy and exploit (2:6-7). Instead, Christ chose the Father’s plan. He emptied out that which could bring glory to himself (2:6-7). This was the crux of the Philippians’ divisions and most of our conflicts today—each person feeling entitled to what brings satisfaction.

Philippians 2 drips with irony, for the Son of God, who is equal with God and entitled to all the glory due to him, lays that right aside and instead opts for servanthood (2:7). When the Son of God walked and ministered daily on Earth, he constantly considered others’ needs above his own. Note Paul’s own testimony, “. . . remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The Holy Spirit used this irony that Jesus emptied himself and was meant to spur on the Philippian believers and us who read the letter today jolting us into an attitude revolution. It should lead to an emptying out that results in fullness; a weakening that leads to wholeness; and a demotion (to servant) that leads to true purpose in life.

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