

DEALING WITH MESSY RELATIONSHIPS

Yield // Philippians 2:1-5,13-15

THE POINT: Humbly place the needs of others before your own.

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Whether we want to be first in line or last, it's a matter of selfishness. It's about what I want or what I want to avoid. A desire for something is not necessarily wrong, but when I pursue it at the expense of others, I have placed myself above others, and this does damage to relationships. In the Book of Philippians, we learn of a better way. Paul calls us to be first in line for one thing—looking out for the needs of others. When we do this, we experience the great benefits of strong relationships.

- ▶ **When have you really wanted to be first in line?**

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4

Paul challenged the church at Philippi to strive for a new level of maturity in relationships. Unity among His people pleases God (Ps. 133:1). Unity involves a commitment to one another and agreeing to stay together and serve together. We can choose to push differences aside and interact with each other with affection and mercy. In emphasizing the unity we're to pursue in the church, Paul spelled out the challenging realities we will face. Many times we're tempted to think only of ourselves and at the expense of others. But Jesus set a different example, and we're to work to meet others' needs just as we work to meet our own. Most of us have no trouble at all thinking about our own desires—what we want. We serve ourselves without even thinking about it. However, serving others requires that we be intentional, and Paul calls us to make the needs of others a major focus of our lives.

- ▶ **When have you benefited from someone who looked out for your interests?**
 - ▶ **How do we balance our responsibility to ourselves and to others?**
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PHILIPPIANS 2:5

Paul challenged believers to look to Jesus to learn how to live in humility. He provides the perfect model for navigating our way through personal relationships. It all comes down to adopting the same attitude as that of Jesus. Verses 6-11 show us how Jesus perfectly demonstrated humility in order to serve others. He gave His life to bring us to God—He emptied himself. Jesus is completely God, but He humbly gave up the glory and privileges that were rightfully His. Jesus' attitude calls us to empty our egos and put others first. Don't buy into the lie that greatness comes only when an ever-growing number of people know your name, follow you on social media, or place you at the head of their table. We must kill this attitude before it kills our connection with others.

- ▶ **How have you seen relationships strengthened through acts of humility?**
 - ▶ **When do you find it particularly difficult to have the same attitude as Jesus?**
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PHILIPPIANS 2:13-15

Do *everything* without complaining! Jesus did it, and He faced situations that were far more difficult and unfair than anything we'll experience. And He expects us to follow His example. Jesus was able to live this out because of the attitude that drove Him. His posture was one of humility before the Father, so He was happy to walk forward according to God's call on His life. Further, Jesus loved people completely, and His thoughts were continually set on serving others and not His own desires. By the power of His Spirit, we too can live without complaining and arguing.

- ▶ **What has helped you fight the urge to complain or argue?**
 - ▶ **How does your attitude affect your witness to the people in your life?**
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LIVE IT OUT

Unit 3 // Session 5

> CHRIST

When we feel like we're not as close to God as we'd like to be, it's often because our desires aren't aligned with His—we do the things we want instead of what He wants. But the Bible teaches that just as Jesus lived sacrificially for the good of others, we are to do the same. This is an expression of love for the people in our lives, as well as an expression of our desire to honor God.

> **How have you lived according to your own desires instead of living according to God's will?**

> **How has this affected your relationship with Him?**

> **This week, how will you put aside your own desires to demonstrate submission to God?**

Remember, the ultimate goal is not only to do what God wants, but to desire the same things God desires. Pray every day that God would help you to obey from the heart.

> COMMUNITY

> **When have you lived selfishly and it damaged your relationships with others?**

> **This week, how will you practice humility and place the needs of others before your own?**

For example: Think in terms of small things (do these regularly) and large things (these may be long-term or big-picture changes). Pray through how God would have you pursue these.

> CULTURE

Because we live in a selfish world, people naturally look out for their own interests and rarely put others' needs before their own.

> **How will you use the opportunity to answer the needs of a lost person as a way to share the gospel? Remember, Jesus served us as the ultimate sacrifice even when we were lost. Share this with your unbelieving friends.**