

SUNDAY

June 5, 2011

READ: Philippians 2

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: In chapter 1, the overall theme was finding joy in the midst of suffering. What is the major theme of chapter 2?

KEY CONCEPT: We are compelled in our relationship with Jesus to live a life of service to others. In this pursuit we will find joy.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Think back over your life to times when you were urged by outside influences (parent, teacher, etc.) to be of service to others. Perhaps it was a community service requirement for school, maybe a church mission trip that your parents took you on. What was your attitude toward serving before that experience vs. afterwards. How have those early “forced” volunteerism experiences created a desire within you to serve others truly voluntarily? Is there an understanding in your heart of serving Christ when you serve others? Can others see Jesus in you at those times?

PRAY: Ask God for new opportunities to serve others in the week ahead in a way that you have not done before. As He presents these to you, ask Him to help you shine the love of Christ in a way that helps others experience His love. Pray that God will give you opportunities to add words of personal witness to your faith as you are serving with your hands

MONDAY

June 6, 2011

READ: Philippians 2 (Focus: verses 1-2)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What is Paul saying in these first two verses of chapter 2? What is the purpose of an “If-then” statement such as Paul uses here?

KEY CONCEPT: Consider the manner in which God has blessed your life, and find ways to pass that blessing on to others in turn.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Think of the elements of verse one, and name specific examples of how you have experienced these in your own life: Encouragement. Comfort. Fellowship. Tenderness. Compassion. In each of the examples that you have recalled, do you see Jesus involved in any way? In what ways have you made it a point to find methods to pass any of these blessings on to others? Think of specific examples. Do you think others experienced Jesus through what you did with/for them?

PRAY: You’ve heard the phrase that we are “blessed to be a blessing.” If you have not given much thought about this concept before, ask God to help you identify specific opportunities that you will have in the coming days to pause and be a blessing to someone whom you will be with. As these occur, take a moment to thank God for answering your prayer and using you to make a difference in the life of someone else.

TUESDAY

June 7, 2011

READ: Philippians 2 (Focus: verses 3-4)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What aspect of our character is Paul addressing in these verses?

KEY CONCEPT: The Holy Spirit gives us the desire and ability to act in opposition to our selfish nature. The Lord desires us to be “others-focused” in our values as well as in what we do with our lives.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Note that Paul does not say we shouldn’t be taking care of our own interests. He says we ought to be looking out for the needs of others in addition to our own. Can you recall a specific time as a child or youth when you began to look outside of your own life to care for someone else’s needs? Paul talks about “selfish ambition” and “vain conceit”. What turns ambition from a good thing to a bad thing? Do you struggle with keeping your ambition in proper perspective? What can you do to prevent what Paul talks about from creeping into your heart (selfishness & vain conceit)? How do you nourish a spirit of humility in your heart?

PRAY: As you consider these verses, and pray for the needs of others, look up James 2: 14-17. Pray that the Lord will help you to be “God with skin on” for someone who has a need this week. Then keep your eyes peeled and ears open for an opportunity to add a component of works to your faith. Ask God to help you “die to yourself,” and to create in you a spirit of humility that will be the basis of your service.

WEDNESDAY

June 8, 2011

READ: Philippians 2 (Focus: verses 5-11)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: Paul starts this passage talking about our attitude. What is it in this reading that defines what our attitude ought to be?

KEY CONCEPT: We please God when we overcome our prideful heart, not tending our earthly markers of status, but rather allowing the fruit of the Spirit to guide our thoughts and actions (Galatians 5: 22-23)

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: As you read this example of what Jesus did (leaving His role as God and becoming a servant), what goes through your mind and heart? Are you encouraged in any way to use His example as a role model in your own life? What are the markers of status that you currently have (i.e. company president, deacon in your church, etc.)? Have you allowed these things to keep you from serving others as Jesus did? Jesus taught His disciples about humility by washing their feet. In what ways are you currently “washing the feet” of others?

PRAY: Humility is a squirrely thing...the moment you feel like you’ve got it nailed, you don’t have it! However, it is an aspect of our character that God wants to develop. If you struggle with a prideful heart, give this to God in prayer today. Ask him to break your pride and to give you a desire to serve Him out of a love for what He has done in your life. For additional insight, see Luke 18: 9-14.

THURSDAY

June 9, 2011

READ: Philippians 2 (Focus: verses 12-13)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What does Paul ask of the people in Philippi? What will be the power behind the scenes making this possible?

KEY CONCEPT: Paul calls us to obey God as Christ obeyed (see verse 2:8). God will empower you to obey Him as you submit yourself to Him.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: (Note: Paul is not saying in verse 12 that we should work for our salvation. Rather, he is saying that, in view of our salvation by the grace of God, we should conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ as we await His coming.*) Paul differentiates the church members being obedient while he is present and when he is away. Is it harder for you to be obedient when “the master is away” than when he is present? What does that say about the condition of your heart? Have you experienced what Paul tells us as being God’s role in our ability to live in a way worthy of the gospel?

PRAY: The heart often changes after an act of the will has been lived out. If you find it difficult to live a God-honoring life because the desire is not there to do so, live obediently anyway because you know it is the right thing to do. At the same time, pray that God will change your heart and that the Holy Spirit would give you a passion to live that life of obedience.

*Adapted from The NIV Application Commentary (Philippians). Frank Thielman. P. 138

FRIDAY

June 10, 2011

READ: Philippians 2 (Focus: verses 14-18)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: This passage comes right after Paul’s command to honor God with our lives (“work out your salvation...”). What examples of this does he elaborate on in these verses? As one lives in this way, what does Paul say is the outcome (“so that you...”? What does he mean when he says that you will “shine like stars in the universe”? What does Paul mean when he says he is being “poured out like a drink offering”? In spite of his circumstances, what does Paul say he does (and wants us to do)?

KEY CONCEPT: Doing life without complaining or arguing fosters the unity that God desires of His church (see verse 2:2). A life of moral purity, peacefulness, and patience...a transformed life...is an effective witness to the power of God in our lives and draws others to the Lord.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: We are all subject to emotions which, if unchecked, can boil over in heated arguments and bad behavior. Do you struggle with this on a regular basis? What are the side effects of those episodes (frayed or fragile relationships, disunity, lack of trust, etc.). Do you think about how other people process these episodes in light of your testimony as a Christ-follower? How can you better handle these emotions and live a more God-honoring life?

PRAY: If you struggle with high emotions leading to hurt-filled experiences, ask God to help you in this area of your life. If this is not an issue for you, recall that Jesus said “blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9). Perhaps He may want to use you to help others who are having difficulty with this. Pray that He would help you understand if you might have a role as a peacemaker in these kind of situations.

SATURDAY

June 11, 2011

READ: Philippians 2 (Focus: verses 19-30)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: Paul speaks about two people in these verses. Who are they? What is their significance to Paul and to the Philippians? What does Paul ask the church at Philippi to do (verse 29)? At almost what cost did Epaphroditus serve God (verse 30)? What are you willing to put at risk for God?

KEY CONCEPT: We need others to help us do all that God desires of us. Others need us for the same reason. It is good to have an understanding of inter-dependence with one another, serving alongside those who share a similar goal to further the gospel.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Who is in your life that adds to your ability to live for God? What shortcomings in you do their strengths compliment or help you to develop in yourself? Have you ever considered the idea of mentoring someone younger or less experienced in some way to help them move forward in their life in some fashion? What gifts, skills, and talents do you have that might be shared with others who need help with life? Would you consider serving as a mentor if God put this on your heart/mind?

PRAY: We can help others learn some of the “keys to life” if we are willing to give some time to be a friend to them. It could be a kind of big brother/sister, a mother/daughter or a father/son type of relationship. Consider praying that God would help you know if He has a role for you in a mentoring relationship somewhere. If you are younger, perhaps God would have you to be mentored by someone older than yourself. Listen for God’s direction...



Personal Devotional Guide - June 5 - 11, 2011
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