

[PHILIPPIANS]

AN UNCOMMON JOY

The Others

Philippians 2:1-11 (NIV) ¹ Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. ⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1. The goal is UNITY not CONFORMITY.

Romans 14:1-5 (MSG) **1 Welcome with open arms fellow believers who don't see things the way you do. And don't jump all over them every time they do or say something you don't agree with—even when it seems that they are strong on opinions but weak in the faith department. Remember, they have their own history to deal with. Treat them gently.** ²⁻⁴ For instance, a person who has been around for a while might well be convinced that he can eat anything on the table, while another, with a different background, might assume he should only be a vegetarian and eat accordingly. **But since both are guests at Christ's table, wouldn't it be terribly rude if they fell to criticizing what the other ate or didn't eat? God, after all, invited them both to the table. Do you have any business crossing people off the guest list or interfering with God's welcome? If there are corrections to be made or manners to be learned, God can handle that without your help.** ⁵ Or, say, one person thinks that some days should be set aside as holy and another thinks that each day is pretty much like any other. There are good reasons either way. So, each person is free to follow the convictions of conscience.

2. One of the most powerful things we can do is to SERVE and EMPOWER each other.

“The strange, the different, the unintelligible, the subjective aspect of my neighbor is the garment in which God's grace meets me.”

— Karl Barth

John 13:34-35 (NIV) ³⁴ “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Matthew 19:19b (NIV) Love your neighbor as yourself.

Malachi 3:5 (NIV) **“So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me,” says the Lord Almighty.**

3. You can use your gifts to build YOUR KINGDOM or to build GOD'S KINGDOM.

Mark 10:17-22 (MSG) ¹⁷ As he went out into the street, a man came running up, greeted him with great reverence, and asked, “Good Teacher, what must I do to get eternal life?” ¹⁸⁻¹⁹ Jesus said, “Why are you calling me good? No one is good, only God. You know the commandments: Don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't lie, don't cheat, honor your father and mother.” ²⁰ He said, “Teacher, I have—from my youth—kept them all!” ²¹ Jesus looked him hard in the eye—and loved him! He said, “There's one thing left: Go sell whatever you own and give it to the poor. All your wealth will then be heavenly wealth. And come follow me.” ²² The man's face clouded over. This was the last thing he expected to hear, and he walked off with a heavy heart. He was holding on tight to a lot of things, and not about to let go.

Luke 12:48 (NLT) But someone who does not know, and then does something wrong, will be punished only lightly. When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.

1 Peter 4:10 (TLB) God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other, passing on to others God's many kinds of blessings.

Life Groups

Scriptures that Relate:

Monday: Matthew 20:1-16 Wednesday: Romans 12:1-8 Friday: Luke 21:1-4
Tuesday: Matthew 25:14-30 Thursday: Romans 12:9-21 Saturday: 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

Talk it Over:

1. Where do you think Paul would see “selfish ambition and vain conceit” in our culture? In your own life?
2. What would you point to as evidence of God's generosity beyond material possessions?
3. For Paul, we are made in the image of a God whose Trinitarian love cannot contain itself. The result of this love is creation. How do you think Paul would react to the language that refers to people as consumers? Why?
4. What keeps you from pursuing relationship with people that aren't like you?