

Humble Patterns

Scripture Reading — Philippians 2:1-4

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.
— *Philippians 2:3*

Philippians is one of the warmest and friendliest of Paul's letters in the Bible. The church in Philippi seems to have been quite healthy and a source of joy for Paul. But it was not perfect. No church is. As we read along in Philippians, we see hints and whispers that Paul knows a few unhappy and unhealthy things about this congregation. There are some cracks in their unity, some struggles with pride.

In Philippians 2, Paul begins to address this. And he lays it on pretty thick. "If you are even remotely Christian," Paul says, in effect, "then make me even more joyful by embracing -humility."

Many theologians teach that humility is the core Christian virtue, the characteristic that makes us most like Jesus. Humility helps us realize that even though we all have gifts and talents to do many things, that does not make us better than anyone else. Instead, we try to see life as a level playing field on which each person does her or his part. And at the end of the day, we pay more attention to others than to ourselves. Let someone else compliment you for your work while you focus on building up others.

We all need each other. Each of us needs to be thankful for the next person. This is, as Paul explains next (in verses 5-8), the pattern established by Jesus—so this is the pattern to follow.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, grant us by your Holy Spirit a portion of your humility. Help us to serve all the people around us even as you served us. In your name we pray. Amen.

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