



Study of Philippians

*The house church at Philippi
and beyond
with the women who led there.*

*“Grace and peace to you from God our
Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Table 2

Philippians 2

Welcome to Table 2! I am humbled and honored to be partnering with you on a slow walk through a much loved letter from one of the greats of our faith. Some of you may wish we would pick up the pace. I know it's countercultural to slow down. As a people, we like to race through life bouncing from one thing to the next. I get it. My mind is always racing. For goodness sake, I think in my sleep! Taking this approach to study is a discipline. It's me using my rebellious streak to actually work something into me that is unnatural. Paul would approve! He would appreciate our effort to be still. Just think about Paul, he was a missionary. Going and doing was his thing! But he got sidelined a whole lot of the time. Thank God for Paul's prison times, because without them, he wouldn't have written all of these letters. Paul would have had no idea how his letters would be put together with the Torah and so forth to become the best selling book of all time. Paul's words/God's words are still traveling to the ends of the earth. Just think about that for a minute. **Your seasons that feel long and meaningless are not in vain.** If that's the only thought you get from this lesson/email, if this is the only paragraph you have time to read, hear me say: What you're going through and what you've lived through is not or has not been in vain.

His Word before my words: [Philippians 2](#)

Listen to “Humble Example” and “Untangling” both on [Apple](#) or [Spotify](#).

These two episodes with Kimberly and Twila are companion episodes.

Paul used the lack of unity in the Church and also the very real threat of persecution this little Church probably faced daily because of their existence in a Roman colony as the backdrop to write one of the greatest Christological passages in the New Testament.

Inside the Church there was conflict. Philippians 2:6-11 are glorious hope inspiring verses. I LOVE everything about Philippians 2. I am also challenged by every single word.

Not only were there threats from within but there were also threats to the Church from outside. It's not just what's happening inside the church but also what is happening outside the church that can be used to divide us. Kimberly and I talked about this in our conversation. Unity feels like a very far off unattainable goal. Is anyone else as desperate as I am to be in a like-minded community? To be in step with other's following Christ. Sometimes I feel like I'm suffocating in what is considered normal Christian culture. The more I've learned to breathe in the breath of God from the gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, the more a holy discontent has begun to pulse through my body. If what I'm saying resonates with you, listen closely. You are not the only one. Jesus sees us. When His mindset increasingly becomes our mindset, this is what happens.

Humility feels unnatural. Well, because it is going against the natural man.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interest of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ. (2:3-4)

When we obey these three verses, we are throwing off the yoke of our flesh and of Satan. We are untangling ourselves from our enemies. It's not easy.

- Putting others first is at the heart of a right relationship with God.

All rebellion against God corresponds with a disregard for others.

With the untangling comes an honest assessment of our truest self. (Ouch!)

We have to admit the following things.

- Our natural inclination is to choose our own way.
- We don't actually care for others. (I debated not using actually, because it's so hard to face this one.)
- Pride is our natural default setting.

Selfish ambition and vain conceit are the two things that led to Satan's downfall.

References: [Ezekiel 28:11-19](#), [Isaiah 14:12-14](#)

Satan wanted to “ascend above” and “I will make myself like the Most High.” This is in contrast to how Jesus responded in Philippians 2:6-8. The Most High God came down. He descended. This is what true greatness looks like. We know this is what true greatness is supposed to be like, but sometimes we forget. When we see true acts of humility in contrast to self exalting actions, we can see the difference, but only if we’re walking by the True Light and not some alternative man-made light. We are having an internal battle and we are in a spiritual battle.

- Reflect on these thoughts. Use the passage to walk through a careful inventory of what you’re feeling and thinking about.
- As we come into the Christmas season, this is a good place to start preparing our hearts for this joyous season.
- Try this out for a week. Ask everyday: Lord, show me how can I live for others?

Journal what the results are each day. Do you see a difference when you focus on others' needs rather than your needs? Describe the ways.

Philippians 2:12-18 is the practical Christianity that follows the mountain top revelation of Christ. Truth is supposed to lead to action. The bottom line is:

There is no point to the mountain top experience unless it is worked out in the valley.

- Think about a real example of how you have seen this unfold in another person and in yourself.
- What Biblical examples come to mind?

I'm not a fan of self-help Christianity. Friends, you can't learn the Christian life from a self-help book or an alternative gospel. The real Christian life is learned in the world.

We learn in the crooked places how to walk the narrow road.

I think Paul had the song of Moses from [Deuteronomy 32](#) in mind when he wrote Philippians 2:12-15. The song is a great read covering God's divine parenting of Israel. Israel had every advantage coming from nothing to becoming the apple of God's eye. As you read it, you will find yourself in the narrative. The outreach to Gentiles is all recorded in this chapter. A glimpse of God's plan past, present, and future is recorded in this chapter. This chapter

brought a lot of clarity to Paul about God's plan for the nation of Israel and for all the nations. I keep a running list of chapters in the Bible that are of utmost importance. Deuteronomy 32 has made my list. Think about what chapters in the Bible you would put on your list.

If "work out your salvation" is still a bit jarring to you, [Ephesians 2:1-10](#) provides great commentary on verses 12-13.

"Do everything **without** grumbling or arguing"...means we are to be in submission to God. Arguing is from a Greek word which we get our word dialogue from. This is the kind of internal dialogue that goes on within the secret places inside of us. Where we are inwardly grumbling or complaining about submitting to God. Remember this is the phrase from the Deuteronomy 32 that sounded the bells in my head to make the connections.

Something was off in the inward dialogue of the members of the Church at Philippi.

This had worked its way to the surface and was contributing to the conflict inside the Church. This ties to the next part, "so that you may be blameless and pure..."

What's on the inside will affect our ability to shine in a warped and crooked generation.

Personal reflection: Bring your internal dialogue to God Most High.

"Without fault" comes from the same word translated blameless in Ephesians 1:4.

This is real sanctification not that we live perfectly but rather we have an increasing awareness of how sinful we are. God knows us fully yet He chose us to become something that's completely impossible for us. The good news is God is spectacular at doing the impossible. He does things in us and through us that we cannot do for ourselves. Read: [Galatians 2:20](#), [Romans 8:3-4](#), [12:2](#) alongside Philippians 2:12-13.

These verses mean what we are incapable of doing God is capable of doing. God is capable of living out such a life when someone submits to His Spirit.

The big takeaway from these verses for me is to remove all my barriers between me and God. If there are barriers in our relationship with God, it's because we put them there. He has done everything on His end so that we have unhindered access to Him.

What practical changes can you make in how your relationship with God functions so that there are no barriers on your end? Ask God where you are internally grumbling instead of submitting.

Christians are to be the bright spots in this dark world. We represent those stars in the sky to which God brought Abraham out of the tent to see. We are children of God.

Genesis 15:5 *He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."*

Friends, this is our time and season to shine like stars as we hold firmly to the word of life. I know it's hard. But it's not impossible. Remember your seasons that feel long and meaningless are not in vain. Let's rejoice!