

LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY FIVE

The Hidden Secret of a Happy Life

Philippians 2:1–11

Let's start with a one-question quiz: "Can you name the most Christ-like attitude on earth?"

—Charles R. Swindoll

EARLY on in his letter to the Philippians, Paul stated his credo: "For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better" (Philippians 1:21).

Paul lived his post-conversion life with that credo guiding everything he did. As he wrote to the Christians at Philippi, he developed for them a theology of surrender fueled by one overarching, Christlike attitude: *humility*. We'll see that attitude literally in the flesh since Paul beautifully expounded the wondrous, albeit mysterious, incarnation of Jesus—God humbly "taking the form" of a servant to lead all of us to glory (2:7 NASB).



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Most Christians who've known Christ for even a few years know the uplifting portion of Paul's letter to the Philippians that encourages prayer in place of worry, making it heaven's antidote for an anxious spirit. Before you begin your study, ask yourself this question:

What is causing me to be anxious today that I've yet to give to the Lord in prayer?

Take all the time you need to bring your life, your family, your circumstances to God in prayer by listing out what is making you anxious, then bring those things to God in prayer. When you do so, with thanksgiving in your heart, He promises to replace your fears and anxious woes with a perfect peace to guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6–7).



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

If someone had asked the apostle Paul to explain the secret to Christlikeness in one word, he would've likely said *humility*. Jesus described Himself in such terms with an invitation: “Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart” (Matthew 11:29).

In other words, Jesus embodied humility, putting the needs of others before His own. What other examples of Jesus' life and ministry demonstrate His humility? See how many examples you can think of on your own and list them below.

How would you define *humility*?

To amplify the meaning of “lowliness of heart,” I think of such things as being generous with one’s time and possessions, one’s money and energy. Unselfishness means looking out for the other person rather than simply one’s own self. In a word: servanthood. —Chuck Swindoll



Observation: Paul’s Plea for Christlikeness—Philippians 2:1–4

According to the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we observe the text by looking for words or sections that are compared, contrasted, emphasized, repeated, or related. We look for central ideas. Paul appealed to the believers at Philippi to embrace the attitude of Christ, and he did so through a series of questions followed by corresponding exhortations.



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Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. (Philippians 2:1–4)

Unity Flows from a Christlike Attitude—Philippians 2:1–2

As Paul asked a series of questions, what did he list as benefits of belonging to Christ?

Fill in the following blanks based on Paul's words in Philippians 2:1.

1. Encouragement comes from _____ to Christ.
2. Comfort comes from Christ's _____.
3. Fellowship together resides in the _____.

Verses 1 and 2 express Paul's ideas in positive terms. Verses 3 and 4 express Paul's concern in negative terms signified by the repeated use of the word *don't*. What attitudes did Paul list as those that should not characterize Christians (Philippians 2:3–4)?



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How Unity Is Accomplished—Philippians 2:3–4

Paul not only exhorted the Philippian Christians to embrace the attitude of Christ, but he also showed how unity in Christ could be accomplished. He described three practical points to follow:

1. Never let selfishness or conceit motivate you.
2. Regard others as more important than yourself.
3. Don't limit your attention to only your interests, but include the interests of others.

In verses 3 and 4, what word or words did Paul repeat to emphasize his point?

In your own words, summarize the principles found in these two verses.



Interpretation: Christ's Life Before and After—Philippians 2:5–11

Interpretation is the step in your Bible study that answers the question, *What does the text mean?* Using your observations, you can begin to gain insight into what the original author, in this case Paul, intended to convey.

In this section, for instance, Paul revealed Christ's humble attitude by showing us His life before, during, and after His coming to earth.



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Prior to His Incarnation

To highlight Christ's lowliness of mind, Paul first revealed the height of glory the Savior enjoyed in heaven (*Philippians 2:5–6*).

What two phrases in verse 6 express the deity of Jesus?

Paul explained that Jesus, though God, willingly relinquished His hold on all things “deity” in order to become human.

How does Christ's willingness to relinquish His rightful privilege as God demonstrate His humility?

For some of you who have built a successful business but who are now growing older, you're realizing how hard it is to give up control. You think to yourself, “No one can run this like I can!” Nope, that's not true. Consider Jesus. He had control in His hands and willingly released it. He did not regard His position with the Father “a thing to be grasped.” We want to seize, to cling to, to hold on to. He let go of it all. —Chuck Swindoll

In His Coming

That incredible path, from heavenly sovereign to earthly victim crucified on a cross, is next portrayed in *Philippians 2:7–8*.



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Consider the downward steps Jesus made in leaving heaven and coming to earth:

He gave up His divine privileges . . .

He took the humble position of a slave . . .

He died a criminal's death on a cross . . .

How did Paul use the downward progression of Christ's coming to explain Christ's humility?

According to Paul, why was Christ willing to do this (Philippians 2:8)?

In his book *Laugh Again*, Chuck explained the meaning of Jesus emptying Himself:

To accomplish our salvation on a cross, Jesus first had to empty Himself. This does not mean that He gave up His deity; rather, it signifies that Christ set aside the independent use of His divine attributes and submitted Himself to the Father's will.¹

Since His Departure

The Father's will mandated that Jesus descend into the lowest depth of suffering for our sins. But once our debt was paid, God elevated His Son to a position of highest glory and honor!

*Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor
and gave him the name above all other names,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9–11)*



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What is the relationship, according to Paul, between Jesus' willingness to humble Himself and God exalting Him to the highest place?

How is obedience to God connected to humility?

What is significant about the response of all people to the exalted Jesus (Philippians 2:10–11)?



Correlation: The Disciple's Calling to Follow Jesus

Correlation compares different passages of Scripture to help interpret the passage in view. The gospel writers recorded the connection Jesus made between being His disciple and remaining humbly obedient to Him.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16:24)

How do Jesus' words in Matthew 16 compare to Paul's words in Philippians 2:5–11?



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In both passages, how does suffering relate to the attitude of humility which Paul emphasized?



Application: What about You and Me?

Application moves us from maintaining a mere intellectual understanding of a passage to allowing truth to penetrate our hearts. Obviously, what's in view is the attitude of our hearts.

The best response to this passage is to humble yourself before the Lord. And, like King David, ask the Lord to search your heart to determine if there is anything hindering you from submitting to Him—to Christ's call to follow Him in humility and obedience (*Psalm 139:23–24*).

Once He makes that known, be willing to offer your entire self to Him in humble, obedient submission. Take a reflective moment and, in the space below, express your heart's desire to the Lord.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the perfect illustration of humble obedience in the person of Jesus Christ. Form His humility in me until I am wholly and unswervingly Yours. For the glory of His name, I pray, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. *Laugh Again: Experience Outrageous Joy Insight for Living Bible Study Guide* (Plano, TX: Insight for Living, 1992), 40.



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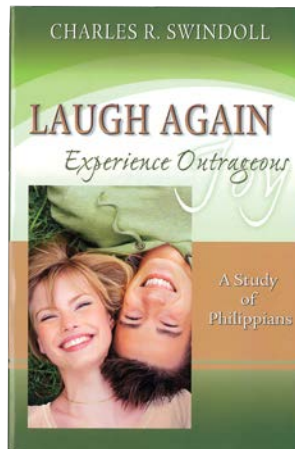
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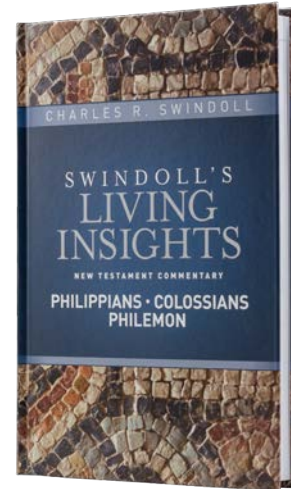
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2019 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

