

# The Example of Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning. Thank you for joining us today. So excited to bring the word to you.

We are going to continue on in Philippians. We're in chapter 2. And we are going to read Philippians chapter 2, verses 5 through 11. We're going to focus our sermon today on 5 through 8.

So if you would, please stand with me for the honor of reading God's word. 2.

Would you pray with me?

God, thank you for your word. Thank you for this beautiful passage about Christ, along with the one that Clint read earlier. God, thank you for who Jesus is. Lord Jesus, thank you for your willingness to come and live on this earth, to die on the cross for our sins.

[ 1 : 29 ] We love you and praise you. And it's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen. Amen. So this morning we're talking about the example of Christ.

The example of Christ. Again, primarily looking at verses 5 through 8. And verse 5 starts off with this statement, to adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus.

Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus. And I'm sure many of you remember, but in the 1990s there was a huge movement. And in fact, I saw a wristband the other day with it on it.

I think maybe it was Chris Siemis was wearing it. But WWJD. You remember this? WWJD? Okay, good. What would Jesus do? Not what would Joseph do.

Don't. Not the right way. All right, no. What would Jesus do? This was a huge movement. I was doing some research on it today, actually, and I found out that this phrase, what would Jesus do, was really popularized in the late 1800s by a pastor in Kansas who wrote a book kind of, you know, encouraging Christians to ethical living.

[ 2 : 36 ] And he, you know, he said, what would Jesus do? And then it re-popularized in the 90s. There was a youth group somewhere in the United States that decided it would be a good idea to get wristbands. It said WWJD as a reminder.

And it is. It's a good reminder. And it's a good way to live. What would Jesus do? That's a good way of thinking, right? We need to live our lives the way that Christ would live his life. And that's kind of what this passage is talking about.

How to look at the example of Christ and imitate his life. Look at the example of Christ and imitate his life. So we must see Christ's example for the type of humility that's required for unity in the church.

Because if you remember, this passage that we're looking at today is building off of the thought that we talked about last week, which was the whole message was about the unity in the church, right? Paul gave these Christians a seven-step plan for how to see unity in their church, right?

A seven-step plan sounds like a book that a Christian author would write today and make a lot of money. But it's right here in the Bible. A seven-step plan. He said to think the same way, have the same love, be united in the spirit, have the same purpose, not be selfish or conceited, humbly consider others as more important than yourself, and look at others' interests instead of your own.

[ 3 : 55 ] So we see that there's a seven-step plan for unity in the church. And if we do that well, then we'll be unified as a body of believers. And that's the hope. But there's more to that because there's this question, then how are we going to follow what we're supposed to follow?

How are we going to do what we're supposed to do? How are we supposed to live out that seven-step plan? Because if we look at it, right at, we talked about it last week, if we look at that plan, it looks really good.

And it's something that most of us would be like, oh, yeah, that sounds great. We'll think the same way. We'll love the same love. We'll be united in spirit. This will all be good. But then the second someone disagrees with my way of thinking, I'm going to get really angry about it, and I'm going to

split the church.

Right? That's what happens. Unfortunately, so many churches have so many issues with disunity and discord and church splits over minor, minor things.

And what we talked about last week was how we have to keep the essentials essential and everything that's not essential to the gospel that has to be in second and third and fourth place.

[ 4 : 56 ] Right? It has to be behind the essentials. So how are we supposed to live out this unity that we're called to? Well, we have an example. We have an example in the person of Jesus Christ.

And we don't look at Jesus just as an example. Okay? That's an important distinction that I want to make because this passage, it's not just that Christ is an example for us to follow.

He's much, much more than just an example. Okay? It's not like we see Jesus and we say, yeah, that Jesus was a really good guy. He said some cool things about loving each other and being nice to your neighbor.

And, you know, Jesus did some good stuff. He healed people maybe. I don't know. Like, that's not how we're supposed to view Jesus. Right? C.S. Lewis, you guys know who C.S. Lewis is.

He wrote the Chronicles of Narnia, amongst other things. But in his book, Mere Christianity, where he kind of explained what he believes about Christianity, the essentials of the faith, he said that you can't look at Jesus and say that he's just a good guy.

[ 6 : 03 ] Like, a really good guy. Because if you examine the claims that Jesus made, and if you look at the life that he lived, he's either a liar, a maniacal liar who was just trying to get all the attention for himself, or he's a lunatic, as C.S. Lewis said it, like a poached egg.

Right? He's, like, completely insane. Or, the third option, he is the Lord of all. Liar, lunatic, or Lord. So, Jesus isn't just an example, like a good guy worthy of paying attention to and listening to. He is an example, but he's so much more. And so, today, as we kind of break down this passage, this is one of those passages that's literally, it's one of the most powerful passages in all of Scripture.

It just describes who Christ is, the beauty of Jesus Christ, and it's really dangerous for me to preach, because I could say something wrong really quickly. So, I'm going to be very careful today as we work through this text, because I don't want to mislead anybody about who Jesus is.

I want you to see, from Scripture, exactly who Christ Jesus is, and what makes him so beautiful, and what makes him the perfect example for us to follow as a church, as we pursue unity.

[ 7 : 15 ] So, adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus. There's three things as we look at the mindset of Christ. Okay, that word attitude.

It kind of actually, it really goes back to Philippians 2.2, where it says to think the same way and have one purpose, have the same purpose. It's the same Greek word for think and purpose.

So, it's really have the same mindset as Christ, have the same mind about you that Christ has. And the reality for the believer is, not only do we look at Jesus as an example, as some far-off example that we may or may not be able to attain, but in Christ, his mindset is now ours.

So, if you're a believer of Jesus Christ, then you can have the mindset that is in Christ. Okay? And so, that's what we're talking about. And if we're looking at this mindset of Christ, there are three things that stand out.

First is his humility. Second is his obedience. And finally, his sacrifice. His sacrifice. So, I'm going to read again verses 6 through 8, and that's what we're going to focus on today.

[ 8 : 28 ] So, read with me. It says, Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead, he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity.

And when he had come as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even to death on a cross. All right.

So, first things first. Let's look at the humility that's displayed in Christ. The humility displayed in Christ. I found a couple of quotes about humility that I thought were particularly helpful and interesting.

And so, I'm going to read these. The first one is from St. Augustine of Hippo. Okay? So, he's way back in the day. Three hundreds. Okay? Way long ago. But he said, For those who would learn God's ways, humility is the first thing.

Humility is the second. Humility is the third. So, if we want to be like Christ, if we want to be unified in the church, then humility is essential. And then, Charles Spurgeon said it this way about humility.

[ 9 : 42 ] He said, Jesus did not think less of himself.

Jesus didn't have, we have kind of sometimes a twisted view of humility where we think that humility is equal to self-deprecation. And we put ourselves down. And sometimes that comes out as a false, a feigned humility.

Right? No, I'm no good. I'm no good. But really, we're just hoping for people to praise us. Like, keep piling on. Like, keep telling me how good I am. That feels really, really good. So, it's not humility for us to put ourselves down.

Humility is when we understand exactly who we are in light of who God is. In light of who Christ is. And Jesus had a wonderful mindset when it comes to humility.

Jesus is the perfect example. So, the first thing that we'll look at here in verse 6 is his divine humility. Jesus' divine humility. Alright, so, he existed in the form of God.

[ 10 : 48 ] Existing in the form of God. So, Jesus Christ is pre-existent. That's what we see here, okay? This is one of the passages, one of many that shows us this truth.

That Jesus Christ existed in eternity past with God the Father. And he didn't consider equality with God as something to be exploited. So, he was equal with God the Father in eternity past.

Always has been. Always will be. Jesus is divine. He is God. Okay? So, here's some other passages of scripture just to emphasize this point.

Of course, John 1, 1-3 says, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through him, and apart from him, not one thing was created that has been created.

Jesus, in his own words, says to the Pharisees, Truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am. Right? Bringing in the Old Testament divine name, Yahweh.

[ 11 : 51 ] I am. That's Jesus' claim to divinity. Colossians 1, 16-17. Clint read this in part earlier. It says, For everything was created by him in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.

All things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and by him all things hold together. And then finally, Hebrews 1, 1-2 says, Long ago, God spoke to our ancestors by the prophets at different times and in different ways.

In these last days, he has spoken to us by his son. God has appointed him heir of all things and made the universe through him. So, some things that we have to address here.

Because this is really, really important. If you ever study church history, ever. And I encourage you to study church history for a couple reasons. One, history is fun. One, and two, it really helps understand how the faith that we know and have was shaped and formed over years as the Spirit of God led faithful believers to the place where we have what we have today, right?

Where we have this orthodox belief system. But in the early church, there were a lot of questions about who Jesus was. Maybe even more specifically, what Jesus was.

[ 13 : 17 ] Was Jesus a man who, at his baptism, when the Holy Spirit came down in the form of a dove, became divine? Was he, you know, it says in Colossians, the firstborn of all creation.

Does that mean that Jesus was created, but he was God's first created being? You know, there's questions that the early church had. And I'm really thankful we didn't live back then, so we didn't have to wrestle with them. Because they've been wrestled with for us.

But no, Jesus was not a created being. Jesus was never created. He's always been God, right? He existed in the form of God in eternity past.

That word form, it's a reference to his nature. He existed as God in eternity past. He did not attain divine status through right living. That was a belief system that Jesus, after he did a really good job for a really long time, God said, that's my son.

Yeah, he's the one. And gave him divinity. That's not what happened. Jesus was with God from before time. And in fact, through Jesus, all creation came into being.

[ 14 : 22 ] The next thing that we have to think about here is the equality with God. Jesus is equal with God the Father. They're co-equal.

But Jesus did not view his divine status as something to be exploited or something to take advantage of for his own benefit, for his own good.

Jesus considered others' well-being, specifically our well-being, before his own. Right? He considered our interests, our eternal interests, before his own.

And so he didn't consider his divine status, his equal authority in the glories of heaven, as something to be kept and held on to. The word exploited, it means grasped.

Right? Like, it wasn't reaching for it like something he didn't have. He was, it was that he didn't hold on to it like something he couldn't let go of. And I'm not saying that he let go of his divinity. I want to make very clear, there was never a moment where Jesus is not God.

[15:23] He's always God, even in his incarnation on earth. But he didn't cling to it in the sense that he didn't remain in heaven. Instead, he came to earth. So, Romans 5 tells us that Jesus is the new and better Adam.

Okay? Jesus is the new and better Adam. Jesus, he came into the earth, right? Like, he didn't cling to the divine status there in heaven. Instead, he emptied himself, came to earth. And now, because of his life, his death, his burial, his resurrection, Romans 5 tells us that he's the new and better Adam.

And I think that there's something of a kind of a correlation here to that word exploited or grasped, as if something he was reaching for. And Adam and Eve and the story of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.

So, I'm going to ask you a question. This is trivia. If you want to answer, please do. That would be awesome. So, in the Garden of Eden, what did the serpent use to tempt Eve to take from the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, of the tree of knowledge of good and evil?

What was the temptation? What did he say could happen? Do what? They would know good and evil.

[16:37] By knowing good and evil, who would they be like? They would be like God, right? So, Adam and Eve, they saw the opportunity. They're not divine, right?

They're human beings, just like you and me. And they saw the opportunity to attain, to take, to grasp the divine nature by taking that fruit and eating from it.

And they did that. And let's not look too harshly on Adam and Eve, because you and I would have done the same thing. Adam and Eve saw the opportunity to take divinity for themselves, to become God of their own life.

And they tried to take that opportunity for them. And we try to do the same thing. Right? When we know that what we're doing or saying or thinking is against the word of God and the will of God, and yet we do it anyways, in effect, we're telling God, I know better than you do.

I'd rather be God than you. I'd rather be God over this area of my life. You be God over the rest. I'd rather be God on Monday through Saturday. You be God on Sunday.

[17:47] We do this all the time. But that's not how Christ viewed his actual pre-eternal, pre-existent divine status.

Instead of clinging to it and using it for himself, it says in verse 7, we'll look at verse 7, it says that he emptied himself. And there's been a lot of discussion, by the way, of what did Jesus empty himself of?

What did he empty himself of? His, you know, divine foreknowledge or his omnipotence? Was he not all-powerful when he was on earth?

You know, there's been a lot of speculation. But I think that the answer to what he emptied himself of in specifics is not in this passage. But for the sake of what we're reading today, what Jesus emptied himself of was heaven.

The idea here is that he made himself nothing. He went, it's to contrast the glories of heaven to sinful humanity where he came and lived, right?

[18:56] He left the glories of heaven. He came into this earth, supernatural pregnancy, right? The virgin birth. But still, his skin, his flesh, his bones, his brain matter, his organs, they were formed in the womb of Mary, right?

He emptied himself of the glories of heaven. He came into his creation as one of his own creation, the same way that we do. And he did that all to take on the form of a servant, right?

Like, even lower than just humanity, the word servant, slave. He took on the lowest status of humanity from the highest status in all of the universe, which is God, to the lowest status, which is servant on earth.

Jesus made himself nothing. And this is his earthly humility. So we've looked at his divine humility and now his earthly humility. So there's a few things that I want to point out about his earthly humility.

One, in emptying himself, Jesus did not ever stop being truly God, okay? This is essential for the faith. We believe in Jesus Christ, who is God and man, all right?

[ 20 : 16 ] He didn't become a 50-50 split, okay? He wasn't like a demigod like you might see in Greek mythology or something like that, right? He was truly, fully God and truly, fully man, okay?

Never ceased being God. And then finally, he was a physical human being. In the early church, one of the first heretical things they had to fight against was claims about Jesus being some sort of a kind of a hologram almost, really, is kind of how they thought of it.

Like Jesus wasn't a physical being, but he was kind of a ghost-looking feature. So he looked like a human. He kind of sounded like a human, but he really wasn't. And the reason they said that was because it was this Gnostic view that physical matter is inherently evil and spiritual is good.

So Jesus had to have been spiritual only. That was ridiculous. Jesus was physically a human being. If you read the Gospel of John, he gets tired. He gets hungry.

He gets sad, right? Jesus experienced betrayal. Jesus was truly man in every sense. In fact, he even experienced death.

[ 21 : 25 ] And as we're continuing on here, he experienced humanity in the lowest form, right? As a servant, as a servant.

Mark 10, 45 says, this is Jesus' own words, For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. He left heaven.

He emptied himself of heaven, knowing that he was going to come and serve sinful man and die on the cross for our sins. He did that. He left heaven knowing what was going to take place.

And Jesus was a human being. So, as I said, he is not unfamiliar with our experiences. Hebrews chapter 4, verses 15 and 16 says, We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin.

Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need. Jesus humbly came to earth.

[ 22 : 42 ] He lived the life that we live. He lived a human life, and he did that for us. And I don't know if you've ever been taught that, you know, if maybe by some religion you grew up in, that God is some far-off, uninterested, uninvolved, you know, creator who just kind of sits back and lets things happen.

But that is not the God of the Bible. The God of Scripture loves his creation, is involved with his creation, and lived on earth with his creation, and died on the cross for our sins.

He's not unfamiliar with our weakness. Jesus experienced hurt. He experienced betrayal. He experienced pain. Jesus experienced the same sufferings that we experience. He experienced death, which is an experience we'll all have.

Jesus experienced these things, so that he could sympathize with our weakness, in a way that's unfamiliar to any other religion, or lowercase g, God, that's ever been created or talked about.

Jesus is so far greater, than anything, throughout history, ever. And this is who he is. Now, the last thing is his humble obedience.

[ 23 : 55 ] Jesus was obedient. So, we have that list of seven, like I said, seven steps to church unity, think the same way, have the same love, so on and so forth.

But in order for us to actually see the fruit of those things, in the church, in our relationships with one another, we have to obey what it says, right?

Like, we can't just agree with the list, like that's good, and then not seek unity through these things. Jesus is the perfect example of obedience. So, looking at his obedience, did you know that Jesus learned obedience?

Did you know that? Jesus learned obedience? That sounds weird to say, but it's true. Hebrews chapter 5, verse 8 says, although he was the son, he learned obedience from what he suffered. Jesus learned obedience, not that he didn't know obedience, not that he wasn't obedient. In fact, he was obedient in coming to earth in the first place, but he experienced obedience to the Father's will in a new way when he suffered and died for the sins of the world.

[ 25 : 05 ] Jesus had this unlimited obedience. There was nothing too far for him to obey. God put a pretty heavy burden on him, right? God the Father's plan was pretty hard.

Jesus had to live among sinful people, and he had to be beaten to the point beyond recognition, and then he had to hang on the cross for our sins. Jesus had to experience all of those things, and he knew that, and he was fully obedient all the way through.

As I was thinking about this this week, I was just struck by the thought, the realization, that his obedience was not only to the will of the Father, but again, he kept the law of God perfectly, the heart of God perfectly, throughout all of those things, the torture that he experienced, hanging on the cross, people spitting on him, people hitting him in the face, that there was not a single moment where Jesus had an evil thought towards one of those people who were hitting him, who were spinning on him, who were shoving the crown of thorns on his head.

Jesus never had one vindictive evil thought towards them. He had compassion for them. He was dying for them. He was obedient to the Father in every respect. And finally, he was sacrificially obedient.

He didn't just die. He died the most painful death known to the world at that time. The Philippians, as Paul wrote this to the church in Philippi, they were Roman citizens.

[ 26 : 28 ] They knew how vile crucifixion was. It was so vile, in fact, that Roman citizens, when they received capital punishment, received mercy, and were just beheaded instead of experiencing crucifixion.

For the Jewish Christians of the day, they would have been offended to think of their Savior on a cross because of how horrendous that is. But Jesus sacrificially gave himself.

Like I said, he was beaten beyond recognition. And remember, Jesus is a human being, by the way, a human being. He felt everything that happened. He felt the hits, the scourging.

He felt the nails be driven into his wrists and into his feet. He felt his shoulders dislocate as he hung on the cross. He felt all of those things. He felt that feeling of suffocation because he couldn't breathe, because his arms were above his chest.

He couldn't breathe. And the only way to get, just so you know, the only way to get a breath on the cross is to push up. Did you know that when you push up, when you're on a cross, it hurts your feet pretty bad? Jesus felt all of those things.

[ 27 : 35 ] And on top of that, he felt the wrath of God, the punishment for our sin, on him, in its fullest extreme, in its fullest measure.

He felt that at the same exact time. Jesus endured so much pain. He did this sacrificially so that you and I could be made right with God. He was making up for the sin of Adam and Eve and the sins that you and I commit.

He was the perfect atoning sacrifice for our sin. So, why is Jesus, like, why did Paul go from, hey, be unified in the church to, hey, look at Jesus?

Like, be unified and then also check Jesus out. Well, it's because he is, everything I just described, the son of God, the son of man, he lived a perfect life. He died on the cross for our sins.

He did all of those things. Because of who he is, he is our example. Because of who Jesus is, he is worthy of imitating.

[ 28 : 37 ] His life is worth imitating. And there's a few passages of scripture to remind us to be imitators of Christ. Ephesians 5, 1 and 2 says, therefore, be imitators of God as dearly loved children and walk in love as Christ also loved us and gave himself for us a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God.

1 John 2, 6, the one who says he remains in him should walk just as he walked. In other words, do what Jesus did. 1 Corinthians 11, 1, imitate me as I also imitate Christ.

By the way, that's one heck of a place to be in your spiritual walk when you can look at others and say, hey, follow my example because I'm following his. And that's the goal, right? That we could all do that. And as we do that, we'll see the unity in the church in a fuller measure.

So, how will we ever experience the unity that God desires for his people in the church? How will we ever experience the unity that God desires for us in his church?

The answer is very simple. We look at Jesus and we live the way that he lives. We can be humble like Jesus is because he lives in us.

[ 29 : 58 ] We can be obedient by imitating his obedience. And we can serve sacrificially because he served us with the greatest sacrifice that has ever, ever been known.

And this passage isn't just a reminder to the Christians in the church who are, you know, pursuing and aiming for unity. It's a reminder to everybody here including those who don't have a relationship with Christ.

You know, the first step for a person to go from not saved, not in Christ to saved, the first and most essential step is that we have to humble ourselves.

we have to humble ourselves. We have to say I'm not God. I'm not good enough to save myself. I can't make this on my own.

And then we have to look to Jesus, look at the cross and fall on our knees and repent from our sins and pray and ask God to forgive us. And 1 John tells us that he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us of all unrighteousness.

[ 31 : 10 ] So, if you don't have a relationship with Christ, would you humble yourself today and would you accept him as Savior? And if you have accepted Christ as Savior, would you live as if he is the Lord of your life and imitate his humility and imitate the way that his humility led to his obedience and sacrificially serve, consider others as more important than yourselves.

You won't always get your way. Jesus didn't have his way on the cross. Well, he did because we were saved. But, you won't always have your way, but if you have the same humble heart that Christ Jesus has and gives to you, then unity is attainable.

Unity is within reach. I'm going to pray for us. We have a final song and I think it's going to be acapella, correct? So, you got to sing with John Marks. I told him I would remind you.

But, would you stand with us and sing this final song? Let me pray as we close out today. Dear God, thank you for who you are. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your sacrifice, for your humility that brought you here.

God, we are so undeserving. Thank you for your love for us. God, for people here today who don't have a relationship with you, I pray that you would show them through your word how beautiful Jesus is, his sacrifice, how thankful we should be for his sacrifice.

[ 32 : 33 ] God, I pray that you would be glorified in the way that people come to you today. We love you and praise you and we pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen. Would you sing with me just as I am?

Just as I am.