



Gospel-Centered Families

Marriage Part 3: Gospel-Centered Health

Philippians 2:1-8, Ephesians 4:29-32,

1 Corinthians 7:3-5

How to Prepare

Begin preparing by reading the full passage a few times. Then answer the questions for yourself. Then think about how your Small Group might answer them. Try re-wording the questions to fit you and your Small Group. Don't feel tied down to the discussion guide, just be sure to discuss the main point of the text in your conversations.

Resources-

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-every-marriage-needs-most>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/your-marriage-is-not-about-you>

Sermon Outline:

Philippians 2:1-8, Ephesians 4:29-32, 1 Corinthians 7:3-5

1. Christlikeness Changes Your Attitude. Philippians 2:1-8
2. Christlikeness Changes Your Articulation. Ephesians 4:29-32
3. Christlikeness Changes Your Actions. 1 Corinthians 7:3-5

**Philippians 2:1-8, Ephesians
4:29-32, 1 Corinthians
7:3-5**

Be Like Christ

- 2 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,
- 2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.
- 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;
- 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.
- 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
- 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The Christian's Walk

- 29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.
- 30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
- 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.
- 32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Teaching on Marriage

- 3 The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.
- 4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.
- 5 Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Discussion Questions

Ask a volunteer to read Philippians 2:1-8, Ephesians 4:29-32, 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 .

INTRODUCTION

Here is a question or two to help introduce the topic and jump-start discussion.

1. In your own words, how does Christlikeness in a person's life affect the health of friendships and marriages?

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

These questions should help your Small Group dig deeper into the text and then apply it to your lives today.

I. Christlikeness Changes Your Attitude. Philippians 2:1-8

2. What does attitude mean, and what role do our attitudes play in our friendships and marriages? What tends to affect people's attitudes negatively or positively?

(Attitude in this context is how we think and feel about something or someone. That is why the text uses the word "mind." Selfishness and selflessness are the key hinges of our attitudes. Selfishness leads to a bad attitude toward others, especially when we don't get what we want from them. But selflessness produces a good attitude toward people, even when they disagree with us or hurt us. Selflessness is humility and genuine love for others.)

3. According to this text, what was Christ's attitude, and what role did that play in Him accomplishing the gospel? How does Christ's attitude affect the attitudes of people who trust in the gospel?

(The attitude of Jesus is love, humility, and concern for our plight.)

4. Why is it necessary to pursue Christlikeness in order to have the right attitude toward people in our friendships and marriages? What happens when we simply try to have "good" attitudes instead of Christlike attitudes?

(True selflessness, humility, and love are all found in Christ. He is the source of those things, so we must pursue Him in order to truly possess that kind of attitude. Without Him producing that within us, we are simply putting a band aid on our selfish desires, and we will produce attitudes of quiet bitterness rather than love.)

II. Christlikeness Changes Your Articulation. Ephesians 4:29-32

5. What are some common pitfalls in communication between friends or spouses that Christlikeness calls us to avoid?

6. What kind of speech does Ephesians 4:29-32 call believers to avoid? What kind of speech does this text call for believers to speak?

(This text is calling for believers' speech to be edifying, God-glorifying, gracious - speaking truth in love - , and forgiving. When our speech tears down, is without grace but filled with anger, and will not speak forgiveness, then we are grieving God and not bringing Him glory with our words.)

7. How does this kind of speech reflect Christlikeness? How would this kind of Christlike speech bring health to our friendships and our marriages?

(When Jesus spoke, He always spoke the truth in love, built people up, and forgave people of their sins. Even when He spoke judgment or displayed anger, He did it under perfect control as the one true Judge. So even when we have to warn people or call people out because of sin, we can do it with a heart of love. If we spoke this way all the time, the vast majority of our relational issues would disappear.)

III. Christlikeness Changes Your Actions. 1 Corinthians 7:3-5

8. How does 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, in the context of Christlikeness, shape our understanding of selfless action within marriage? In the context of Christlikeness, what would be the wrong way for a spouse to understand this passage?

(1 Corinthians 7:3-5 discusses mutual conjugal rights and obligations within marriage. It exhorts married couples to put the needs of their spouse before themselves. Some people have used this passage as a weapon to guilt their spouse into doing what they want. This would be completely contrary to the point that this passage is making, and would negate Christlikeness altogether. A Christlike spouse desires to act in love toward their spouse, not manipulate or guilt trip their spouse into getting what they want. That said, a spouse also should not purposefully withhold from their spouse out of selfishness or manipulation.)

9. Beyond this specific example in 1 Corinthians, what are other actions that demonstrate Christlikeness in a marriage (e.g., serving, forgiving, sacrificing)?

10. How can pursuing Christlikeness motivate us to act in ways that prioritize our spouse's well-being and needs? How will Christlike actions produce health in our friendships and marriages?

Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

Phil. 2:1–30 Exhortation to Humble Service. Paul calls the Philippians to unite in love and humility (vv. 1–4), as exemplified by Christ’s humble service (vv. 5–11). They are to live as lights in the world (vv. 12–18), just like Christ’s faithful servants Timothy (vv. 19–24) and Epaphroditus (vv. 25–30).

Phil. 2:1–4 Encouragement to Unity in the Faith and Service of One Another. The Philippians are encouraged to live out their life in Christ and in the Spirit by living in unity.

Phil. 2:1–2 Paul is not doubting that encouragement, participation in the Spirit, affection, and sympathy are realities in Christ and are present in the congregation at Philippi. He uses a conditional sentence (if) to provoke the Philippians so that they will reflect on whether these qualities are evident in their lives. The Philippian believers must make sure they continue to progress in the absolutely critical area of love for one another. As Paul emphasizes, they must be of the same mind. This does not imply a drab intellectual uniformity; rather, the Philippians are to use their diverse gifts (cf. 1 Corinthians 12) in an agreeable, cooperative spirit, with a focus on the glory of God.

Phil. 2:3–4 There is always a temptation to be like Paul’s opponents in 1:17 and operate in a spirit of selfish ambition, looking to advance one’s own agenda. Such conceit (lit., “vainglory”) is countered by counting others more significant than yourselves. Paul realizes that everyone naturally looks out for his or her own interests. The key is to take that same level of concern and apply it also to the interests of others. Such radical love is rare, so Paul proceeds to show its supreme reality in the life of Christ (2:5–11).

Phil. 2:5–11 Christ’s Example of Humble Service. This passage is often referred to as the “hymn of Christ.” Paul depicts Christ’s example of service in a stirring poem that traces his preexistence, incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God. Paul wrote this magnificent theology to encourage the Philippians to consider other people’s interests first (see v. 4). Jesus is the paradigm of genuine spiritual progress: not a self-aggrandizing struggle for supremacy, but a deep love for God and neighbor shown in deeds of service. Verses 6–11 have some clear indications of poetic structure, leading some to believe that this is a pre-Pauline hymn adapted by Paul. It is just as likely, however, that Paul composed the hymn for this setting. In view of the myriad theological questions that arise in these verses, it is critical to keep two things in mind: (1) these verses were written not to spur Christians to theological debate but to encourage greater humility and love; and (2) the summary of Christ’s life and ministry found here is not unique: the same themes are evident throughout the NT.



Phil. 2:5 The believer's mind needs to reflect on the proper model, if life is to be lived for God. There is some debate as to whether this mind-set is something Christians receive by virtue of being united to Christ (which is yours in Christ Jesus), or whether it is to be based on the model of Christ (ESV footnote: "which was also in Christ Jesus"). (The Gk. has no verb; either "is" or "was" has to be supplied.) In light of the consistent theme of behavior modeling in this letter (Jesus, Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus are all held out as examples), many interpreters have adopted the latter meaning. Both ideas are theologically true. In either case, the central theme of vv. 1–5 is the same—that the Philippian church would be of one mind (v. 2), united by love (v. 2) and humility (v. 3), and looking out for the interests of others (v. 4).

Phil. 2:6 Prior to the incarnation, Christ was in the form of God (Gk. *morphē theou*). Despite the assertions of some scholars to the contrary, this most naturally refers to the "preexistence" of Christ—he, the eternal Son, was there with the Father (John 1:1; 17:5, 24) before he was born in Bethlehem. "Form" here means the true and exact nature of something, possessing all the characteristics and qualities of something. Therefore having the "form of God" is roughly equivalent to having equality with God (Gk. *isa theō*), and it is directly contrasted with having the "form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7). The Son of God is and always has been God. "Form" could also be a reference to Christ being the ultimate image of God, "the exact imprint of his nature" (Heb. 1:3). It might also refer to the fact that he is the visible expression of God's invisible glory (Col. 1:15). Remarkably, Christ did not imagine that having "equality with God" (which he already possessed) should lead him to hold onto his privileges at all costs. It was not something to be grasped, to be kept and exploited for his own benefit or advantage. Instead, he had a mind-set of service. "Christ did not please himself" (Rom. 15:3). In humility, he counted the interests of others as more significant than his own (Phil. 2:3–4).

Phil. 2:7 Emptied himself has occasioned much controversy. Greek *kenōō* can mean "empty, pour out" or also (metaphorically) "give up status and privilege." Does this mean that Christ temporarily relinquished his divine attributes during his earthly ministry? This theory of Christ's kenosis or "self-emptying" is not in accord with the context of Philippians or with early Christian theology (see the article on The Person of Christ). Paul is not saying that Christ became less than God or "gave up" some divine attributes; he is not even commenting directly on the question of whether Jesus was fully omnipotent or omniscient during his time on earth. Nor is he saying that Christ ever gave up being "in the form of God." Rather, Paul is stressing that Christ, who had all the privileges that were rightly his as king of the universe, gave them up to become an ordinary Jewish baby bound for the cross. Christ "emptied himself" by taking the form of a servant, being born in

Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

the likeness of men (roughly equivalent phrases). While he had every right to stay comfortably where he was, in a position of power, his love drove him to a position of weakness for the sake of sinful mankind (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9, "though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich"). The "emptying" consisted of his becoming human, not of his giving up any part of his true deity.

Phil. 2:8 It is remarkable enough that God the Son would take on human form (Gk. *schēma*, "outward appearance, form, shape," a different term from *morphē*, used in vv. 6–7 for "form of God" and "form of a servant") and thus enter into all the vicissitudes of a broken world. But Jesus went much farther, becoming obedient (cf. Rom. 5:19) to the point of death, even death on a cross. Crucifixion was not simply a convenient way of executing prisoners. It was the ultimate indignity, a public statement by Rome that the crucified one was beyond contempt. The excruciating physical pain was magnified by the degradation and humiliation. No other form of death, no matter how prolonged or physically agonizing, could match crucifixion as an absolute destruction of the person (see note on Matt. 27:35). It was the ultimate counterpoint to the divine majesty of the preexistent Christ, and thus was the ultimate expression of Christ's obedience to the Father.

Eph. 4:25–32 Exhortation to an Edifying Lifestyle. Paul gives practical examples of how church members build up Christ's body (cf. vv. 13–16), based on what is true of them as Christians.

Eph. 4:25 Therefore. In vv. 25–32 Paul will show how Christians are to put into practice the truths explored in vv. 17–24.

Eph. 4:26–27 Be angry. Not all anger is sin, but the believer should not be consumed by anger, nor should one's anger even be carried over into the next day, as this will only give an opportunity to the devil.

Eph. 4:28 Paul uses the thief to illustrate how repentance impacts one's lifestyle. Repentance involves both stopping (negative) and starting (positive). The thief must stop stealing and start doing honest work. Stealing arises out of laziness and greed, so the repentant thief must display the opposite: diligence at labor and willingness to share.

Eph. 4:29 corrupting talk. As with the "stopping" and "starting" noted in v. 28, Christians are to stop evil speech, substituting talk that is good for building up and giving grace. "Corrupting" (Gk. *sapros*) also applies to "bad" (rotten) fruit (Luke 6:43) or "bad" (putrid) fish (Matt. 13:48). To "give grace" in speaking means to benefit others rather than corrupt them through what is said.



Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

Eph. 4:30 grieve. Grieving the Holy Spirit means to cause him sorrow by one's sin. sealed. See note on 1:13. The day of redemption is the day of Christ's return (see Luke 21:28; Rom. 8:23).

Eph. 4:31 All bitterness means "every kind of bitterness." "All" also modifies the other items in the list, telling readers to put away all wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice. "Bitterness" may head the list because it so often leads to the other sins that Paul names. Bitterness comes from a heart that is not right before God (Acts 8:21–23); it is a primary characteristic of an unregenerate person (Rom. 3:10–14); and it causes destruction and defilement (Heb. 12:15). Bitterness and resentment are thus incompatible with Christian character and must be put away. People often are very careless with their speech ("slander"), even though the tongue can ignite a forest fire of harm to others (James 3:5–6).

Eph. 4:32 Being kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving flows from constantly remembering that God first forgave us and that we need his forgiveness daily, as the Lord's Prayer reminds us: "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt. 6:12; cf. Luke 11:4).

1 Cor. 7:1–11:1 Three Issues from a Corinthian Letter. Paul now turns to a series of problems raised in a letter from the Corinthians written to him (7:1). He signals a move from one topic to another with the phrase "now concerning" (7:1 [see note], 25; 8:1; the phrase also occurs later at 12:1; 16:1, 12). He first addresses issues related to marriage, divorce, and one's lot in life (7:1–24). He then turns to whether the betrothed and widowed should marry in light of the urgency of the times (7:25–40). Finally, he discusses food sacrificed to idols (8:1–11:1).

1 Cor. 7:1–24 Marriage, Divorce, and Unchangeable Circumstances. The Corinthians are commanded to be faithful in their marriages, to avoid divorce, and to be content in their calling.

1 Cor. 7:2–5 the husband . . . the wife. God designed marriage as the place for the expression of human sexuality. Sex within marriage has both relational and spiritual benefits (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:31; see also 1 Cor. 6:17). It also has the practical benefit of reducing the temptation to engage in sexual sin (see 7:9).

1 Cor. 7:4 The emphasis here is on mutuality in the marriage relationship within the overall framework described in Eph. 5:22–23 and Col. 3:18–19.

1 Cor. 7:5 Do not deprive. Abstention from sexual relations in marriage should be limited to short periods of time and only by mutual consent of the husband and wife.

