

**LESSON FIVE**  
**ULTIMATE SERVANTHOOD**  
**(Philippians 2:5-7 NKJV)**

### REFLECTION

Think back on the various jobs you have held and the volunteer assignments you have undertaken. Which assignment or responsibilities have been the most menial and humbling to you? Describe one such experience.

### SITUATION

In this next section of the letter, Paul continues to expound on the types of characteristics that believers in Christ must adopt in order to live in harmony with one another. To do this, Paul points to the ultimate example of humble servanthood that he can provide: Jesus' decision to put aside his divinity, become a human, and willingly sacrifice his life in obedience to the Father. As Paul notes, it is only through Christ, and only embracing his attitudes and actions, that we can find true unity and joy.

### OBSERVATION

Read **Philippians 2:5-11** (New King James Version).

### EXPLORATION

1. To have the "same mindset as Christ Jesus" (**Philippians 2:5 NIV**), means to have the same mental attitude or inclination as Jesus.
2. Being a disciple means imitating one's master or teacher in thoughts, actions, and character. Think about it. Where are our attitudes most like Christ? Where are they most unlike Jesus' attitudes?
3. Paul notes that Jesus, in taking on full humanity, gave up the advantages of his divinity and "made himself nothing" (**verse 7**). Let's look at some examples of this from the Gospels (see, for example, **Matthew 4:2; Mark 13:32; John 4:6, 11:33-35, and 19:28**).
4. As God's ultimate servant, Jesus always acted in absolute dependence on his Father (see **John 5:19, 8:28 and 14:10**). What can we learn from this example?
5. Jesus said that he "did not come to be served, but to serve" (**Mark 10:45**). If we dare to live likewise, how can we be assured that our needs will be met?
6. How does God reward those who humble themselves and serve (see **Luke 18:14**)?

Jesus was “in very nature God.” Before Bethlehem, Jesus had every advantage and benefit of deity. He was boundless, timeless, and limitless. “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (**John 1:3** NKJV).

- A. Every rock, tree, and planet needs a stamp that says, “Made by Jesus.”
  - 1) He gets credit for the Whirlpool Galaxy. It contains more than a hundred billion stars.
  - 2) He created our sun. More than a million earths could fit inside the sun.
  - 3) Jesus spoke and the bespangled sky happened. He calls each star by name and can fold up the skies as a Bedouin would pack his tent.
  
- B. Paul’s headline, however, is not “Christ the Creator.” It is “Christ the Incarnate One.” The One who made everything “made himself nothing” (**Philippians 2:7**).
  - 1) Christ made himself small. He made himself dependent upon lungs, a larynx, and legs.
  - 2) He experienced hunger and thirst. He went through all the normal stages of human development. He was taught to walk, stand, wash his face, and dress himself.
  - 3) His muscles grew stronger; his hair grew longer. His voice cracked when he passed through puberty. He was genuinely human.
  
- C. When he was “full of joy” (**Luke 10:21**), his joy was authentic. When he “wept over” Jerusalem (**Luke 19:41**), his tears were as real as yours and mine.
  - 1) When he asked, “How long must I put up with you?” (**Matthew 17:17**) his frustration was honest.
  - 2) When he cried out from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (**27:46**), he needed an answer.
  - 3) He knew only what the Father revealed to him (see **John 12:50**). If the Father did not give direction, Jesus did not claim to have it.
  
- D. He took “the very nature of a servant” (**Philippians 2:7**). He became like us so he could serve us! He entered the world not to demand our allegiance but to display his affection.
  - 1) He did not view his equality with God as “something to be used to his own advantage” (**verse 6**).
  - 2) He refused to throw his weight around. He divested himself of divine advantage.

When people mocked him, he didn’t turn them into stones. When soldiers spat on him, he didn’t boomerang their spit. When people said he was out of his mind, he didn’t strike them blind. Just the opposite, He became “obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (**verse 8**).

Paul gave special emphasis: “even death on a cross.” Crucifixion was the cruelest form of execution in the Roman Empire. It was commonly reserved for those of the lowest class, especially slaves...God took the nails. God took the whips. God bore the shame. God felt the tip of the spear. God exhaled a final breath. Jesus descended the ladder of incarnation one rung at a time. (From *Because of Bethlehem* by Max Lucado.)

## REACTION

- 7. How do you react when you consider all that Jesus gave up to come into this world and sacrifice his life to pay for your sins?

Life Lessons from Philippians, Max Lucado, Author, Thomas Nelson, Inc; Philippians, MacArthur Bible Studies, John MacArthur, Author, Thomas Nelson, Inc; King James Open Bible, Thomas Nelson, Inc.

8. Servanthood requires no special training or gifting. Given this, why do you think it is often so rare to see today?
9. What are the key ingredients to a life of servanthood?
10. How would the atmosphere in a church change if it were filled with humble servants?
11. What is it like to work for you or to be under your authority? How do you treat those who serve under you?
12. How can a life of servanthood—giving up your rights, putting others first, refusing to promote yourself—be a path to glory and joy?

## LIFE LESSONS

The Father in heaven is not only *with* us but also *in* us. He listens to us. He never abandons us. He cares about us and only wants the best for us. If we truly understand this truth, we recognize that all things are possible. We no longer have to scramble around trying to make life work. We can relax and go “off duty.” We can let go of the joy—depleting habit of looking out for number one. Even better, when we are convinced the Father is absolutely for us, we are freed up to focus all our attention and energy and efforts on living for him by serving others. As surrendered servants, we can rest assured he will meet all our needs.

## DEVOTION

*Lord Jesus, thank you for your humble sacrifice. You gave your life to give us life. In gratitude, we want to respond today by giving our lives to serve others. Thank you for the assurance that you will supply all our needs as we humbly seek to follow your example.*

## JOURNALING

What are some tangible acts of servanthood you could engage in this week?

**Next Week:** Lesson Six: Shining For Christ—**Philippians 2:12-18**