

## The Heart of God at Christmas: Humility

What was on the heart of God at the first Christmas? Typically, during the Christmas season our attention is drawn to the birth narratives in the gospels that focus on what was happening on earth (trip to Bethlehem, shepherds, angels, Jesus being born in a manger, etc.). The epistles, however, when they speak about Jesus becoming one of us focus on what was happening in heaven in the heart and mind of God. They tell us about the motives, rationale, and attitude of God when Jesus came to earth. This Advent we are going to look at the epistles and seek to understand the heart of God at the first Christmas. In this study, we see that *humility* was on the heart of God the Son at the first Christmas.

### Read Philippians 2:1-11

1. Paul had a deep affection for the church in Philippi that he had planted years before this letter. They had been partners in mission. And while Paul continues to have joy in his heart when he thinks of the Philippians, he has a concern that prompts this letter. What was the internal issue that threatened to sabotage their partnership in the gospel (see 1:27)?

Steve said:

Like the Philippians we need to understand that true unity is based on ***a common commitment to the mission of proclaiming the gospel***. It's not enough for us to have unity about the facts of the gospel (Jesus died for our sins and rose again); that's essential, but it's not enough for true unity. True unity is based on a common commitment to the mission of sharing Christ so that . . . our friends and family and others in our community can experience freedom from their sin and eternal life. A church won't have genuine biblical unity with lesser commitments.

2. Do you agree that genuine unity is found in a common commitment to the mission of proclaiming the gospel? Why or why not?
3. If a church is going to walk in unity, Paul says that it requires humility. Why is this? What does humility do that allows unity to exist (vv. 1-4)?
4. Starting in verse 5, Paul points to Jesus as the ultimate example of humility. How does Paul say Jesus expressed his humility (vv. 6-7)?

5. How does this example of Jesus' humility function in Paul's overall argument in this part of the letter?

Steve said:

This year when you think of Christmas, I hope that one word that comes to your mind is *humility*. And when it does, let your mind go a couple different directions. First, let your mind go to worship. Worship Jesus himself because of his great humility. He took the greatest plunge possible - from equality with God to death on a cross - willingly, for us. Through all eternity, we will never tire of worshiping him for that act of humility. Second, let your mind go to your own habits of humility (or lack thereof). Notice whether you instinctively and habitually look out for the interests of others. Or notice if you mainly look out for yourself. Notice whether you have humility toward your family, your friends, others in the body of Christ. . . people you enjoy and people you find hard to be around.

6. Would you say that you have "habits of humility"? Why or why not?
7. If you sense a lack of humility in your life, what might it look like to allow Jesus' example of humility to stimulate change in your life?
8. Without naming names, where do you most sense the need to have humility of mind towards others in the church that as a church we might experience the kind of unity that allows us to stay on mission?