

Portraits of Servanthood*Philippians 2:19-30*

Humble, sacrificial servanthood should be our normal mode of relating to one another in the church. We are disciples of Jesus and this is exactly the model He set for us as He lived among us. How are we doing? Do we express a spirit of servanthood as we relate to one another? In our passage today, Paul commends the servanthood of two men, Timothy and Epaphroditus. In many ways, these two portraits of servanthood are great examples of the qualities that Paul has already urged upon the Philippians and us earlier in chapter 2. May these examples spur us on to a deeper expression of servanthood as we relate to each other.

Opening Discussion: Who is someone who has been a great model of servanthood in your life?

Read Philippians 2:19-24

1. How does Paul describe Timothy?
2. How is what Paul says about Timothy in 2:20-21 an expression of the kind of character that Paul urged upon all of the Philippians in 2:4-5?

Steve said:

Paul is saying in verse 21 that the other Christians around him lacked such humility. They lacked this "others" focus. They may have been "good Christians" in many other senses; but they were basically self-centered. It is very significant that after Paul says, "they all seek after their own interests," he adds, "not those of Christ Jesus." Stating it positively, Paul is saying that **to seek after the interests of others is to seek after the interests of Christ**. Jesus is the ultimate example of looking out for the interests of others. We are Christ-like when we have a genuine concern for others.

3. If this is one way to measure Christlikeness in our lives, how are you doing? Where is this going well? Where is there need for growth?

Steve said:

We need "Timothys" in our day in the church. There exists a crying need for people who have the capacity to not merely look out for their own interests, but also the interests of others - ultimately the interests of Christ. Showing humble servanthood to one another is God's design for the body of Christ; He has made us interdependent in this way. Think about your commitment to others ***within the body of Christ***. Are there others in the church (outside of your immediate family) about whom you'd say, "I am actively looking out for their interests. I pray for them; I make a point to encourage them; I look for practical ways to serve them." My encouragement is to identify a small group of such people - whether in your life group or someone you've met on a Sunday morning or someone on a ministry team - and intentionally show them humble servanthood.

4. Who are the people for whom you feel special care and concern? Is there anyone that you sense God might want you to add to this list?

Read Philippians 2:25-30

5. How does Paul describe Epaphroditus?
6. How would you describe the extent to which Epaphroditus was willing to sacrifice for the work of Christ?
7. Practically, what kind of sacrifices might we need to make for the spiritual progress and welfare of others?
8. How would you evaluate your own willingness to live in a sacrificial way for others?
9. What do you sense is the main thing that God is stirring in you as a result of this passage?