

# UNITE!

WEEK 4

## A STUDY OF THE PRISON EPISTLES

### WITNESS

Do you want to excel at school, at home, at work, in your future? Want to work harder, faster, more intelligently? One answer, not found in external factors, is simply a positive state of mind. Several studies, including one out of Stanford University, show that a “positive attitude...is as large as the contribution as IQ” as it relates to success.

Isn't it fun when science catches up to the lessons of the Bible? Some of the best advice in Scripture is, “*Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may be blameless and pure* (2:14–15a). Aside from actual material gain, gratitude and humility preserve your witness. People will want what you have—they may hate you for having it—but they want it all the same. If you want to share effectively, don't be prideful and don't be ungrateful. There's enough of that in the world already.

It's easy to complain. We're dissatisfied by default. Gratitude must be cultivated. It's like embers needing tending until they finally catch fire. We will never attain gratitude without also embracing humility. Grumbling and arguing present a sure sign you are neither humble nor grateful. If you want to win at life, and reshape eternity, be positive.

### PHILIPPIANS 2:1–11

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort provided by love, any fellowship in the Spirit, any affection or mercy, <sup>2</sup> complete my joy and be of the same mind, by having the same love, being united in spirit, and having one purpose. <sup>3</sup> Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility, be moved to treat one another as more important than yourself. <sup>4</sup> Each of you should be concerned not only about your own interests, but about the interests of others as well.

<sup>5</sup> You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had, <sup>6</sup> who though he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave, by looking like other men, and by sharing in human nature. <sup>8</sup> He humbled himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross! <sup>9</sup> As a result God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—<sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

We've discussed that humility, and its inseparable counterpart, gratitude, are critical for meaningful impact. You cannot change the world without them.

These two attributes together might be summed up in what people call "a positive attitude." The QR code is a TED talk by a researcher showing the tangible value of positivity. He hilariously points out the different advantages that we have if we just cultivate humility and gratitude.



### DISCUSSION

Describe a time when you felt like quitting? How did it turn out?

1. What spiritual benefits indicate unity with Christ? (1)

2. How does Christ change your view of others? (3-4)

3. In what specific ways did the Father honor Jesus' humility? (9)

4. In what ways is Paul's advice surprising considering his situation. (i.e unjustly imprisoned)

5. List some examples from the last week of how you've...

...sought your own interest.

...treated someone more important than yourself.

What if people take advantage of me? Putting others first is a risk. You might get taken advantage of. Ask yourself, is it worth it? God won't waste your service. Talk to your coach today.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

## STUDY NOTES EGO IS THE ENEMY

“Appearances are deceiving. *Having* authority is not the same as *being* an authority. *Having* the right and *being* right are not the same thing either...Impressing people is utterly different from being truly impressive.” This quote by the author of *Ego is the Enemy* hits the nail on the head. In your schools and on your teams, you are leaders. You *have* authority, but you are not *an* authority. You *have* rights, but you must fight to *do* right. You are impressive, but greatness takes a lifetime to achieve. In a me-first world, it would do all of us wonders to think less often, and less highly, of ourselves.

We all struggle to varying degrees with unhealthy feelings of superiority and certainty—this despite all the evidence of our failings. If you’re reading this, you struggle with ego. We have a lot to learn in relation to leadership, humility, sacrifice, etc. However, you’ve come to study God’s Word and that’s the best place to start.

Today’s passage might be the most important text we could study in this season of your life. It will require you to put on your big kid pants and strap in for some hard-won wisdom—much of which you’ll have to take on faith. Wisdom takes the life experience of others and correctly applies it to our own encounters. That’s exactly what the Apostle Paul offers to us today. Paul shares hard-won wisdom on the extreme importance of humility.

## UNITY WITH OTHERS BEGINS WITH HUMILITY

Nothing frustrates us as much as selfish pride in others. Yet, no mirrors exist so that we can see it completely in ourselves. We’ve all had that teammate who thought too highly of themselves—the player more concerned with their points or yards per game instead of just helping the team win.

Paul picks up on the teamwork theme from last Week. He sets up several “*if*” statements that basically point to the benefits of teamwork in the faith—***encouragement in Christ, comfort provided by love, fellowship in the Spirit, and affection or mercy.*** By working as a team in the faith, the Philippians had the ability to bring ***complete joy*** to Paul.

We all want these benefits, just like the Philippians probably wanted to complete the joy of Paul. However, we are so unwilling to pay the price. The price tag for such benefits in teamwork is to ***be of the same mind, by having the same love, being united in spirit, and having one purpose. Instead of***

***being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity.*** Notice the repeated words of unity—“same,” “same,” “united,” “one. Notice also the converse, the traps into which we so easily fall—“selfish ambition,” and “vanity.” The team must come first in our hearts and minds.

At this point, we discover two of the hardest concepts to master in the whole Bible, ***in humility, be moved to (1) treat one another as more important than yourself. Each of you should (2) be concerned not only about your own interests, but about the interests of others as well.*** What would it look like if we really lived this way? What if we put the interests of others *first*—your classmates, your teachers and coaches, that person that cut you off driving?

If each of you reading this right now committed to seeking the best good of every person around, you would start a revolution. You should also realize that revivals have almost *always* been started by men and women your age—late teens and early twenties. Take the passion, energy, and zeal of youth and change the world. Paul is not only providing you a how-to manual for world change, but he also points you to the most significant world-changing life in human history as an example of what it takes.

## BELIEVERS SHOW HUMILITY BY THEIR ATTITUDE

Paul encourages us to ***have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had.*** Notice the humility of Christ. He was clothed in majesty and glory, but left eternity behind to come in ***the form of a slave, obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross!*** The most shameful and brutal way humanity has ever devised to kill itself. If we gave up everything, it wouldn’t come close to what Christ left behind. But in his humility, ***God highly exalted him.***

Your humility will not be wasted either. What acclaim and accolades do you need to give up? Who around you can you elevate? Who is the outcast in your class, the person that everyone would be shocked for you to befriend? You cannot out give God. That’s not only true financially, but also with your reputation.

Humility often gets confused with humiliation. Instead, humility is a right perspective of who I am in light of who God is. You are an image-bearer. Don’t mope around like you’re worthless. You’re infinitely valuable. However, one day ***every knee will bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.*** If all eternity is moving to the day when we find ourselves kneeling before Jesus’ throne, as a wise man once said, “I think that’s a pretty good way to start living now.”