

# FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT

## Philippians 2:1-4

### INTRODUCTION

On the eve of our Lord and Savior's betrayal, when Jesus was in the upper room with his apostles teaching and instituting the Lord's Supper, He said these words from **John 13:34-35**:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

He said this right in the middle of teaching them about His betrayal. There is a certain weight to the solemn nature of the time that He brings out this command.

What shows that we have "love for one another"?  
How do we grow and excel, yet more, in our "love for one another"?

Home Group Ministry – a fantastic manifestation of what it looks like to love one another and grow in that love.

### READ Phil 2:1-4

**Proposition: 3 Essential Elements** in a Growing Church:  
(growing church → spiritually growing)

- I. Body-Life Reality**
- II. Like-Minded Unity**
- III. Others-Oriented Humility**

**So That:** Home Groups

- |                             |                 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>I. Body-Life Reality</b> | <b>Phil 2:1</b> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|

Point – four realities that are part of biblical Christianity - they aren't just realities but also motivations - already/not yet

Proof – “**1**If therefore 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,”

What is the “**therefore**” there for? 1:27? → purpose statement → Phil 1:27, Paul is urging us to live like Christians.

- so we would have a life worth living – our daily life match the worth of the Gospel

“**If**” – seen 4 times in this verse

In the original Greek language, they had 4 forms of this word:

**1<sup>st</sup> Class Condition** – simple condition assumes the premise (protasis) is true for the sake of argument.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Class Condition** – contrary-to-fact condition and assumes the premise as false for the sake of argument.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Class Condition** – more probable future condition.

**4<sup>th</sup> Class Condition** – less probable future condition

1<sup>st</sup> class condition – assumes the premise to be true for the sake of argument – either the premise is true, or the author uses it to illustrate an absurdity (used in 1 Cor 15 to illustrate the absurdity of trusting in Jesus Christ if Christ didn’t rise from the grave – but He did, of course, rise from the grave)

When the premise is true (and not an absurdity), can translate as “**since**”

That to say, God through Paul, is bringing out four realities.

**4 Realities** of Christian **Body-Life**:

- A. Encouragement
- B. Love
- C. Fellowship
- D. Affection

These are realities and these are motivations.

Point – God asks you to give what He has already given to you.

The **1<sup>st</sup> Reality** of Christian **Body-Life** ...

- A. **Encouragement** → Christ-centered encouragement

Proof – “<sup>1a</sup>**If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ,**”

All of these are based upon being “**in Christ**”

→ only in the Body of Christ

“**encouragement in Christ**” – to call to one’s side, to exhort

1 Thess 4:18 – the same word that is translated as ‘encouragement’ here is translated as ‘comfort’ - “comfort one another with these words”

The 2<sup>nd</sup> **Reality** of Christian **Body-Life** ...

**B. Love** → tender love

Proof – “<sup>1b</sup>**if there is any consolation of love**”

“**consolation of love**” – tenderness – consoling love

**Love:** All-encompassing theological virtue and one of the defining marks of biblical Christianity.

God asks you to give comfort and encouragement — sometimes in situations where you won’t get anything back — He asks you to do this because He’s already given you a comfort that’s bigger and deeper than can be created by any situation.

2 Cor 1:3-7 - has certainly been near to my heart recently →

“Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, **4** who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in [a]any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. **5** For just as the sufferings of Christ are [b]ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. **6** But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; **7** and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are *sharers* of our comfort.”

**Illustration** – Last Friday was the anniversary of the September 11 abomination. Lisa Beamer bears witness to the encouragement of

being joined Christ. Her husband Todd was on Flight 93 that went down in Pennsylvania. He was the one who said, “Let’s Roll!”

He lost his life in the struggle, but many others in Washington were saved by what he and others did. He left behind Lisa and three small children. She said this: “*God knew the terrible choices the terrorists would make and that Todd Beamer would die as a result. God knew my children would be left without a father and me without a husband . . . Yet in His sovereignty and in His perspective on the big picture, He knew it was better to allow the events to unfold as they did rather than redirect Todd’s plans to avoid death. . . .*

*I can’t see all the reasons He might have allowed this when I know He could have stopped it. She says, “If we believe wholeheartedly, each moment, that our destiny rests in the hands of Jesus Christ – the one with ultimate love and ultimate power – what do we have to be concerned about?”*

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Reality of Christian **Body-Life** ...

C. **Fellowship** → ☐ Spirit-led fellowship

Proof – “<sup>1c</sup>**if there is any fellowship of the Spirit,**”

fellowship – partnership and mutual sharing  
Our communion as believers in the body of Christ.

This is something supernatural

→ Friendship – natural

→ Fellowship – supernatural

**Phil 2:12-13** – “So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup>for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.”

**Illustration** – There was once a small boy reading a book in a park. A man came and sat on the bench and glanced across and said to him, “What are you reading?”

“It’s the New Testament,” he said, “I was given it for my birthday.” “Do you believe there’s a God?” asked the man.

“Yes,” the boy said.

“Well,” the man said, “can you tell me is your God a little God or a great God?”

The boy was silent for a moment and then he said, “He is both.”

“How can that be?” said the man.

“Well, He is so great that the whole world cannot contain Him, but He is so little He can come and live in me.”

**Application** – So it is with the Holy Spirit, He is so great that at creation He was hovering over the primordial waters, but in grace He will come into a little girl or boy who trusts in Him.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Reality of Christian Body-Life ...

**D. Affection** → ☐ compassionate affection

Proof – “<sup>1d</sup>**if any affection and compassion,**”

“**affection**” – spla,gcna – literally means ‘the intestines’ – affection from the bowels. Today, we use the “heart” as the source of affection, in the time of the New Testament, the bowels were the source – comes from 1:8

“**compassion**” – translated as “mercy” in Rom 12:1

**Illustration**– The redwood trees in California are considered the largest things on earth and the tallest trees in the world. Some of them are three hundred feet high and over 2,500 years old. One would think that trees so large would have a tremendous root system reaching down hundreds of feet into the earth. The redwoods actually have a very shallow system of roots, but they all intertwine. They are locked to each other. When the storms come or the winds blow, the redwoods stand. They are locked to each other, and they don’t stand alone, for all the trees support and protect each other.

**Application** – In the same way, that is a great picture of God’s gift to you and me of the local body of Christ. He has intended and desired for us to be interlocked with a local body and to have the

protection, security, wisdom, comfort, camaraderie, and joy within a local body.

→ And a great way to do that is to be involved in a home group.

## **Body-Life Reality, ...**

### **II. Like-Minded Unity**

**Phil 2:2**

Point – God does not ask us to create **unity**. God commands us to understand and own the **unity** that Christ has created.

Unity is first and foremost, **inward – not outward!**

The external display and behaviors that God calls us to flows from the internal reality and unity.

The theme of Philippians is joy in unity

Outline→

1. Unity in Suffering
2. Unity in Submission
3. Unity in Salvation
4. Unity in Sanctification

Paul is saying, live this out. Manifest the spiritual reality of your unity that is created through the gospel. Maintain this unity.

Proof – “**make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.**”

In the original Greek language, verses 1-4 are all one sentence.

And there is one main clause in this big sentence → “**make my joy complete**”

Background – written to the church at Philippi

– first church in Europe that was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey

– written during Paul’s first imprisonment at Rome (A.D. 60-62)

Philippi is a mature church that brings Paul great joy. They are:

1:7 Evangelizing Church

1:9 Discerning Church

2:12 Obeying

4:5 Forbearing (Gentle, Patient)

## 4:14 Giving

➔ STBC is a mature church ☺...still a work in process...but a church that gives both myself and the Elders great joy.

Notice what will fill Paul's cup of joy. Not release from his imprisonment. He is ready to be poured out as a "drink offering" (2:17). What will fill his cup is the sanctification of his flock, the well-being of the church he loves.

When you love someone, you love it when they're happy. When you love someone, you love it when they're rejoicing. Paul wants to rejoice in their joy because he loves them. And he wants them to rejoice in his joy.

We see the same concept here:

**Heb 13:17** – "Obey your leaders, and submit *to them*; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."

Joy and obedience are not competitors. They're not contradictory. They don't fight against one another. Obedience in the Christian life does not squash joy; it brings joy to full blossom.

What is the chief indicator to Paul of the spiritual prosperity of the church? Like-mindedness! Like-mindedness with Christ! – Like-mindedness with one another!

**"by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose."**

**Necessary element** in biblical unity ➔ Like-mindedness

Paul uses the phrase *be like minded* 23 times in his letters. 10 times in this letter he says it. Do you think it's important? He says it over and over again!

**Rom 15:5** – "Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus"

**1 Cor 1:10** – “Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

**2 Cor 13:11** – “Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.”

**Phil 2:5** – “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus” – “have this mind among yourselves”

**Phil 3:15** – “Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude,” – “have this mind among yourselves”

**Phil 4:2** – “I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord” – “**be of the same mind**” – same phrase as 2:2

**Application** – How to be like-minded?

- By being high-minded and by being low-minded
- Have a high view of God and a low view of man
- The more lowly-minded, the more like-minded.

→ **Col 3:2** – “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth”

The initial subordinate clause “by being of the same mind” is elaborated by series of participial phrases that continue through 2:4

“**maintaining the same love**” – the same love:

- as Christ, as each other, for each other

Biblical unity is held by the head and by the heart – something grasped intellectually and lived out practically

“**united in spirit**” – su,myucoj – literally means “with” + “soul”  
→ souls that beat together, with one another and with Christ – be **soulmates**

“**intent on one purpose**” – literally translated as “having one mind” – identity of ideas and harmony of feelings

With unity of mind there is unity of love, mind, heart, and soul

Make note of **2:5!!!!!!!!!!!!** – **the mind of Christ!!!!**

**Illustration** – If you have a bag filled with marbles you have a certain unity. You have one bag full of marbles and all those marbles are pushed against each other, packed together. But what binds them together is the container. It’s something on the outside that holds them. As soon as you tear the bag, the marbles are everywhere.

But on the other hand, if you have a magnet and you put that magnet into some metal shavings, the shavings will all cling to the magnet. Not because there is an external container but because there’s an internal force. And they are pulled to each other because they’re pulled by the same force pulling through each other.

In the same way, the church is pulled together internally through Christ.

### **Body-Life Reality, Like-Minded Unity, ...**

#### **III. Others-Oriented Humility Phil 2:3-4**

Point – 2 Necessary Elements of Biblical Unity:

Like-Mindedness and Humility → parallel with Truth and Love

Like-mindedness is the theology, the teaching, the doctrine.

Humility is the practice, the fellowship, the heart attitude.

They complement each other.

Proof – <sup>3</sup>**Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself;** <sup>4</sup>**do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.**”

The true obstacle to unity is “**selfishness**”

- self-centeredness
- putting oneself first
- a me-first heart

“**selfishness**” – KJV translates this word as “strife” – the beast called Strife is awakened when people have a me-first heart. And when the beast has begun to rage, many are the victims ripped apart by it.

The poisonous cocktail of selfishness and conceit.

**“empty conceit”** – literally means “vain/empty/worthless” + “glory” – when one’s ego is tickled with the fanciful notion of his own glory

4<sup>th</sup> century expositor John Chrysostom said this – *“there is nothing so foreign to a Christian soul as arrogance”*

Pride is a master sin. It leads to all other kinds of sin. As far as I can tell, there is no sin in Scripture God hates more than pride.

The remedy, the cure for the disease of selfishness and the disease of conceit is the same – **“but with humility of mind”**

*to make low, bring low*

- in the Latin Vulgate they use the word *humilio*
- having a humble opinion of oneself; a deep sense of our littleness;

The word used here does not appear before the NT church.

**Illustration** - At the end of your final year at The Master’s Seminary, you are required to give a ten minute testimony during Chapel. I love what one Russian classmate said: *“I realize that God is very, very big and I am very, very little.”*

**Illustration** – Lately, I have read multiple articles on the Millennials work ethic, or lack thereof.

Article in the Chicago Tribune, “Millennials Frustrate HR Execs”

- Millennials’ sense of entitlement is frustrating. ... The younger employees feel they are owed more respect, opportunity and pay than their experience, ability or knowledge merit.
- Millennials lack face-to-face communication skills. This age demographic is most comfortable texting and can often seem socially inept.
- Millennials’ work ethic is troublesome. Besides wanting to work remotely from Starbucks, millennials are often unwilling to put in more than 40 hours a week. Their propensity for leaving the office

early — according to one respondent, for a 3 p.m. yoga class — is particularly problematic.

→ Humility is the opposite of an entitlement mentality.

This is the **mind of Christ** – **2:6-8** - “...who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

If anyone was ever entitled to anything.....it would be Christ!!

Biblical humility creates identity, community, and solidarity.

→ God humbles the proud and lifts up the humble

→  It is liberating; not oppressing

**1 Pet 5:5-6** – “You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time.”

Point – The unbeliever naturally puts himself first, and others second. The believer supernaturally puts himself second, and others first.

Proof – <sup>3c</sup>**let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; <sup>4</sup>do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”**

The word “**interests**” is a filler. It’s open-ended. It is generic. All that is specified is “your own (something)” or “the other’s (something).” So it could be, “Let each of you look not only to your own financial affairs, or your own property, or your own family, or your own health, or your own reputation, or your own education, or your own success, or your own happiness—don’t just think about that, don’t just have desires about that, don’t just strategize about that, don’t just work toward that; but look to the financial affairs and property and family and health, and reputation, and education, and success, and happiness of others.”

**Rom 12:10** – “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor”

**1 Cor 10:24** – “Let no one seek his own *good*, but that of his neighbor.”

**Illustration** – Mothers are always thinking about their children. Have you ever noticed that? They’re always thinking about their children. Mothers do not wake up in the morning and think, “Hmmm...how shall I serve myself today?” Mothers are always thinking about their children! They’re thinking about their children getting dressed and getting to school. They’re thinking about their children’s friends. They want their children to have good friends. They’re thinking about who their children are going to marry. They’re thinking about if their children are well. And even when their children grow up and go away, Mothers are thinking about their children. And then mothers add to that list. They start thinking about their grandchildren! They’re always thinking about other people. That’s what mothers do. That’s what mothers are.

**Application** – Paul is saying something sort of like that to you and me. He’s saying just like mothers don’t get their children out of their minds in any of their waking moments (they’re always back there somewhere), so also I don’t want you ever to get out of your mind the well-being of others in the congregation. Every waking moment you are to be living in a context in which you are oriented towards helping, encouraging, serving the rest of the congregation.

**Body-Life Reality, Like-Minded Unity, Others-Oriented Humility, ...**

## CONCLUSION

My beloved Margie and I had a very difficult first couple of years of marriage. We moved from church to church and when we finally found one we settled on, we attended but we were flakey, arriving late or leaving immediately. That changed when, one day, an associate pastor hurdled across those pews as we were leaving one Sunday, stopped us and invited us to a home group. That was, in the economy of God, the transforming turning point for my beloved Margie and I. From that, we got plugged into the church. From that we began serving. From that we began growing in

Christ. From that we began having personal quiet time. That is how God worked in my life. I pray you will consider participating in a local home group here at STBC.