

Philippians Session 3

2:1-11 – New Attitude

Resource: 'A Life worth Living' by Nicky Gumbel, Chapter 3

Timing: 40-50 minutes, then leading into ministry

Buzz groups: Suggestions are boxed, pairs or groups of 3-4 will work best

Illustrations: Suggestions are noted, but your own ideas and stories are preferable

Focus: Major on the one or two points most relevant to your group

Icebreaker: What things make you happy and why do they make you feel that way?

Introduction

Recap last week on *New Purpose*

Key Point: We are Christians for a purpose, our whole lives should be reset in this context

Key Verse: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (v.21)

Introduce this week on *New Attitude*

Key Point: Our lives are re-shaped by Jesus so that His attitudes become our own

Key Verse: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (v.5)

Tell a personal story that displays one of your own core attitudes, or perhaps tell a funny story or joke displaying someone else's very bad attitude

What Christ-like attitude do you most appreciate or aspire to, and why?

1. Unite Around Christ's Attitudes (v.1-2)

The Point: We're happiest when we're united with Christ and united with each other

Although he is in prison (1:14) Paul is full of joy (1:18) because he is united to the love of Christ (v.1).

If the church will be similarly united with each other, Paul's joy will be complete (v.2), but disunity will spoil it.

Paul lists three types of unity in v.2:

- "*being like minded*" not necessarily agreeing, but the same approach and attitude
- "*having the same love*" not loving the same things, but a common emotion of love
- "*one in spirit and purpose*" the same ultimate goal and purpose

Illustration: Share a story about a positive resolution to a situation of conflict in your own life or between some people you know

Application: Think of a situation you feel unhappy about and how you might change it by fostering unity in our homes, workplaces or relationships. [Hand out post-it notes and pens and ask people to jot down their answer whilst you play a CD – if the group seems to respond to this you can pick it up in the ministry time afterwards.]

2. Repair Wrong Attitudes (v.3-4)

The Point: Wrong attitudes destroy unity

Paul lists three wrong attitudes that can rob us of joy and destroy our unity:

- “*selfish ambition*” (v.3) a desire to succeed is good only if it seeks God’s will and glory rather than our own
- self-importance (“*vain conceit*” v.3) humility is the opposite of thinking we’re a ‘VIP’
- self-centredness (v.4) instead we focus on the interests of others

Illustration: Quote some press clippings describing a famous celebrity’s divorce, or the break-up of a famous rock band for similar reasons as these wrong attitudes

Application: Imagine you’re at your own funeral. What would you like to hear others say about you as a person? Write one or two key words down and ask yourself whether that is a good aim to have, and how you are doing on achieving it. [Hand out a different colour post-it and do this exercise together as you listen to a piece of uplifting classical music.]

What areas do we struggle to let go of wrong attitudes and in what areas do we struggle to find true meaning and fulfilment? Are these two areas connected?

3. Build Right Attitudes (v.5-11)

The Point: Jesus is the ultimate example to us of what right attitudes look like

Paul identifies three ways that Jesus “let go” of his status for us:

- his *natural* status (v.6)
 - Jesus climbed down the ladder of achievement not up it, to reach us
 - He was ambitious and determined for our sakes and not for himself
- his *social* status (v.7)
 - Jesus climbed down from the top of the social ladder to reach us
 - The King of Kings and Lord of Lords made himself nothing to serve us
 - This is the opposite of vain conceit and self-importance
- his *legal* status (v.8)
 - utterly humbled himself – even letting go of his right to live
 - suffered injustice and died as a criminal

Jesus became like us, so that we might become like him

This is the path to greatness in God’s eyes (v.9-11)

Illustration: Retell the story of the prodigal son. Focus on how through his own sin he lost his status, but how his father restored them even though he didn’t deserve it.

Application: Humility often seems so hard to live by – talk over your attitudes and ambitions with a friend, then pray together, asking God to develop his humility in us.

Ideas for Ministry

- Together in prayer thank God for the happiness he has given us – the good relationships we enjoy and the work he has given us
- Stand together in silence. Ask God to reveal to us any wrong attitudes that we can repent of and begin to put right with his help. Perhaps read out Romans 12:2 and ask the Holy Spirit to come and do His work of renewal and transformation in these areas. Then break in to pairs or smaller groups and pray through these.