

PAUL



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Lesson 04



Lesson 4: It's Not About Us



Bible Verses: Philippians 2:3-4,
Philippians 2:5-8, Ephesians 3:8



Bottom Line: Paul teaches us to live
with humility and selflessness, a mes-
sage that contradicts the teachings of
our culture



Topic: Humility, Selflessness, Loving
Others

REVIEW

Well, we're coming in on the home stretch on this Teachings of Paul Series.

We've learned so much from Paul's past and his ministry.

And there's so much that we can learn from him as we continue to dig into the letters that he wrote to the churches.

In today's lesson, we are going to dive into a topic that is completely counter-culture.

What I mean is that the topics we'll discuss today will be in direct opposition to what today's culture teaches.

Whether we're watching TV, playing video games, or scrolling through Instagram, we are being "taught" by our culture.

What is truth?

Why are we here?

What truly matters?

These questions and more are answered, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly, by the media that we consume every single day.

But what does God's Word have to say?

How does the Bible answer these questions?

When it comes to the idea of "self," both our culture and the Bible have quite a bit to say.

But only one of these sources is telling us the truth.

TEACH

These days, buzzwords related to self – things like “self-love” and “self-care” – are all the rage.

No matter where we turn, we are told to think about ourselves first.

Culture tells us that “self” should rule us – it’s all about my needs, my body, and my truth.

We are taught that self-love marks the beginning of our journey and that self-care is critical to our mental health.

And, to a point, there is some truth in these statements.

Of course, it’s important to be self-confident, knowing that you have purpose and value.

And it’s important to take care of yourself physically and emotionally.

But when do these cultural teachings become dangerous?

Let’s talk about it.

Discussion Questions

1. At what point do you think self-care turns into selfishness? Give examples of when self-care becomes sinful.
2. At what point do you think self-love turns into pride?
3. What are some of the messages that our culture sends out concerning self?

Read **Philippians 2:3-4** (New Living Translation) – Denial of Self

3 Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.

4 Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

In these verses, Paul is pretty clear not only about how we should view ourselves but also how we should relate to others.

He tells us NOT to be selfish and to BE humble.

And then he explains what humility means.

Humility is putting others before yourself.

It's recognizing that without Christ you are nothing.

It's also recognizing that your gifts and abilities don't come from you but from God.

We are gifted with talents for the glory of God, not to make our own names great.

This is the opposite of what culture teaches.

After all, it's much easier to worry about ourselves first.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do you put others before yourself? Is it difficult to do so?
2. Why do you think Paul is so concerned about Christians thinking of others before themselves?
3. What are some negative effects of putting yourself first?

Paul clearly warns believers that they should be selfless and humble, placing others before themselves.

But we haven't discussed Paul's reasoning behind his words.

In the verses following our earlier reading, we get a little bit more context.

In **Philippians 2:3-4**, Paul gave us "the what" – what we're supposed to do.

In **verses 5-8**, he gives us "the why" – why we're supposed to do it.

Let's read.

Read **Philippians 2:5-8** (New Living Translation) – Following Jesus' Lead

5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

6 Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.

7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form,

8 he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

“The why” of Paul’s teaching is evident in these verses.

By being selfless and humble, we are following the example of Jesus himself.

Jesus is the ultimate example for what selflessness and humility look like.

He not only lived on earth as a man (when he could have stayed on his throne), but he also sacrificed his comfort and ultimately his life by taking our sin upon himself.

In the history of mankind, we’ve never seen a more selfless act.

The cross of Christ was humiliating and agonizing, and yet Jesus never ran from God’s will.

In obedience to God, Jesus suffered and died for you and me.

If we want to be like Jesus, we must put others before ourselves.

When we follow Jesus in not only words but actions, we set ourselves apart from our culture.

And we point people toward a God who is nothing like the world. A God who, out of His great love, gave His Son to save us from the punishment we all deserve.

Discussion Questions

1. Other than Jesus' death for our sins, can you think of Bible accounts where Jesus acted with great humility toward others?
2. What opportunities do you have to demonstrate humility to those around you?
3. How can the daily reading of God's Word cause you to become more humble?

When we look to Jesus as the model for what Christian living looks like, it's clear that God's way is quite different from our own.

Read **Ephesians 3:8** (New Living Translation) – The Chief of Sinners

Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ.

Before we close, let's look back at Paul.

In this verse from **Ephesians 3**, Paul doesn't tell us how to behave as Christians like he did in the first set of verses we read.

Instead, Paul models it by talking about himself.

He calls himself "**the least deserving**" of all believers.

But why?

Because instead of arrogantly pointing out what's wrong with everyone else, Paul recognizes that his own sin makes him unworthy to serve God.

And yet God gave Paul the "**privilege**" of serving Him by spreading the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Instead of viewing himself as superior to others because of the calling on his life, Paul reminds us (and maybe even himself) that he is only here because God has allowed him to be.

This humility is evident throughout many of his New Testament letters to the churches.

Remember, just because Paul was humble and selfless, that doesn't mean that he was fearful or timid about spreading the Gospel.

Quite the opposite.

Paul understood the power of the Gospel – that it could transform a sinner like himself.

And his gratitude for this undeserved gift led him to serve and love others from a place of humility and selflessness.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think humility is a godly trait?
2. What are some ways that we can guard ourselves against pride?
3. Has anyone ever done a selfless act for you? If so, please share it with the group and explain how it made you feel.

In this series, we've learned so much about Paul, his teachings, and what a true ministry should look like.

As we go out into the world, let us remember the power of the Gospel.

That we are saved by grace, not works ...

That God can use us for His glory despite our pasts ...

That we're only truly living if we're living to please God, not man ...

And that this message of the Gospel is not about serving ourselves, but about serving others with selflessness and humility.