

SESSION 4 – Modeling My Character after Christ

Sharing About Exercises (25/20 MIN)

Keep in mind that in order to have time for everyone to share, each person should plan on around two minutes. The goal here is for you to share with the group how your exercise from last week went, and possibly something you learned about God, or yourself (it is not a teaching time).

Opening Prayer (1/1 MIN)

Premise of this Session (2/2 MIN)

We live as Christians to empty ourselves (even forfeiting advantages) so that others can be lifted. God gives grace to the humble but opposes the proud.

Key Scripture Passage (2/2 MIN)

Philippians 2:5-11 ⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Commentary (to be read aloud in the meeting) (10/10 MIN)

In Paul Baloche's song *Jesus You Are*, the opening line of the chorus is this: "Jesus, you are, you are everything I'm not. But everything that I want to be ..."

In Philippians 2, Paul shared what some think might have been one of the first Christian hymns, a beautiful song about Jesus that carries inside it the implications of what it means to be like Him. His words are about what we are to do and who we are to be as His disciples.

At the heart of the idea of following God is the desire to shed our old lives and to live as a new person. The key feature of this process is learning to "let go" of who we once were and to embrace our new identity. This is a difficult process because we are used to who we've always been. We tend to struggle letting go of the old life and claiming the new one. Let's take a look at a few examples from the Bible.

Consider Adam and Eve who chose selfish ambition over obedience. Or the Israelites who, after given the Ten Commandments to obey, struggled to do so. Or Jonah, who fought against God's instructions: "Go to the city of Nineveh and preach against it" (Jonah 1:2). Or Peter, who denied he knew Jesus three times. Or the disciples arguing over who was the greatest.

What's the deal!? Why is it so hard to want to follow God? Well, thankfully Jesus got to the heart of it; His clarity on the topic helps to define the chief issue. When asked what was of utmost importance for a child of God, Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind" (Matthew 22:36-38). "Letting go" of the old self and taking on a new self truly is a struggle over what we choose to love.

Paul outlined in Philippians how Jesus chose to love the Father and humanity and stressed that Jesus was different. Jesus chose obedience over self, so to become like Jesus we must choose obedience as well. Keep in mind that before Paul shared about Jesus' obedience and sacrifices, he gave a command to the Philippians: "do nothing from selfish ambition ... but in humility count others as more significant ..." (Phil 2:3-4). In Paul's mind, humility is the practicality of love. When we are humble, we love, and when we love someone, we humble ourselves for their benefit. Humility means giving up (some of) our "rights and privileges" for the sake of others and holding their needs as important. Humility not only takes care of a "need in the moment" but it also reorders the world.

According to Marty Solomon (BEMA Discipleship), rabbis from the Jewish tradition taught that the mark of a God-following society is how that society treats the powerless and the vulnerable. In their view, a godless society pushes out the weak towards the margins to fend for themselves. But, a godly society brings its weaker members into the “center of the camp” to be cared for and protected. In those societies, the strong give up (some of) their space for the good of others.

The *godly* person says in his heart: “From my position in life, what can I do in my sphere of influence, at my expense, for the powerless and vulnerable?” In contrast, the *ungodly* person says in his heart: “From my position in life in my sphere of influence, how can I take advantage of the powerless and vulnerable, at their expense?”

Paul clearly believed in this mindset of empowering the powerless and vulnerable too, and implored Christians to do the same. This certainly was Paul’s aim as he wrote letters to Christians, dotted all over the map of the first century world, that churches would be full of humble people who resembled the way of their master, Jesus Christ.

That desire to be like Jesus ends in humble actions, but it starts with faith-filled prayer and worship. Consider the chorus of the song that began our Session outline:

Jesus, you are, you are everything I’m not
But everything that I want to be;
Jesus you are, you are the maker of my heart
Finish what you’ve started in me.
Amen.

Who are you becoming?

Discussion Questions (25/10 MIN)

1. **In Philippians 2:6**, what do you think it means that Jesus “did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage?”
2. **Why do you think** Paul is writing on this subject to the Philippian church?
3. **List some things** going on that might cause Paul to write this letter to today’s church.
4. **In what ways** might we bring the weaker members of society to the “center of the camp?”
5. **How do you see** humility “reordering the world?”

Spiritual Formation Exercises (15/14 MIN)

Please pick one exercise (or make up an exercise) that you want to do for the coming week.

1. **The Word.** Rewrite the key passage for this session in your own words. Try writing it as a news story or a poem or a song lyric. Let your heart lead you in expressing your thoughts about Jesus.
2. **Journal.** Search online for “injustice in the world.” Make note of some of the “injustices” and ask for wisdom and guidance on how you might be able to make an impact in one area.
3. **Worship.** Go to whoamibecoming.org > Session 4 > Worship Exercise. Listen to the video.
4. **Discernment and Action.** Go to whoamibecoming.org > Session 1 > Ask, Seek, Knock and read *Discerning God’s Will*. Find a quiet place once a day and imagine sitting with Jesus. Ask Him to tell you what privileges and rights you use to your advantage. Ask Him to show you how to use them for others.
5. **Prayer.** Practice breath prayer. Breathe in slowly with the words “Jesus you love me,” hold for a count of two, and breathe out slowly with the words “You gave your life for me.” Do it several times a day throughout the week.

Prayer Time (10/1 MIN)

Online Resources for this Session

Visit whoamibecoming.org and click on **Session 4** tab for: **Session 4 Intro** video, the **Going Deeper** commentary, **Sermon Video** and **Transformation Story** about transformation in the aftermath of a near-death experience.