

## GIVING OF ONESELF

### God's Word:

*Philippians 2:1-18*

### Key Verses:

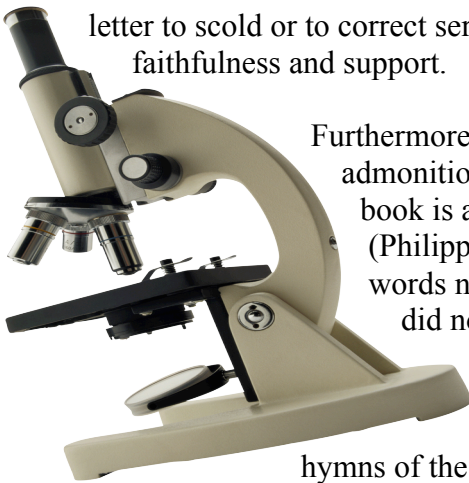
"HAVE THIS ATTITUDE IN YOURSELVES WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS."

PHILIPPIANS 2:5



### Breaking It Down:

The book of Philippians has the most joyous and celebratory tone of any of Paul's letters. It was written to a church where Paul was deeply appreciated. He did not write the letter to scold or to correct serious error, but to thank the Philippians for their faithfulness and support.



Furthermore, Philippians is loaded with useful, encouraging admonitions for us today. One of the central features of this book is a passage some have called the "Philippian Hymn" (Philippians 2:6-11). Because of its rhythm and the use of words not typical of Paul's writings, many believe that Paul did not write this section, but quotes a hymn that was already in use in the churches.

This passage has been the inspiration for many hymns of the church (such as "He is Lord" and "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name") and innumerable sermons. While there are several passages in the New Testament with a parallel theme of Jesus' self-humbling (particularly the first part of John 13), there are some unique expressions here that help us understand the mystery of God becoming human.

Paul's purpose in this section of the letter is to remind the Philippians that living for Christ means living life as Christ lived His human life here on earth. There is no place for ruthless ambition and selfish promotion. The church is to be known for its true

concern for the well-being of others. The essence of this is the idea that church members serve one another rather than seeking to control others for their own benefit. Satisfaction comes from serving, not from being served. This is the example of Christ.

The church must be singled-minded, unanimous in its desire to care for each other. One selfish person can upset and even destroy this ideal model. This is not a matter of direction from church leadership. Such an ideal can only come through the commitment that each believer has to Christ and a willingness to follow His example.

Jesus becomes the perfect model for us. As a man, He humbled Himself. Obedience was the natural result and that obedience took Him to His death on the cross.



### **Living It:**



One of the most respected and honored persons of the 20th century was an Albanian nun, Agnes Bojaxhiu. She was sent to India in 1929 to teach schoolchildren. She was troubled by the severe poverty she encountered on a daily basis, so she turned her attention to helping the poor.

She founded the Missionaries of Charity, an organization dedicated to serving the “shunned of society,” those whom no one else was helping. This became an international relief organization.

She was known to the public as Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and in 1979 was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her ministry. Despite being an international celebrity, Mother Teresa never used her public reputation for her own sake. All the money she received for books, speaking, and prizes like the Nobel, was poured back into her ministry. She never tired of this work, even until the day of her death in 1997.

What motivates a person like Mother Teresa? Why would she give her life to helping people others had forgotten? How do we explain her fierce love for the unlovely? Only Mother Teresa knew this for sure, but we can attribute a lot of it to her love for God and her consequent desire to be of service to Him.

Emily Elliot, taking her cue from Paul’s Philippian “Hymn,” wrote, “Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown, when Thou camest to earth for me.” If we are to be like Christ, we too should be of this mind. We cannot be found holding too tightly to earthly position or riches.



### **Understanding It:**

1. What one word describes what Paul was appealing for in verses 1-4?
2. Who is the Christian's greatest model of humility?
3. Is it possible for a church to be of one mind, spirit, and purpose? If not, why not? If so, how can we achieve this unity?
4. What is the difference between unity and conformity?



### **Doing It!**

Whatever ministry we do in the church or community, it is really not our ministry but it is God's ministry. He works in and through us, giving us both the desire and the strength to achieve His purposes. Is there a problem or concern around which your class or youth group can unify and do something concrete to bring about a positive change in your community either socially, spiritually, or both? Try to identify that problem and then tackle it together.

