

**AIM**

- To explain how we can conduct ourselves “in a manner worthy of the gospel” by standing firm together

**EXPLORE**

- *What questions do you have over the Follow-Up from Session 2?*
- Read Philippians 1:21-26
  - *What dilemma does Paul face? He is torn between wanting to live or die.*
  - *Why does Paul want to “go on living”?* It would be a benefit to the Philippians. By being with them again, he would help them to progress in their faith and find joy in Christ. This is what he means by “fruitful labor” in verse 22.
  - *What is it about death that Paul finds so attractive (v. 23)?* He would then “be with Christ, which is better by far.”
  - *Do you share Paul’s view of death? Why or why not?* It may be useful to look at 2 Corinthians 5:1-8 and Revelation 21:1-7.
  - *What do these verses tell us about Paul’s mindset?* For Paul, Christ is central to everything.

**LISTEN (DVD)**

*“Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 2:5).*

**Introduction**

A friend of mine told me this story. He said:

I was walking across a bridge recently. I saw this man who looked as if he was ready to jump off. “Don’t jump!” I said.

“Why not?” he said. “Nobody loves me.”

“God loves you,” I said. “You believe in God, don’t you?”

“Yes, I believe in God,” he said.

“Good,” I said. “What religion?”

“Christian,” he said.

“Me, too!” I said. “What denomination?”

“Baptist,” he said. “Me, too!” I said. “Independent Baptist or Southern Baptist?”

“Independent Baptist,” he said.

“Me, too!” I said. “Moderate Independent Baptist or Conservative Independent Baptist?”

“Conservative Independent Baptist,” he said. “Me, too!” I said. “Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist or Arminian Conservative Independent Baptist?”

“Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist,” he said.

“Me, too!” I said. “Dispensational Premillennial Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist or Historical Premillennial Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist?”

“Dispensational Premillennial Calvinistic Conservative Independent Baptist,” he said.

“Dispensational?” I said, and pushed him off.

Some disagreements can be incredibly petty, can’t they? By contrast, look at what Paul says in verse 27: “Stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel” (cf. Philippians 4:2-3).

“For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him” (v. 29). If suffering is to be the normal experience of the Christian, how are we to conduct ourselves “in a manner worthy of the gospel”, as Paul says we should in verse 27?

Paul insists that the only way to do it is by standing firm “in one spirit” and “as one man” – in other words, by standing firm together. He calls for unity again in chapter 2 verse 2: “Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose”.

Why is it so important to stand together? Because we can’t fight for the gospel, if we’re fighting with each other. Fighting will come from the outside (i.e., “suffering”); that’s the normal experience for a Christian. So, we must “stand together” and fight for the gospel. We have no reason to fight each other, since we’ve all been made rich in Christ (v. 1). Millionaires don’t fight over a penny.

When they stand together, it would enable these young Christians to stand without fear (“without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you”). This in itself will be a powerful sign to their opponents that God is on their side (v. 28).

How exactly can we stand together in this way? After all, if we’re being honest and realistic about human relationships, we know that it is very difficult to be “one in spirit and purpose” with anyone!

The secret of standing together is revealed in verse 5: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus”—which was, in a word, humility. The root of all sins is pride. It’s only when we see true humility that we see the ugliness and extent of our pride and the beauty of true humility. Such humility finds its fullness in Jesus, and from him we learn that being humble includes: considering others better than ourselves, setting privilege aside, becoming like servants, and obeying God’s will.

### **1. We should consider others better than ourselves (v. 3-4).**

We must not think of ourselves more highly than we ought, and we must not think of others as less important.

We must remember that everyone we meet has great value (v. 1). They are made in the image of God, and Christ died for them.

God calls people from every nation to follow him. God’s new community is supernatural. Unlike human communities, it crosses all boundaries of race, class, income, education and geography.

**Application:** Do we treat people with the same care Jesus did? Are we guilty of any sort of prejudice against other Christians?

### **2. We should set privilege aside (vv. 6-7).**

This wonderful poem in verses 6-11 reminds us of Jesus’ **Identity** as God and man (vv. 6-8), his **Mission** to die on the cross (v. 8), and his **Call** that people follow him as Lord (vv. 10–11).

Jesus is “in very nature God”, and yet he deliberately “made himself nothing”. He did not consider it worthwhile to stand up for his “rights”, as he could have done.

- *Add your own illustration here about “rights” that might be better laid aside for the sake of Christ and the gospel (eg: the right to take a holiday every year, to own certain possessions, to get married, to have children nearby.)*

**Application:** Are we willing to make ourselves nothing so that we can stand together in Christ?

### **3. We should become like servants (vv. 7-8).**

Literally, the word in verse 7 means “slave”. Jesus made himself like a slave, even to the extent of dying for others.

**Application:** Are we prepared to serve others, even if it costs us dearly?

### **4. We should fully obey God’s will (v. 8).**

Jesus obeyed God all the way up until and even in death.

**Application:** Are we daily surrendering ourselves to obey God unerringly?

## **Conclusion**

Paul ends in verses 9-11 with a stunning image of the whole universe “together in Christ”, worshipping the Lord.

If we keep this image of the exalted Christ in mind, our attitude will become more like his and we will be better able to stand as one man and in one spirit for the gospel.

## **DISCUSS**

- *Was there something in particular that stood out or struck you from the DVD?*
- *According to Philippians 1:27, what does it mean to conduct ourselves “in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (cf. 2:5-8)?*
- *What opportunities do you have to “contend” for the gospel by sharing your faith with others?*
- *Paul and the Philippian church faced opposition because they were “contending” for the gospel (vv. 28-30). Why might we face opposition to the gospel today?*
- *In verses 28-30 Paul makes some surprising statements. From these verses, what should we remember when we face opposition?*
- *What does it mean to stand together, according to Paul in Philippians 2:2?*
- *What will it mean in practice for us to “consider others better” than ourselves?*

## **FOLLOW-UP**

See the document entitled “Session 3 Follow-Up.” Please note that these follow-up questions differ from the ones in the *Discipleship Explored Handbook*.