

The Joy of Making Much of Jesus

Philippians 2:1-11

The Journey of Joy in Christ

A Series in the Book of Philippians

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Have you ever asked yourself, “How do I make much of Jesus?” Every sincere believer wrestles with this question as they grow in their walk with Him. The Christian life is not merely acknowledging a one-time decision, but enjoying a lifelong journey with Christ. The Apostle Paul captures this reality in Philippians 1:21 when he declares, *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”* For Paul, life meant fruitful labor of proclaiming the gospel, strengthening the church, and serving others. Death, by contrast, meant freedom from earthly burdens and eternal union with Christ. Both life and death, then, were opportunities to magnify Jesus. This mindset defined Paul’s ministry—that Christ would be exalted in everything. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul reminds us that all of life is to make much of Jesus in response to who He is, how He loves, and what He is accomplishing in and through His people. In Philippians 2:1-11, the Apostle Paul highlights how believers in Christ can glorify Him.

How do believers in Jesus Christ make much of Him?

1. Be invigorated by His power

2:1

If we are going to magnify Jesus Christ in our lives, we must be invigorated by His presence and fueled by His Spirit. The Christian life is not simply difficult—it is impossible apart from Him. At salvation, Jesus changes who we are, making us new creations because His Spirit now resides within us (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:13–14). Paul reminds us in Romans 8:11 that the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead now dwells in us, empowering us to live in resurrection power. That is why Paul frames Philippians 2:1 with “if” clauses that, in Greek, are not hypothetical but assumed realities, and can be translated, “since.” Paul is not appealing to what might be true, but to what is already true for every believer in Christ.

Four Spiritual Realities in Christ

- **Encouragement in Christ** - The word “encouragement” means to come alongside and help, counsel, or exhort. Jesus strengthens His people with His presence, His promises, and His word. As we walk with Him, He produces hope, peace, trust, and joy, reminding us that we are never alone.
- **Consolation of Love** - This is the comfort one experiences when the Lord draws near in times of disappointment or pain. His sacrificial love, as demonstrated at the cross (John 3:16; Romans 5:8), assures us of His care, secures us in His presence, and gives us courage to press on.
- **Fellowship of the Spirit** - Every believer can enjoy deep communion with the Holy Spirit who indwells us by yielding to Him and following Christ’s word and guidance. This *koinonia* refers to shared participation in the life of God and the mission of His people (2 Cor. 13:14). The Spirit not only draws us closer to God but also unites us together in one body and purpose.

- **Affection and Compassion** - Paul uses the strongest terms for tender love and active sympathy. These are not merely human virtues; they flow from God's own heart into ours. God's affection reshapes our relationships, and His compassion moves us toward others in Christlike care (Phil. 1:8; Col. 3:12).

These resources are not future ideals but present realities, available to every Christian. Yet, like a phone that constantly needs recharging, we must continually draw on them to live in His strength. Without renewal in His presence, we quickly slip into spiritual weakness and manifest a lack of joy and peace. That is why daily practices of talking with the Lord, reading Scripture, reflection, and intentionally depending on the Spirit are essential. To make much of Jesus, we must live not in our own power, but in the strength of the indwelling Christ who is always with us (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:16-17; Col. 1:26-29).

2. Be intent on His purpose 2:2-4

If believers are going to exalt Christ, both individually and as a church, they must align themselves with His purpose. Paul makes this appeal in Philippians 2:2 when he says, "Make my joy complete." This is the central command in verses 1-4, showing that true joy is found when God's people move from self-centered living to Christ-centered living. Paul calls the church to be "of the same mind," not in the sense of uniformity, but in harmony as those united around Christ's supremacy, the authority of His word, and the mission of making disciples. He urges them to be "united in spirit," literally "one-souled," with affections and desires knit together by the Spirit, and "intent on one purpose," which is nothing less than glorifying Christ, advancing the gospel, and building up disciples who live for Him. Just as a football team is unified not because every player does the same job, but because each fulfills their role for the sake of one goal, so the church magnifies Christ when every believer embraces their part in His mission.

But Paul also warns of the greatest threats to this unity: selfish ambition and empty conceit. These attitudes fracture relationships, stir up conflict, and rob Christ of His glory. The antidote is humility. Rather than insisting on our own way or elevating ourselves above others, humility calls us to consider others as more important than ourselves. Humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less. It is to see ourselves rightly before God (Rom. 12:3). Paul calls the church to "look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others," which is to make a deliberate choice to live with others in view. Such unity and humility put the gospel on display before a watching world, preserve harmony in a diverse body, and reflect the very character of Christ who humbled Himself for us (Phil. 2:5-11). To make much of Jesus, then, we must be intent on His purpose of glorifying Him, sharing the gospel with the people we know, and developing disciples of Christ.

3. Be impassioned by His Personhood 2:5-11

To make much of Jesus, believers must be strongly moved by who Jesus is and all that He has accomplished. Philippians 2:5-11, often called the "Christ Hymn," is one of the most profound portraits of Christ in all of Scripture. Paul writes this passage to teach profound theology and to shape how we think and live. Verse 5 is the hinge: "Have this attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus." Our attitude and our way of thinking and responding are to be patterned after Christ Himself. Just as a

child traces a picture, imperfectly but with real resemblance, so our lives are to “trace” Christ’s humility and love because we are trusting and following Him. To be impassioned with His Personhood means that our hearts are stirred by what Jesus has done and who He is. Like Paul, we want to say, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Our devotion is intensely personal; we love Jesus because of His very character and nature and because He loves us (Rev. 1:5-6).

Paul unfolds the Personhood of Christ in three movements. First, we see His pre-incarnate glory (v. 6): the Son of God existed eternally in the form of God, equal with the Father in every way, yet He temporarily set aside the exercise of His divine attributes and chose the path of unimaginable humility when He came to this earth. Second, we see His incarnated reality (v. 7): He “emptied Himself,” not by ceasing to be God, but by adding humanity to His eternal being, veiling His glory, and taking the form of a servant. Fully God and fully man, yet without sin, He embraced the role of a servant and willingly endured the limitations of humanity for our sake. Third, we see His humble obedience (v. 8) as Jesus became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross, the most humiliating and degrading form of execution. In His selfless humility, He bore our sin and shame and paid the full penalty of God’s just wrath against sin, so that those who believe in Him may be forgiven. God’s holiness was not compromised but fully displayed at the cross. Yet humiliation was not the end, as Jesus Christ’s obedience led to exaltation. God highly exalted Him, bestowing on Him the name above every name, so that one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is the eternal Lord to the glory of God the Father (vv. 9–11). The Son of God’s humiliation led to glory, and His cross led to a crown.

For the believer, being passionate about Christ’s Personhood produces a life of love, worship, and obedience. It means delighting in Christ Himself beyond His gifts, longing to know Him personally rather than merely know about Him, and allowing His holiness and love to shape our identity and actions. His humility becomes our model, His mission our pursuit, and His love our compelling joy. To exalt Him in this way is to live in the very purpose for which we were created: to glorify God by living out the life we have in Christ. When we live for His exaltation, we will never be disappointed, for He is the Preeminent One, the joy of heaven, and the Lord before whom all creation will one day bow. To make much of Jesus, then, we must think much of Jesus. The greater our vision of Jesus Christ, the greater our devotion and delight in Him will be.

The joy of making much of Jesus is at the heart of a Christ-centered life.

Passage Investigation: Prayerfully engage with the passage by reading it multiple times. Ask, “What is this saying?” and “Why did God have this recorded?” Look for the natural, normal meaning of the words and phrases and identify the meaning in context. **Write down your observations** about what the passage reveals about God, Christ, His kingdom, humanity, sin, the gospel, trials, and faith. Ask key questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Let your investigation lead to a deeper understanding and love for God and His word.

LIFE Application: Questions for our journey of joy in living out the LIFE we have in Christ
(Loving God, Investing in others, Following His word, and Engaging our world)

1. What are some ways you can daily “recharge” your soul in Christ’s presence so that you live by His power and not your own?
2. Paul reminds believers of the encouragement, love, fellowship, and compassion that are already theirs in Christ. How do these spiritual realities provide practical strength when you face discouragement, temptation, or relational strain?
3. What attitudes or habits of selfish ambition and conceit can subtly creep into your life or your church, and how can humility redirect your focus toward Christ’s mission?
4. How can our group, ministry, or church practically demonstrate being “one-souled” and “intent on one purpose” in glorifying Christ and advancing the gospel together?
5. When you think about Jesus’ humility in becoming human and dying on the cross, how does that shape your attitude toward obedience, service, and suffering in your own life?
6. Paul said, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21), and he highlights that our words and way of life are to rejoice in the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord as presented in Philippians 2:1-11. What does it look like for you, in your daily routines, relationships, ministry, and/or work, to live with the goal of making much of Jesus?