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Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

**The Oaks
Baptist Church**
Grand Prairie, Texas

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Imitate Christ Philippians 2:1-11

Lesson Background and Introduction

Under his own humble circumstances of Roman imprisonment, Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians. Paul wrote, in part, to address the church's problems with interpersonal conflict (Philippians 4:2, 3). But the core of Paul's teaching is found in today's text. Philippians 2:6-11 of our text is poetic in form in that the lines have parallel structure and build to a climax. Many scholars suggest that this is an early Christian hymn. It is easy to imagine the first generation of Jesus' followers singing or chanting these verses together as an expression of their new, revolutionary faith. In addition to the poetic rhythm of the original text, the content of this passage closely resembles other texts that also seem to cite ancient hymns. Some possibilities in that regard are John 1:1-14; Colossians 1:15-20; and 1 Peter 3:18-22. These focus on the nature and work of Christ by highlighting his divinity and preexistence, role in creation, incarnation, painful death, resurrection, and exaltation (although not all these passages contain all these elements). The hymn in Philippians 2 includes most of these elements.

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Follow Christ's Example - Paul wanted to see the Philippians truly loving each other, prioritizing the desires of others before their own, definitely exemplifying Christ. Is it possible to keep a compassionate attitude in a congregation with so many different kinds of people? Disagreements and conflicts inevitably occur in Christian fellowships. To counter these unkind interactions and misunderstandings, Paul held Jesus Christ up as their example: imitate His ways.

Draw upon the Holy Spirit - Jesus always placed the needs of others before His own. How did He endure and continue to pour out God's love? By the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives God's people the ability to go beyond themselves, to love people we might call unlovable.

Be Humble Minded - Paul rejoiced as he heard the reports about the Philippians following his instructions in the letter and fulfilling God's will. The church moved out, like a powerful army advancing against the enemy, holding up Christ's banner. In order to spread the Gospel, each individual needed to value each person in the Body, actively attending to each other's needs. Jesus had the power and authority to wipe out those coming against Him, but Jesus chose to love instead. A humble person says, "I have the ability to retaliate, but I choose to grant you peace." It's easy to lord it over others, but God calls us to walk in grace, extending kindness.

Stay Focused - How is it possible to practice such unselfish behavior? Paul exhorted the church to look to Christ. Jesus lowered Himself from heaven to earth to become a servant. The Son took His obedience to His heavenly Father all the way to the Cross, suffering one of the most shameful, cruel deaths known to man. The Savior set His mind and heart on doing the Father's bidding—period. As Paul encouraged the church of his day and so all believers, don't merely collect facts about Jesus, but imitate His humility and servant heart.

(Adapted from the Echoes Commentary)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:
Those who walk in step with Christ provide a model for us to emulate. But our ultimate example is Jesus Himself

POEM FOR THE WEEK:
To follow in the steps of those
Whose eyes are on the Lord
Will help to keep us strong and true,
And faithful to His Word. —D. De Haan

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:
Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ
(1 Cor 11:1 NKJV)
(from "Our Daily Bread", June 12, 2007)

Series: Our Love For God

UNIT: God is Worthy of Our Love

NEXT WEEK

Press On in Christ
(Philippians 3:7-14)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Preparation to Imitating Christ (2:1-4)

Prepare by having consolation in Christ (1)

- Consolation through peace given by Jesus (John 14:27)
- Consolation through Jesus' comfort (2 Cor 1:5-6)
- Consolation through God's encouragement (2 Thess 2:16-17)

Prepare by having comfort from Jesus' love (1)

- Comfort through having complete joy (John 15:10-12)
- Comfort in having the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22)
- Comfort through encouragement and understanding (Col 2:2)
- Comfort in being born of God and knowing Him (1 John 4:7-8)

Prepare by having fellowship with the Holy Spirit (1)

- Fellowship with the Holy Spirit through spiritual baptism (1 Cor 12:12-13)
- Fellowship with the Holy Spirit through obedience (1 John 3:24)
- Fellowship with the Holy Spirit through adoption (Rom 8:15)

Prepare by being tender and compassionate (1)

- Compassionate through forgiveness (Eph 4:32)
- Compassionate through the God of compassion (2 Cor 1:3-4)
- Compassionate through being God's chosen people (Col 3:12)
- Merciful to those who need it (Jude 1:22)

Prepare by being united with other believers (2)

- United through harmony (Rom 12:16)
- United through endurance and encouragement given by God (Rom 15:5-6)
- United through agreement (1 Cor 1:10)

Prepare by being humble (3-4)

- Humility through grace (James 4:6)
- Humility before God (James 4:10)
- Humility that is not false (Col 2:17-19)
- Humility that comes from godly wisdom (James 3:13)

Elements of Imitating Christ (2:5-11)

Imitate Jesus who has the nature of God (5-6)

- Having God's glory (Heb 1:3)
- Being the image of God (Col 1:15)
- God's Divine Nature is seen in His creations (Rom 1:20)
- We can also participate in God's Divine Nature (2 Pet 1:4)

Imitate Jesus who is a servant (7)

- God chose Jesus as His servant (Isa 42:1)
- Jesus, as a servant, brought the light to the Gentiles (Isa 49:6)
- God's Spirit was upon His servant Jesus (Matt 12:18)
- Jesus became a servant to confirm God's promises (Rom 15:8)

Imitate Jesus who humbled Himself in obedience (8)

- Humility to want God's Will above His own human will (Matt 26:39)
- To Jesus obedience was His nourishment (John 4:34)
- Jesus suffering also brought about His obedience (Heb 5:8-9)
- Jesus came to do God's will (Heb 10:7-9)

Imitate Jesus who has preexistence (9)

- Jesus existed as God (John 1:1-6)
- Jesus existed from the beginning (1 John 1:1)
- Jesus existed before all things (Col 1:15-18)
- Jesus existence has no beginning or end (Heb 7:3)

Imitate Jesus who is Lord (10-11)

- Jesus is Lord because God made Him Lord (Acts 2:36)
- Jesus is Lord because through Him we live (1 Cor 8:6)
- Jesus is Lord because the Holy Spirit testifies to us He is (1 Cor 12:3)
- Jesus is Lord because He confirmed He is (John 13:13)
- Jesus is Lord because the Church is built on this fact (Matt 16:16-18)
- Jesus is Lord because the angels agree that He is (Rev 17:14)