**Toxic Week 4**

**Selfishness**

**Philippians 2: 1-8**

**Intro:** All relationships are built on something. There’s a foundation there, maybe you have a friend who you met in college and you struggled through classes together, maybe your foundation is family, maybe the foundation isn’t so good. (it’s like seeing a Michigan fan out of state and saying go blue, we are bonded by Michigan) (Grandpa talking to a person because He say a bumper sticker or Tshirt) Today I’m going to give you the secret formula to having the best relationships possible. It’s another challenging topic in our Toxic series, and when we struggle with this, it makes all of our relationships bad, but if we get it right, we can have unified relationships with other people build on the foundation of our relationship with God!

**BL: Our goal is to be united in our relationships with each other through Jesus.**

**Outline**

1. Our goal is to be united (1-2)
* Our goal in all of our relationships should be to be united. Everything is built on unity in something. When that unity breaks down it’s when we have problems. As believers our unity is in our relationship with Christ. Division and disharmony can hurt our church family but not only those relationships but all other ones. Unity is essential in our relationships as believers. Fracturing Christ’s church is going to be one of Satan’s main objectives and what better way to do it than through breaking apart our relationships with each other. Paul is challenging the believers to make their goal to be united with each other. The threat to the Philippian church wasn’t a matter of doctrine or some immoral failing but it was an issue of how the Philippian believers thought about themselves, and I don’t think it’s too different for us today. (Slide1-3) Verse 1
* **Therefore:** Paul is referring back to chapter 1:27—He is challenging us with 4 terms of affections that all should appeal to our relationship with Jesus. Encouragement in Christ, Comfort from Christ, oneness or fellowship and love for one another all come from our relationship with Jesus. **The appeal for unity begins by focusing on our relationship in Christ, not our relationship towards each other.**
* Believers conducting themselves in a unified way should promote furthering the Gospel more effectively.
* Here Paul is giving us the equation for how to live our unity in our lives. He says **IF,** is a first class conditional participle, which means these if statements all refer to certainties and not possibilities. These are essentially four reminders of our spiritual resources. Anyone like Math? Yeah I don’t either. But I want you to look at this like spiritual math. Spiritual resource + the corrected spirit enabled response = Unity (Slide 4-5 ) We have the resource to live in unity now we have the responsibility to do such. God never asks us to do what He does not also enable us to do. I think that’s a great reminder. He’s going to give us a massive challenge here in how we are supposed to live, but He also gives us everything we need to accomplish that. What has He given us to accomplish this unity?
	+ **Encouragement in Christ:** we are in Christ. We have the blessing of knowing Jesus and being found in Him. Nothing can hel more in life than finding encouragement in our relationship with Jesus.
	+ **Consolation of Love:** This is a reference to the love of Christ that comforts us. Love that flows from our relationship with Jesus. We know God’s love, and His love makes us love others.
	+ **Fellowship:** Fellowship means a close association involving mutual interests and sharing. The spirit unites us as brothers and sisters in Christ. Here we are reminded of the spirit produced fellowship that we all share because of our relationship with Jesus.
	+ **Affection and Compassion:** this flows from our relationship with Jesus. Jesus shows us infinite love and mercy. This tender love and mercy should cause us to look out for the interests of others and serve sacrificially.

**Application:** As fellow believers we too enjoy these amazing blessings from God, and when we put them together with the appropriate action it can produce unity in our relationships.

* Look at verse 2 (Slide6-7 ) Here Paul is saying make my joy complete—it He is expressing a sense of urgency in filling His joy and the way to make his joy complete was to be unified. Joy was already being experienced because of His relationship with these believers but His cup of joy would be filled to the top if the Christians would maintain unity.
* The goal is to **Be of the same mind**—thinking the same way, being like minded is essential for our unity. Being like minded obviously starts with what we believe. It begins with our faith in God and our relationship that we have with Jesus. The idea is that the **same mind** must be focused on the truth. The idea here isn’t that we are all identical people thinking the same exact thoughts, but that we are focused on the same truth the same goal, that you and I exist to share the gospel and serve God with our lives. We are commanded to be unified in three ways.
	+ **Maintaining the same love:** that means to have continued possession. We are called to keep holding the same love. Our opinions or thoughts might differ but we are to be united in love. The same love that God has given us. (Jn 13:35 Jesus says people will tell if you are my disciple (a Christian) if you love each other.) This love isn’t sentimental or emotional but obedient, we are to choose to love each other as God chose to love us. The love this passage is telling us to have isn’t about attraction or preference but rather choice. Choice to sacrificially love and care for others needs before our own.
	+ **United in Spirit:** this literally means one soul. (of one accord—Make the Honda Joke?) This described people who are knit together in harmony, having the same desires, passions and ambitions. What are those focused on sports, work? No on serving God, on growing His kingdom on sharing the gospel and teaching new believers what it means to follow Jesus.
	+ **Intent on one purpose:** This is unity of thought and purpose. This is a unity of heart, soul and mind. The intent here is setting a person’s mind or heart upon something. Our actions will show this. Again this is in the present tense, which means this is to be our continual mindset. It’s not that we will see eye to eye on every detail in life, we all have different circumstances in life, different problems we go through, different up bringing different challenges. But we are supposed to have the same purpose, same love, same mindset.

**Application:** Think about how this would affect our relationships: your marriage on the same page, your GF/BF/fiancée on the same page, your kdis on the same page, your co workers on the same page, our church on the same page, thinking alike, treating each other right, loving right, living right! Think about how amazing our relationships could be, but we’re all so different, we have so many problems that other people don’t see, we are all struggling some more than others, our past, our up bringing , our family of origin. (now you see the problem) How on earth do we live in unity with each other? Look at what verse 3 says. (Slide 8-9 )

1. Unity comes from focusing on others (3-8)
* **Do nothing from Selfishness:** This means do nothing selfish, not even one thing. The idea of selfishness is those who seek only their own. It’s a self love, disregarding the rights or feelings of others.
	+ Selfishness: The root meaning of the term selfishness (eritheia) may have been that of a hired person. The idea of a mercenary, one who does his work simply for money, without any regard for the issues or harm he may e doing. Everything he does is for the purpose of serving and pleasing self. It’s a desire to put yourself first.
* Many believe Paul was writing this because perhaps there were factions in the Philippian church that were beginning to take place and Paul was trying to get them to see that their disagreements were showing a spiritual fellowship problem. The cure for this problem isn’t rules or threats, but getting their hearts right with God.
* If there is to be joy filled up in the church, there can’t be factions and division and a spirit of competition within the church.

**Application:** I’m super competitive! I’m a guy many of us are! And there can be some healthy competition that can be good and helpful. But there can’t be this unhealthy competition in our relationships. Like all joking aside, Michigan V. Ohio State aside, if it gets in the way of unity in our marriage, families, friendships, church and serving God is has to go. We have to be focused on the main goal. The goal is reaching others for Jesus and teaching them all that they need so they can do that as well, if that isn’t our focus we need to step back and fix it. It’s not about who serves better, who shares the gospel better, how much more you can do, etc. It’s not about comparison, its all about serving God. Really this command is forbidding us of doing anything that causes strife. Does that joke cause a problem in your marriage? Don’t say it? Does that comment tear down another believer, don’t say it. Does that action hurt people? Don’t do it.

* **Empty Conceit:** The idea is vain glory or empty praise. It has an appearance but lacks reality. It’s the idea of earthly things, that lack any eternal value. (sit here for a moment, I think a lot of us are very focused on the earthly things, things that have little to no eternal value, our job, our house, sports, vacations, things, but we aren’t focused on eternal things. We are going to regret that one day big time and I think as a whole, Americans are going to regret that big time) The word here for conceit (kenodoxia) describes a person who is ambitions for his own reputation, challenging others to rivalry, willing to fight to prove his idea is right! It includes a highly exaggerated self-view. Now we don’t like the word conceit. I don’t think any of us would say this is us, but the reality is this is all of us. Selfishness, pride, conceit is a problem in probably all of our lives in one way shape or another. If you disagree with me think of it this way, it’s when we seek to advance ourselves, it’s putting ourselves before others. The command here is to avoid anything focused on gaining our own praise for ourself, anything that is focused on ourselves and making our self look better. Self is not to be first! This is a wide, general, sweeping statement.
1. Noting is focused on yourself (3a)
	* The challenge is for us to do nothing focused on our own glory. This is our job, in our relationships with our spouse, our kids, our friends, coworkers, this is serving in the church. Everything in life tends to be about how we can get ahead. It tends to be focused on how we can make a name for ourselves or how we can get fame, or how we can get noticed or become popular or make more money for ourselves. But that’s not the way it should be, especially in our relationships. How should they be?
2. Everything is focused on others (3b)
	* **Humility:** Now the Bible gives us the spiritual cure for selfishness. We are to view others more highly than we view ourselves. It’s the opposite of what we want to do and opposite of what we are told to do. Humility in our relationships will go a long way in removing disharmony in the body of Christ. We are thinking with humility of mind, we recognize that we aren’t all that, but God is all powerful and all sufficient. Apparently this was a term that Paul came up with. John Wesley said, “neither Greeks or Romans had a word for humility.” (Sounds a lot like our culture.) Pagan writers took the term (tapeinophrosune) and they used it in a derogatory way. The idea of being humble was weak to them. But humility isn’t thinking less of ourselves bur is really not thinking of ourselves at all. Humility is what all of our relationships need. True humility is not putting yourself down, but lifting others up! If we focus on lifting others up putting ourself into the proper place will take care of itself. As we go through life exalting Christ and other genuine humility will happen. God promises to humble the proud, but doing it this way, by your own choice and on your own is definitely the easier way to do it.
	* **Regard Others:** We should focus on others so that we are more others centered than self centered. Paul knew that if we were pre occupied with our selves it would be sin and that would destroy unity in our lives. Again the passage is using the present tense, it was a habit, a constant attitude, a lifestyle of making others more important than ourselves. Again its not putting ourselves down in a bad way but our concern for others must come before our concern for ourselves. It’s being humble and having humility towards others.

**App: (**Slide10-11 ) Barnes describes humility this way, “it is the estimation of ourselves according to truth. It is a willingness to take the place which we ought to take in the sight of God and man;” What is the truth that we are supposed to be basing this on? God’s Word. Imagine this humility played out in our relationships. You are focusing not on yourself, but rather on doing what God says and doing what others need. We focus on our spouses, our kids, our friends, our family, our coworkers, our church family with humility thinking about their own needs before our own, their own thoughts and feelings before our own, their own wants, needs, and feelings before we focus on our own and then we have a proper view of our self. What helps us do this? Look at verse 4. (Slide 12-13 )

1. Focus on the interest of others (4)
	* **Do not look:** in the present tense so make it a habit not to look at your own interests. A selfish spirit is destructive in our relationships. Obviously the passage isn’t saying to never care about yourself, never take care of yourself, don’t work, eat, exercise, go to the doctor, etc. but focus on others as well.
	* We are to put our own interests below that of others though.

**App:** Think about that for a moment, we aren’t saying hey spouse, kids, this is what I want to do today, or what I want to get done, hey friends I want to go to this restaurant. No rather it’s what do they need? What do they want? Again not saying I illustrate this perfectly ever. But it’s what we need to do. Focus on the interest of others. The great thing is, Paul gives us an example to follow. Look at the example we are to follow in verse 5. (Slide 14-15 )

1. Follow Jesus example (5-8)
2. An attitude—a choice (5)
	* This is a command. Before he even tells us what the mindset is he tells us this must be the practice in our life. It must become part of our lifestyle, part of our relationships. This is a choice. We don’t be humble and serve in humility when we want to, or when we feel like it. We are supposed to choose to do it always.
	* He wants us constantly thinking about how we are serving others. How we are caring about others, how we are putting others thoughts, needs, and wants before our own. Just like Jesus did. Paul is saying **Be Like Jesus.** Which should be the goal for each and every one of us as believers. If you have placed your faith and trust in Jesus for salvation you should be trying to become more like Jesus. And here the Bible says, choose to have the same attitude that Jesus did for others. What did His attitude towards others look like? (Slide16-17 )
3. Emptied Himself and served (6-7)
* Jesus emptied himself and became a human. This was ultimate humility. Jesus was God, is God, but He took on the form/flesh/became a man. It wouldn’t be wrong for Jesus to think of himself highly, He is God. But instead He choose to care about others. (you and me.)
* Jesus was equal with God and He gave that up to come to earth to die on the cross for you an me. Just think about that for a moment, He gave that up for us.
* Not only that but the Bible tells us Jesus emptied Himself, of all his honor and glory and stepped down from heaven. He didn’t become no longer God, He was still God, but he took on human nature. And He took on the form of a servant. He was insulted, humiliated and rejected by the people He made. And He did God’s will. (remember His prayer was not my will, but yours God) He did the Father’s will no matter what, even in the face of pain, humiliation, separation from God, and taking my sin and your sin on Himself and paying for it in the way that we should have had to pay for it. He did all of that for us. Talk about putting others first in a relationship.
1. Humbly obey God (8) (Slide 18-19 )
* He obeyed God, even to the point of dying on the cross for us. Jesus was just as much human as we are, He grew up, he grew physically, emotionally, socially. He dealt with relationships, hardships, problems just like we have to, but His focus was always on two things, God’s Will, and other people. That’s what He was focused on. Even if it meant dying a terrible death on the cross for your sin and my sin.
* **He humbled Himself:** All of this was a choice to be humble. To have humility. He willingly and graciously died for us. He wasn’t forced or coerced. We are often humbled by doing or saying something, but here Jesus chose to be humble and to humble Himself. You and I need to follow His example and humble ourselves in our relationship. This is the key to true unity.

**App:** are you humble and show humility or are you selfish, conceited, and proud? Christians we have to choose to humble ourselves and focus on others in our relationships to have true unity. The goal of our relationships should be unity in Christ. And if that is possible in our relationships we have to follow Jesus example and put others first, humbling ourselves. What’s the goal in all of this? Look at verses 12-13 (Slide20-21 ) Do we wake up one morning and magically choose to living in humility and all of our relationships are perfect? No. We have to work at it. Anyone ever work out? (explain working out illustration) Here the Bible says to **work out your salvation.** Not work for or to keep your salvation. God keeps your salvation and He is at work in you to make you more like Jesus. (we talked about this during deep end: Sanctification) He is setting you apart for a specific purpose. This is your spiritual work out. God is at work in your life to make you who you need to be to fulfill the plans that He has for you, but you have to put the work in, just like a work out. You have to choose to humble yourself, follow Jesus example and put the work in the work out your salvation, in order to make your relationships stronger. God has promised to work in you too, but to be most effective you have to put work in as well. Follow Jesus example.

**Takeaways: (Slides 22-23)**

1. **Trust in Jesus as your Savior.** None of this is possible with out a relationship with Him. (you can do that as easy as….. conversation with God) Feel free to grab me after to discuss this more.
2. **You need to make unity a priority in your relationships.** Unity is the main goal. That true unity can only come because we are united in Christ. We have to be focused on what God wants us to do and focused on others more than ourselves.
3. **Follow Jesus example of humility.** That means humbly making God’s will and others more important than yourself. That isn’t easy. But it’s what we are commanded to do and it’s the secret to having great relationships.

**Conclusion:** I think we all ultimately want good relationships. Marriages, friendships, kids, extended family. Here’s the key, we have to focus on others more than ourselves.

I read this story this week, “The German philosopher Schopenhauer compared the human race to a bunch of porcupines huddling together on a cold winter’s night. He said, “The colder it gets outside, the more we huddle together for warmth; but the closer we get to one another, the more we hurt one another with our sharp quills. And in the lonely night of earth’s winter eventually we begin to drift apart and wander out on our own and freeze to death in our loneliness.”

Christ has given us an alternative—to forgive each other for the pokes we receive. That allows us to stay together and stay warm.”

We are like those porcupines, let’s be honest, even if we are being humble we are prone to hurting each other. That’s a part of life, people are going to offend you, hurt you, harm you, not even intentionally all the time. But if we are focused on God and putting others needs before our own, we can get over those pains and hurts and problem and have true unity focused on our relationship with God and not the mistreatments we see in our relationships. Let’s focus on God and others this week.