

December 21, 2003 by Steve Brandon



The Humility of God

Philippians 2:6-8

1. Jesus came willingly (verse 6).
2. Jesus came with nothing (verse 7).
3. Jesus came in humility (verse 8).

About a month ago, president George W. Bush decided to visit the American troops in Iraq and enjoy the Thanksgiving holiday with them. His trip began on the day before Thanksgiving. Just after nightfall, President Bush left his ranch in Texas with an unmarked vehicle without the usual security escort. If you had been sitting outside the ranch waiting for the president to leave, you never would have known that he left. It took him 45 minutes by car to arrive at the airport at Texas State Technical College in Waco, where he boarded Air Force One and flew to Andrews Air Force Base near Washington, D. C. Once he arrived, he switched to an identical Air Force One, which is primarily used for international flying, in a closed hangar and took an overnight flight to Baghdad. Air Force One touched down at Baghdad airport with lights off and its windows blacked out at about 5:30 in the evening, Baghdad time. The soldiers from the 1st Armored Division and the 82nd Airborne Division were led to believe that their special Thanksgiving guests would be L. Paul Bremer, the top U.S. civilian in Iraq, and Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the U.S. military commander. Sanchez told the troops that they had a Thanksgiving message from President Bush, and Bremer suggested that the top U.S. official on the scene should read it. Bremer said, "Is there anyone back there who's more senior than us?" as he glanced behind him. President Bush stepped out from behind the curtain and grinned at the stunned soldiers. There was no grand introduction. There was no presidential fanfare. He simply walked onto the stage. The place erupted in cheering and hollering to such an extent that one soldier said that the place shook! Many of the soldiers were so moved with joy that they were crying. After things calmed down, president Bush said, "I was just looking for a warm meal somewhere [and] I can't think of finer folks to have Thanksgiving dinner with than you all." After serving food to the troops, Bush was on his way home to Thanksgiving leftovers at his ranch in Texas.

It was a great political move. It touched the heart of many Americans. (Certainly, there were many who criticized him). But I would contend that the majority of America thought that it was a great way to boost the moral of the country and of the troops in Iraq. I am sure that his trip especially encouraged those soldiers from the 1st Armored Division and the 82nd Airborne Division that he came to visit. I'm not sure how many of them complained that he went to great risks to be with them for Thanksgiving.

I want to ask you, "What made it a great move?" I have thought of a few reasons why it was great.

1. The surprise. Nobody expected the president of the United States to arrive in Baghdad. It was kept top-secret. The thirteen reporters that went along with the president had to surrender their cell phones, pagers and other electronic devices that might be used to leak the story. The plan was kept from Bush's family. His father and mother weren't told until he arrived at the ranch on Thursday for Thanksgiving and didn't find him there. The troops didn't know that the president was coming.
2. The risk. Non-military flights in and out of Baghdad had been shut down for four days before Air Force One arrived, because a cargo plane was struck by a shoulder-fired surface to air missile. Non-military flights had resumed only a few hours before Bush's arrival. It was a very risky thing that he did. It was decided beforehand that if news of Bush's departure leaked at all, they were going to turn around, even if they were in the air.
3. The sacrifice. President Bush could have had a nice, relaxing Thanksgiving meal with his parents and his twin daughters at his Texas ranch as originally planned. Instead, he spent almost 40 hours in his whirlwind tour around the world. Rather than taking the easy course, he chose a difficult one.
4. The commitment. President Bush demonstrated his commitment to the war in Iraq. It demonstrated that Iraq is on his mind. As one soldier, fighting in Iraq, said, "It shows that he cares about us and is thinking about us." Another soldier put the entire trip into perspective. He said, "Here was this man, our President, came all the way around the world, spending 17 hours on an airplane and landing in the most dangerous airport in the world, where a plane was shot out of the sky not six days before. Just to spend two hours with his troops. Only to get on a plane and spend another 17 hours flying back. It was a great moment, and I will never forget it."
5. The humble entrance. Without any fanfare or hype, president Bush simply appeared before the soldiers. He wasn't wearing a fancy suit. He was wearing a simple jacket that said, "Army" on it.

I cause you to reflect and think about this trip because there are some parallels to what George W. Bush did and what our Savior did. Two thousand years ago, in the city of Bethlehem, God took a trip to the earth. He became a man, like us. He didn't travel 17 hours on a jet. He descended from deity to humanity. He didn't descend to any man, He descended to be a servant to us. By dying on the cross, and doing what we could never do for ourselves. Few expected it. The sacrifice was great. And it demonstrated His love for us and commitment to us.

What made the president's trip to Iraq so special was that it was the president who came. It wouldn't have meant nearly as much if the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, had taken the trip. The reason why the surprise was so special was because it was the president. Those in the military have risked their lives as much as president Bush did. Those in the military have made more of a sacrifice that president Bush did. He was gone from home for 40 hours. They have been gone from home for months. It was simply the fact that the president, the most powerful man in the world, would make such a trip to be with the troops, and be introduced in such a low key fashion. Though he was the president, he demonstrated that he wasn't above taking risks for the cause of our country.

The reason why Christmas is so great is because of the one who came to be among us. It was God who came to be among us. This is the message of our text this morning.....

Philippians 2:6-8

"although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Jesus is God. Paul clearly tells us that Jesus "existed in the form of God" (verse 6). This is in contrasted with Jesus "taking the form of a bond-servant" (verse 7), which refers to His attitude as a man. As truly as Jesus was a man, so also is Jesus God. You can't get away from the parallel. Jesus is God. That is what the Bible clearly teaches. This is what Paul was saying. Jesus came from deity to humanity. God took the form of a man, though He still remained God. This is what the church has always affirmed down through the centuries. One person, Jesus, had two natures, a human nature and a divine nature.

The gulf between God and man is of infinite proportion. It is far more than the gulf between the president and the military personnel. The difference between the president of the United States and a common soldier is one of rank. But, the difference between God and man is one of species. It is a difference of being. It is a difference of nature. It is a difference of essence.

Have you ever sat and looked upon an ant hill? I remember as a child watching ants for hours at a time. I would watch them come in and out of their little ant hill. Sometime, I would take a stick and knock a few grains of sand into the opening of the ant hill and watch the ants climb their way back through it. Now, there are many things that you can learn from ants. The Proverbs tell us that we can learn about diligence from ants. But there are other things that you can learn from ants. One of them is that you can learn how much bigger and stronger and faster you are than ants. Sure, they might be able to hold six times their body weight in their mouth and carry it all around all day without being tired, but even the smallest child can step on an ant and kill it instantly.

Now, could you imagine taking the form of an ant? Though you are a human, and exist in the form of a human, you willingly take on the form of an ant? It would take great humility, wouldn't it? To be regarded as one of them? But go further than this. Though you are a human and ought to be received by all of the ants as man's greatest gift to them, you come as an ant-servant. You become an ant who works harder than all of the other ants. But go further than this. As you do this, you are hated by all of the other ants, because you make them look lazy. You begin to demonstrate just how much work an ant can get done in one day, and the ants are furious with you. So furious that they kill you. Could you imagine becoming an ant? It would be a great act of humility on your part, wouldn't it. Now, take this imagery and multiply it by two million times and you might begin to approach what it meant for God to become a man.

This morning, I will give you three ways in which God became a man.

1. Jesus came willingly (verse 6).

Verse 6 reads, "... although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped" (verse 6).

The idea here is that Jesus didn't think that he had to cling to His deity and the glory that comes with it without ever letting go. Before Jesus came to earth, He had great glory with the Father. Jesus prayed to the Father, "Glorify Me together with Yourself, Father, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (John 17:5). After Jesus left the earth, He had great glory with the Father. Jesus prayed for us to see His glory. Jesus prayed (in the same prayer), "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me" (John 17:24).

While Jesus was on earth, His glory was diminished. Perhaps you remember when Jesus was upon the mount of transfiguration. We are told that "His face shone like the sun and His garments became white as light" (Matt. 17:2). In His transfiguration, the glory of Jesus briefly returned to Him to be witnessed by a few of His disciples. If His glory wasn't diminished while upon the earth, Jesus would have blinded people with His presence. If His glory had been in full form on the earth, He would have walked around as a light bulb, radiating the glory of God. Imagine Mary, His mother, saying, "Jesus, it's time for bed, please turn off your light. He would have said, "Mom, it is off" (though the room would be as bright as the day). When Jesus was on the earth, he relinquished the full manifestation of His glory.

Yet, having glory with the Father, Jesus didn't think that He always needed to be worshiped and esteemed and lifted high. Jesus wasn't the doctor who had earned his degree and insisted on being called, "Doctor." Jesus wasn't the drill sergeant, who demanded that his soldiers always address him as "Sergeant." Jesus wasn't the authority figure, who insisted in always being called, "Mr." There was a season in His existence, when He was hated and not honored; shamed, and not worshiped; forsaken, and not feared; despised, and not adored; rejected, and not revered; killed, and not crowned.

This He did willingly. This is the thrust of verse 6, "He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped" (verse 6). He didn't hold tightly to the glory that He had with the Father. This is unlike Saddam Hussein, who thought that it was necessary to hold onto his glory and his power. He held out until the very end. In the end, Saddam Hussein was humbled. Last week we heard of him being found in a rundown

shack, hiding in a hole, "like a rat." But his humbling was to his shame, because it wasn't his choice and he wasn't in control. But the humility of Jesus was glorious, because He did it willingly. But Jesus came and died willingly. Jesus never lost control of His life. In John 10:17, 18, Jesus said, "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again."

There is something special about a man in authority who willingly bends to help those who are considered as lower than he is. When President Bush visited the troops in Baghdad, it was special, because he was a man in great authority willingly stooping to visit those who are considered lower than he is. Why do politicians kiss babies? Because it demonstrates that they care for the little ones. From time to time I hear of great athletes visiting sick children to make them feel better. Whenever I hear of such an athlete, I respect him more. It must have been a precious sight when Jesus gathered the children around Him, took them in His arms and blessed them saying, "Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14).

This morning, I want to do something special for the children. I may not be president Bush, or a politician, but I care for the little ones in our congregation. I have some Christmas presents here for the children of this congregation that I would like to give to them. I have one present for each family. Please take this present and put it under your Christmas tree and open it up at Christmas time. I thought of this idea. I spent much time this past week preparing these presents. I wrapped all of these presents myself. As a pastor of this church, as I willingly give out these presents, is it to my shame or my honor? It is to my honor. When Jesus Christ willingly gave of Himself to become a man for us, His humility didn't bring shame to Him. It brought honor to Him.

Willing humility never brings shame. It always brings honor. Perhaps you remember the time when Jesus was invited to the home of one of the leaders of the Pharisees. He noticed how everyone had been picking out the places of honor at the table. Jesus said, "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, and he who invited you both shall come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place. But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted." The one who willingly humbles himself will be honored. It is the one who is humbled by others who is shamed.

Did you know that it was the death of Jesus that became the very means of His receiving great honor. In Revelation 5, the question is asked, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" (Rev. 5:2). We are told that "no one in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book or to look into it" (Rev. 5:3). When John was observing all of this, tears began to well up in his eyes and he began "to weep greatly, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look into it" (Rev. 5:4). But, one of the elders came to console John and said, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals" (Rev. 5:5). Soon after, in heaven the praise goes up to Jesus Christ, "Worthy are You to take the book, and to break its seals; for You were slain and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). Heaven cries out, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Rev. 5:12). It continues, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever" (Rev. 5:13). Because Jesus willingly came to die, He has been glorified and for all time, the heavens will resound His praise forever.

2. Jesus came with nothing (verse 7).

Verse 7 says that Jesus "emptied Himself." Several translations say that Jesus "made himself nothing" (NIV, ESV). Other translations say that Jesus, "made Himself of no reputation" (KJV, MKJV, NKJV). The Greek word translated, "empty" is *ekenwsen* (*ekenosen*), which literally means, "to make vain." In seeking to understand this concept, theologians have filled many pages of theology books, as they grapple with how God can become a man and yet remain God. So intense has been the thought and research into this grand mystery, that the word, "kenosis" has been used as a term to describe the incarnation. We will never quite understand fully what it means. But in simple terms, it describes what must take place if God will become a man. When Jesus became a man, He had to be emptied. Think about my earlier illustration about becoming an ant. What would have to take place if you became an ant? Your mind would have to be diminished a bit. Your body would change. Your size would be reduced. In summary, you would be "emptied." If you look at verse 7 carefully, you can add two little words to help you understand what it means. Listen to verse 7 with these words added, He "emptied Himself, *by* taking the form of a bond-servant, and *by* being made in the likeness of men." In other words, the process of becoming a man is what tells us what it means that He was "emptied."

Think about this incredible act of Jesus Christ. Do you remember when Isaiah was the glory of God? Day and night, the angels cry out, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isa. 6:3). In John 12:41, we are told that Isaiah was beholding the glory of Jesus. Perhaps you remember the awesome display we receive of God creating the world by the words of His mouth? When God spoke, it took place. In Colossians we are told that Jesus Christ is the creator of the world, "all things have been created by Him and for Him" (Col. 1:16). The world is created for Jesus Christ and for His glory. When Jesus returns again to earth, He will be clearly identified as the "king of kings, and lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16). Think of a king. Think of a lord. Think of King Henry VIII. Think of Constantine. Think of Hitler. Think of Winston Churchill. Jesus is their king. Whatever power they had, Jesus has more. In Ephesians 1:21-22, we read that Jesus is seated in the heavens, "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet." Think of any angelic power: Michael or Gabriel. Think of any demon: Satan or one of his demons. The authority of Jesus is far above their authority. Forever will Jesus Christ be worshiped by those who love Him. Jesus is "the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Rev. 22:13).

This is Jesus Christ. But when Jesus came to earth, He didn't come in all of His power and authority which He possessed. He emptied Himself of some of these things. Paul tells us that He came, "in the form of a bond-servant" (verse 7). He came as a slave. Jesus constantly affirmed this during His life. He repeatedly said, "The Son of Man didn't come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45; Matt. 20:28). On the night in which He was betrayed, He took the apron of a slave and washed the disciples' feet, as any common slave would do (John 13:4, 5).

Perhaps the thing that is most revealing about how much He emptied Himself was that He was classified as something less than He really was. This is what the King James Version of the Bible emphasizes, "[He] made Himself of no reputation." What happens today when people are classified as something less than they really are? What happens when an athlete believes that he is on the receiving end of a bad call? He complains to the referee. What happens when a child is treated unfairly at school? The parents often will rise up and speak with the teacher and the principal at the school. What happens when a consumer attempts to return an item to a store, but is refused? Often an argument breaks out at the service desk. What happens when a corporation discriminates against its employees? The ACLU is lurking behind the corner waiting to bring a lawsuit. Yet, Jesus, the king of glory came to earth and was classified as something less than He was.

The Bible says that "He had no stately form or majesty" (Is. 53:2). "He was despised and forsaken of men" (Is. 53:3). He was not esteemed (Is. 53:3). He was mocked as "gluttonous man and a drunkard" (Matt. 11:19). He was mocked as "a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners" (Matt. 11:19). He was called an illegitimate son (John 8:41). He was accused of casting out demons "by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons" (Matthew 12:24). Every single one of these accusations came as a result of His emptying process. How did Jesus respond? ...

3. Jesus came in humility (verse 8).

Verse 8 reads, "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." It was great humility for God to become a man (we already pondered that).

Think a moment about the humility of Jesus as demonstrated **in His birth**. When it came time for Mary to give birth to Jesus, there was no room for them in the inn, so they made their way to the stable next door, where the animals were (Luke 2:7). He was born and laid in a feeding trough. Very few understood what took place that night. Many were inside resting, while the King of Glory was being born outside in the barn, next door.

In the 1500's, Pieter Bruegel painted a marvelous painting entitled, "The Numbering at Bethlehem." The painting pictures a snow-covered village in which many people are outside doing various activities. In one corner, children are having fun throwing snowballs and skating on a frozen pond. In the foreground, people are tending to their pigs, chickens, and hens. In the background, a cabin is being built. Quite a few people are shoveling snow. Quite a few are crossing the ice-covered pond, with loads upon their backs. There is a big line of people, registering for the census in Bethlehem. The painting is so busy with people that you are hardly aware of a man leading a donkey with a woman on top, making their way to be counted in the census as well. The man is Joseph and the woman is Mary. There is nothing attractive about either of them. And unless you knew that it was them, you wouldn't even notice them in the painting. It is a good picture of what took place in Bethlehem 2000 years ago.

Many who had traveled to Bethlehem to be registered in the census taken which Caesar Augustus decreed (Luke 2:1), saw that night like any other. They passed their day like any other. They had no idea that God came to earth that day. It took an angelic appearance for the shepherds to come and see Jesus. It took a supernatural star to guide the magi to where Jesus was born. But many missed the birth of Jesus. It demonstrates His humility. Jesus was born in relative obscurity. There was no fanfare. There were no grand announcements to the world. The grand announcements came only to a few. Life went on as usual.

Think about the humility of Jesus **in His life**. He was the one who served others. He was the one who taught others. He was the one who helped others. He was the one who washed the feet of the disciples. In all ways, He placed Himself under the authority of His Father in heaven. He was the perfectly obedient Son, who came to do the will of the Father (Heb. 10:7). Jesus said, "I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me" (John 8:27).

But the humility of Jesus is demonstrated most plainly **in His death**. This is what Paul is bringing our attention to in verse 8, "He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." He was humble to the point of death. "He was oppressed and He was afflicted" (Is. 53:7). Yet, even as they put Him to death, He was "like a lamb that is led to slaughter, ... He did not open His mouth" (Is. 53:7). "While being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats" (1 Pet. 2:23).

This is the lowliness of Jesus. He never demanded His rights. Though Jesus had the ability to "appeal to [His] Father, and ... put at [His] disposal more than twelve legions of angels," (Matt. 26:53), He submitted to His arrest. His trial was incredibly unfair. It was illegally brought at night. It was rushed. Those who hated Him presided over the trial. Nobody excused themselves due to a "conflict of interests." Many witnesses were obtained, most of whom were demonstrated to be false. Finally, He was accused of trumped up charges. Though his trial was unfair, Jesus never appealed His case, as He could have done (and probably won). When they put a purple robe on Him and beat Him and spit upon Him, He remained silent. He didn't cling to His majesty and protest everything that was going on. He humbled Himself to the point of death, because this was the plan of the Father for Him. In the garden, He demonstrated how difficult it was for Him to do so. Sweating drops of blood, Jesus prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). Jesus was born to die. Jesus came from possessing all glory and honor to being a despicable man who was killed as a criminal, though He had never done anything wrong.

Jesus came willingly. Jesus came with nothing. Jesus came in humility.

Application: Be humble (verse 5)

Up to this point in my message this morning, I have said nothing about application. Perhaps you have noticed it. Perhaps you haven't. I have attempted to make you feel "The Humility of God" this Christmas season. The poet said it well, ...

From the riches of the universe
to the lowliness of a manger ...
From the glory of eternity

to the humility of the cross ...
From fellowship with the Father
to the silence of an empty tomb ...
... Jesus Christ is Lord of all!

There is a sense where our application this morning is to bow and worship Jesus. After all, this is where our text ends this morning...

Philippians 2:9-11

Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

It would be right and proper for us to respond in worship. But, I believe that there is a more direct application for us this Christmas. The reason why Paul wrote these marvelous words we have expounded this morning is for the point of application in verse 5....
"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus."

Let this sink in. Don't hurry past it. Paul writes, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus." Jesus humbled Himself willingly. You should have the same attitude: willing humility. Jesus emptied Himself. You should have the same attitude: Say to yourself, "I am nothing." Jesus was obedient to death. You should have the same attitude: sacrificial service.

Do you want to apply Christmas? Have the attitude of Jesus. Be Humble. Willingly humble yourself and make yourself low. Christmas ought to make you humble. When you consider how Jesus took the low position, you ought to be willing to do the same. Christmas is applied as we look at ourselves properly. We shouldn't build up ourselves. We shouldn't think highly of ourselves.

Jesus willingly took the low road as an example for us. After Jesus had washed the feet of His disciples, He sat down at the table and said to His disciples, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For *I gave you an example that you should do as I did to you*. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things you are blessed if you do them" (John 13:13-17).

About five years ago, my wife and I had the opportunity to travel to Israel. On one of our stops, we visited Bethlehem. We visited the church of the nativity, which was built over the traditional site where Jesus was born (who knows if this was really the spot). The entrance to the church has a door unlike many others. The door is only four feet high. It is called, "the door of humiliation," because you must bend over to enter in. How appropriate is this door for Christmas! As we think of Jesus, we ought to stoop in humility to Him.

Let me ask you a few questions to test your humility:

1. What do you think of yourself? Are you prideful of your accomplishments? Do you like to tell others of all of the great things that you have done? Do you like others to tell you how great you are? Are you selfish? Who is the most important person in the world? You or other people? Do you think that you are better than other people? Or, do you think that other people are better than you? Do you think highly of yourself? Or, do you think lowly of yourself? Are there things that you are not willing to do? Or, is no job too small for you to do? Do you do the smallest, dirtiest, lowest jobs with joy?

2. How do you interact with other people? Do you open doors for people? Do you offer to help others with things they are carrying? Do you seek to encourage others with the things you say? Are you a giving person? Do you like being the expert? Or do you prefer to learn how to do something from someone else? Do you like others to know how much you know about something? Or do you like to learn from others? Do you like others to know how good you are at something? Or do you like to encourage others in a job well done? Do you like others to know how godly you behaved last week? Or do you prefer to confess your sin and your failings? In conversation, do you do more talking or listening? Are you more interested in telling others about yourself or are you more interested in learning about others? Do you prefer to be last in line? Do you prefer sitting in the back seat of the car? Do you prefer serving or being served?

3. How do you act at home? What things do you do on a daily basis that demonstrates your humility? Husbands, are there ways that you daily serve your wife? In what ways do your actions demonstrate that you consider your wife as more important than yourself? What sacrifices do you make on a daily basis to help your wife? Are you above doing chores around the house? Perhaps you can ask your wife what one thing is there that she really doesn't like to do, that you might begin doing, today. Perhaps she really dreads doing the garbage or the dishes or cleaning the bathroom or changing the sheets or changing diapers or dusting or vacuuming. You can demonstrate your humility by doing the one thing that she hates to do. Or, are you above doing any of these things?

Wives, are there ways that you serve your husband in humility? In what ways do your actions demonstrate that you consider your husband as more important than yourself? Do you seek to make the meals that he likes? Do you seek to do what you can to make sure that he looks nice when he leaves the door for work in the morning? When he makes a comment about something that he doesn't like (with the kids, with the house, with dinner, with your tardiness, with your bed times, ...), do you work hard to change those things?

4. When someone does a wrong against you, how do you respond? Do you fight for your rights? Are you seeking your vindication? Children, when another child takes a toy from you, how do you respond? Do you fight against them? Do you consider them as more important than yourself? When someone asks for forgiveness, do you give it freely? Or, do you grant it slowly? Do you hold grudges against other people? Do you have a long memory? Can you bring up all of the wrongs done against you? Do you feel a right to better treatment than Jesus received?

Are you a humble person? The humble person is the one who puts himself under others and willingly serves other people. Now, could you imagine a church filled with humble people, who look out for the interests of others and not of themselves? This is the very thing that Paul was aiming at when he penned these words. Let's pick up the context from verses 1-4, ...

Philippians 2:1-4

If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

First, if all were humble in the church, Paul said that there would be great unity in the church (verse 2). There would be one mind. There would be one love. There would be one spirit. There would be one purpose.

Second, if all were humble in the church, Paul said that he would be very happy (verse 2). He said, "make my joy complete." Do you want to give your pastor a Christmas present? Be a humble people, who "regard one another as more important than yourself" (verse 4).

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 21, 2003 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
