Motivated by God

"A Humble Spirit"

Luke 10:38-42

☞ **What would you like to praise God for today?**

Unity through Humility

1 Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any
fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and sympathetic?
2 Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another,
and working together with one heart and purpose.
3 Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of
others as better than yourself.
4 Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are
doing.

Christ's Humility and Exaltation

5 Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had.
6 Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God.
7 He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human
form.
8 And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death
on a cross.
9 Because of this, God raised him up to the heights of heaven and gave him a name that is
above every other name,
10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the
earth,
11 and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Phil 2:1-11 (NLT)

☞ **Pray for God's guidance as you study**

1. Reading between the lines, what was wrong with the church in Philippi? What is Paul encouraging us to guard against?

2. Did Jesus give up His deity to become human?

3. What made Jesus <u>humanity</u> unique from ours? What do you think it was like for Jesus to leave heaven and become human?

4. From this passage, what reasons would you give for why Jesus is described as being humble?
5. What do you think it was like for Jesus to take on Himself the sin of mankind?

6. How does humility differ from being a doormat? (see Romans 12:3)

7. What is the result of Jesus' obedience to the father for himself? For us? For the Father?

8. What does it mean to develop an attitude of humility as we serve - to consider someone "better than yourself"?

9. Who do you admire because they truly put the interests of others ahead of their own interests?

Wrap-up: The Spirit that empowered Jesus' humility is available to us today. Where are you most likely to need empowering to serve humbly - at home? At work? At church? Elsewhere? Why?

Prayer: For one another

Commentary Notes from the Life Application Bible

Chapter 2

Notes for Verses 1-5

Many people -- even Christians -- live only to make a good impression on others or to please themselves. But "selfish ambition or vain conceit" brings discord. Paul therefore stressed spiritual unity, asking the Philippians to love one another and to be one in spirit and purpose. When we work together, caring for the problems of others as if they were our problems, we demonstrate Christ's example of putting others first, and we experience unity. Don't be so concerned about making a good impression or meeting your own needs that you strain relationships in God's family.

Notes for Verse 3

Selfish ambition can ruin a church, but genuine humility can build it. Being humble involves having a true perspective about ourselves (see Romans 12:3). It does not mean that we should put ourselves down. Before God, we are sinners, saved only by God's grace, but we *are* saved and therefore have great worth in God's kingdom. We are to lay aside selfishness and treat others with respect and common courtesy. Considering others' interests as more important than our own links us with Christ, who was a true example of humility.

Notes for Verse 4

Philippi was a cosmopolitan city. The composition of the church reflected great diversity, with people from a variety of backgrounds and walks of life. Acts 16 gives us some indication of the diverse makeup of this church. The church included Lydia, a Jewish convert from Asia and a wealthy businesswoman (Acts 16:14); the slave girl (Acts 16:16, 17), probably a native Greek; and the jailer serving this colony of the empire, probably a Roman (Acts 16:25-36). With so many different backgrounds among the members, unity must have been difficult to maintain. Although there is no evidence of division in the church, its unity had to be safeguarded (Php 3:2; Php 4:2). Paul encourages us to guard against any selfishness, prejudice, or jealousy that might lead to dissension. Showing genuine interest in others is a positive step forward in maintaining unity among believers.

Notes for Verse 5

Jesus Christ was humble, willing to give up his rights in order to obey God and serve people. Like Christ, we should have a servant's attitude, serving out of love for God and for others, not out of guilt or fear. Remember, you can choose your attitude. You can approach life expecting to be served, or you can look for opportunities to serve others. See Mark 10:45 for more on Christ's attitude of servanthood.

2:5-7 The *incarnation* was the act of the preexistent Son of God voluntarily assuming a human body and human nature. Without ceasing to be God, he became a human being, the man called Jesus. He did not give up his deity to become human, but he set aside the right to his glory and power. In submission to the Father's will, Christ limited his power and knowledge. Jesus of Nazareth was subject to place, time, and many other human limitations. What made his humanity unique was his freedom from sin. In his full humanity, Jesus showed us everything about God's character that can be conveyed in human terms. The incarnation is

explained further in these passages: John 1:1-14; Romans 1:2-5; 2Corinthians 8:9; 1Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:14; and 1John 1:1-3.

2:5-11 These verses are probably from a hymn sung by the early Christian church. The passage holds many parallels to the prophecy of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53. As a hymn, it was not meant to be a complete statement about the nature and work of Christ. Several key characteristics of Jesus Christ, however, are praised in this passage: (1) Christ has always existed with God; (2) Christ is equal to God because he *is* God (John 1:1ff; Colossians 1:15-19); (3) though Christ is God, he became a man in order to fulfill God's plan of salvation for all people; (4) Christ did not just have the appearance of being a man -- he actually became human to identify with our sins; (5) Christ voluntarily laid aside his divine rights and privileges out of love for his Father; (6) Christ died on the cross for our sins so we wouldn't have to face eternal death; (7) God glorified Christ because of his obedience; (8) God raised Christ to his original position at the Father's right hand, where he will reign forever as our Lord and Judge. How can we do anything less than praise Christ as our Lord and dedicate ourselves to his service!

2:5-11 Often people excuse selfishness, pride, or evil by claiming their rights. They think, "I can cheat on this test; after all, I deserve to pass this class," or "I can spend all this money on myself -- I worked hard for it," or "I can get an abortion; I have a right to control my own body." But as believers, we should have a different attitude, one that enables us to lay aside our rights in order to serve others. If we say we follow Christ, we must also say we want to live as he lived. We should develop his attitude of humility as we serve, even when we are not likely to get recognition for our efforts. Are you selfishly clinging to your rights, or are you willing to serve?

Notes for Verse 8
Death on a cross (crucifixion) was the form of capital punishment that Romans used for notorious criminals. It was excruciatingly painful and humiliating. Prisoners were nailed or tied to a cross and left to die. Death might not come for several days, and it usually came by suffocation when the weight of the weakened body made breathing more and more difficult. Jesus died as one who was cursed (Galatians 3:13). How amazing that the perfect man should die this most shameful death so that we would not have to face eternal punishment!

Notes for Verses 9-11
At the last judgment even those who are condemned will recognize Jesus' authority and right to rule. People can choose to regard Jesus as Lord now as a step of willing and loving commitment, or be forced to acknowledge him as Lord when he returns. Christ may return at any moment. Are you prepared to meet him?

Motivated by God

"DON 'T JUST STAND THERE"

Acts 1:1-11

☞ **What would you like to praise God for today?**

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

1 Dear Theophilus: In my first book I told you about everything Jesus began to do and teach
2 until the day he ascended to heaven after giving his chosen apostles further instructions from the Holy Spirit.
3 During the forty days after his crucifixion, he appeared to the apostles from time to time and proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. On these occasions he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.
4 In one of these meetings as he was eating a meal with them, he told them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you what he promised. Remember, I have told you about this before.
5 John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

The Ascension of Jesus

6 When the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, are you going to free Israel now and restore our kingdom?"
7 "The Father sets those dates," he replied, "and they are not for you to know.
8 But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere--in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
9 It was not long after he said this that he was taken up into the sky while they were watching, and he disappeared into a cloud.
10 As they were straining their eyes to see him, two white-robed men suddenly stood there among them.
11 They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing here staring at the sky? Jesus has been taken away from you into heaven. And someday, just as you saw him go, he will return!"
Acts 1:1-11 (NLT)

☞ **Pray for God's guidance as you study**

1. How do you think the disciples felt about Jesus leaving them - again?

2. What chance would you have given to the followers of Jesus at this point to change the world? Why?

3. What do the disciples think will happen when they receive the Holy Spirit (v.6)?

How does their idea of the kingdom differ from Jesus' (vv. 7-8)?

4. What do you think the disciples did during the 10 days of waiting for the Holy Spirit to come? (See vv. 12-14)

   How important was that?

5. As a disciple, what is the impact on you of Jesus' words (v.8)?

   Of Jesus' departure(v9)?

   Of the angels' promise (v. 11)?

6. How would you explain the effects of the Resurrection that would make sense to your non-believing friends?

   What hold you back from spreading the word about Jesus to them?

Wrap-up: How do you sense a need for the Holy Spirit to help you?

Prayer: For one another

Commentary from the Life Application Bible

Notes for Verse 1

The book of Acts continues the story Luke began in his Gospel, covering the 30 years after Jesus was taken up into heaven. During that short time the church was established, and the gospel of salvation was taken throughout the world, even to the capital of the Roman empire. Those preaching the gospel, though ordinary people with human frailties and limitations, were empowered by the Holy Spirit to take the Good News "all over the world" (Acts 17:6). Throughout the book of Acts we learn about the nature of the church and how we today are also to go about turning our world upside down.

1:1 Luke's former book was the Gospel of Luke; that book was also addressed to Theophilus, whose name means "one who loves God." (See note on Luke 1:3.)

1:1ff Verses 1-11 are the bridge between the events recorded in the Gospels and the events marking the beginning of the church. Jesus spent 40 days teaching his disciples, and they were changed drastically. Before, they had argued with each other, deserted their Lord, and one (Peter) even lied about knowing Jesus. Here, in a series of meetings with the living, resurrected Christ, the disciples had many questions answered. They became convinced about the resurrection, learned about the kingdom of God, and learned about their power source -- the Holy Spirit. By reading the Bible, we can sit with the resurrected Christ in his school of discipleship. By believing in him, we can receive his power through the Holy Spirit to be new people. By joining with other Christians in Christ's church, we can take part in doing his work on earth.

1:1-3 Luke says that the disciples were eyewitnesses to all that had happened to Jesus Christ -- his life before his crucifixion ("suffering"), and the 40 days after his resurrection as he taught them more about the kingdom of God. Today there are still people who doubt Jesus' resurrection. But Jesus appeared to the disciples on many occasions after his resurrection, proving that he was alive. Look at the change the resurrection made in the disciples' lives. At Jesus' death, they scattered -- they were disillusioned, and they feared for their lives. After seeing the resurrected Christ, they were fearless and risked everything to spread the Good News about him around the world. They faced imprisonment, beatings, rejection, and martyrdom, yet they never compromised their mission. These men would not have risked their lives for something they knew was a fraud. They knew Jesus was raised from the dead, and the early church was fired with their enthusiasm to tell others. It is important to know this so we can have confidence in their testimony. Twenty centuries later we can still be confident that our faith is based on fact.

Notes for Verse 3

Jesus explained that with his coming, the kingdom of God was inaugurated. When he returned to heaven, God's kingdom would remain in the hearts of all believers through the presence of the Holy Spirit. But the kingdom of God will not be fully realized until Jesus Christ comes again to judge all people and remove all evil from the world. Before that time, believers are to work to spread God's kingdom across the world. The book of Acts records how this work was begun. What the early church started, we must continue.

Notes for Verses 4,5

The *Trinity* is a description of the unique relationship of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. If Jesus had stayed on earth, his physical presence would have limited the spread of the gospel, because physically he could be in only one place at a time. After Christ was taken up into heaven, he would be spiritually present everywhere through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was sent so that God would be with and within his followers after Christ returned to heaven. The Spirit would comfort them, guide them to know his truth, remind them of Jesus' words, give them the right words to say, and fill them with power (see John 14 -- John 16).

Notes for Verse 5

At Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) the Holy Spirit was made available to all who believed in Jesus. We receive the Holy Spirit (are baptized with him) when we receive Jesus Christ. The baptism of the Holy Spirit must be understood in the light of his total work in Christians.

(1) The Spirit marks the beginning of the Christian experience. We cannot belong to Christ without his Spirit (Romans 8:9); we cannot be united to Christ without his Spirit (1Corinthians 6:17); we cannot be adopted as

his children without his Spirit (Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:6, 7); we cannot be in the body of Christ except by baptism in the Spirit (1Corinthians 12:13).

(2) The Spirit is the power of our new lives. He begins a lifelong process of change as we become more like Christ (Galatians 3:3; Philippians 1:6). When we receive Christ by faith, we begin an immediate personal relationship with God. The Holy Spirit works in us to help us become like Christ.

(3) The Spirit unites the Christian community in Christ (Ephesians 2:19-22). The Holy Spirit can be experienced by all, and he works through all (1Corinthians 12:11; Ephesians 4:4).

Notes for Verse 6

During the years of Jesus' ministry on earth, the disciples continually wondered about his kingdom. When would it come? What would their role be? In the traditional view, the Messiah would be an earthly conqueror who would free Israel from Rome. But the kingdom Jesus spoke about was first of all a *spiritual* kingdom established in the hearts and lives of believers (Luke 17:21). God's presence and power dwell in believers in the person of the Holy Spirit.

1:6,7 Like other Jews, the disciples chafed under their Roman rulers. They wanted Jesus to free Israel from Roman power and then become their king. Jesus replied that God the Father sets the timetable for all events -- worldwide, national, and personal. If you want changes that God isn't making immediately, don't become impatient. Instead, trust God's timetable.

Notes for Verse 8

Power from the Holy Spirit is not limited to strength beyond the ordinary -- that power also involves courage, boldness, confidence, insight, ability, and authority. The disciples would need all these gifts to fulfill their mission. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you can experience the power of the Holy Spirit in your life.

1:8 Jesus promised the disciples that they would receive power to witness after they received the Holy Spirit. Notice the progression: (1) they would receive the Holy Spirit, (2) he would give them power, and (3) they would witness with extraordinary results. Often we try to reverse the order and witness by our own power and authority. Witnessing is not showing what we can do for God. It is showing and telling what God has done for us.

1:8 Jesus had instructed his disciples to witness to people of all nations about him (Matthew 28:19, 20). But they were told to wait first for the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49). God has important work for you to do for him, but you must do it by the power of the Holy Spirit. We often like to get on with the job, even if it means running ahead of God. But waiting is sometimes part of God's plan. Are you waiting and listening for God's complete instructions, or are you running ahead of his plans? We need God's timing and power to be truly effective.

1:8 This verse describes a series of ever-widening circles. The gospel was to spread, geographically, from Jerusalem, into Judea and Samaria, and finally to the whole world. It would begin with the devout Jews in Jerusalem and Samaria, spread to the mixed race in Samaria, and finally be offered to the Gentiles in the uttermost parts of the earth. God's gospel has not reached its final destination if someone in your family, your workplace, your school, or your community hasn't heard about Jesus Christ. Make sure that you are contributing in some way to the ever-widening circle of God's loving message.

Notes for Verse 9

It was important for the disciples to see Jesus taken up into heaven. Then they knew without a doubt that he was God and that his home was in heaven.

1:9-11 After 40 days with his disciples (Acts 1:3), Jesus returned to heaven. The two men dressed in white were angels who proclaimed to the disciples that one day Jesus would return in the same way he went -- bodily and visibly. History is not haphazard or cyclical; it is moving toward a specific point -- the return of Jesus to judge and rule over the earth. We should be ready for his sudden return (1Thessalonians 5:2), not by standing around "looking into the sky," but by working hard to share the gospel so that others will be able to share in God's great blessings.

Motivated by God

"MOTIVATED BY LOVE"

1 John 4:7-21

☞ **What would you like to praise God for today?**

Loving One Another

7 Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is
born of God and knows God.
8 But anyone who does not love does not know God--for God is love.
9 God showed how much he loved us by sending his only Son into the world so that we might have
eternal life through him.
10 This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to
take away our sins.
11 Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.
12 No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love has been
brought to full expression through us.
13 And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us.
14 Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be
the Savior of the world.
15 All who proclaim that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God.
16 We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in him. God is love, and all who live
in love live in God, and God lives in them.
17 And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of
judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we are like Christ here in this world.
18 Such love has no fear because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of
judgment, and this shows that his love has not been perfected in us.
19 We love each other as a result of his loving us first.
20 If someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we
don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we have not seen?
21 And God himself has commanded that we must love not only him but our Christian brothers and
sisters, too. 1 John 4:7-21 (NLT)

☞ **Pray for God's guidance as you study**

1. What personality trait or strength did you get from your mother or father?

2. True or false? "Love is a feeling"

3. What does 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 teach us about what true love is?

4. What is the source of human love?

5. How can God's love be expressed through humans? In our motives? In our actions?

6. Why is it a lie to say you love God but do not show love to your brother (v.19)?

7. Specifically as Christians, what gives us the power to love (see Romans 5:5; 8:9) and how do we appropriate it (see vv. 15-16)?

8. Meditate and discuss what this world would be like if everyone was motivated by true love? How would it affect such things as hunger? Diseases? Housing? …? Is this be what it will be like when Jesus reigns supreme on earth during the millennium?

Wrap-up: How do you want to love sacrificially this week? At home? At work? A difficult relationship? In how you plan your time? Your budget?

Prayer: For one another

Commentary From the Life Application Bible

Chapter 4

Notes for Verse 7ff
Everyone believes that love is important, but love is usually thought of as a feeling. In reality, love is a choice and an action, as 1Corinthians 13:4-7 shows. God is the source of our love: he loved us enough to sacrifice his Son for us. Jesus is our example of what it means to love; everything he did in life and death was supremely loving. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to love; he lives in our hearts and makes us more and more like Christ. God's love always involves a choice and an action, and our love should be like his. How well do you display your love for God in the choices you make and the actions you take?

Notes for Verse 8
John says, "God is love," not "Love is God." Our world, with its shallow and selfish view of love, has turned these words around and contaminated our understanding of love. The world thinks that love is what makes a person feel good and that it is all right to sacrifice moral principles and others' rights in order to obtain such "love." But that isn't real love; it is the exact opposite -- selfishness. And God is not that kind of "love." Real love is like God, who is holy, just, and perfect. If we truly know God, we will love as he does.

Notes for Verse 9
Jesus is God's *only* Son. While all believers are sons and daughters of God, only Jesus lives in this special unique relationship (see John 1:18; John 3:16).

4:9,10 Love explains (1) why God creates -- because he loves, he creates people to love; (2) why God cares -- because he loves them, he cares for sinful people; (3) why we are free to choose -- God wants a loving response from us; (4) why Christ died -- his love for us caused him to seek a solution to the problem of sin; and (5) why we receive eternal life -- God's love expresses itself to us forever.

Notes for Verse 10
Nothing sinful or evil can exist in God's presence. He is absolute goodness. He cannot overlook, condone, or excuse sin as though it never happened. He loves us, but his love does not make him morally lax. If we trust in Christ, however, we will not have to bear the penalty for our sins (1Peter 2:24). We will be acquitted (Romans 5:18) by his atoning sacrifice.

Notes for Verse 12
If no one has ever seen God, how can we ever know him? John in his Gospel said, "God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known" (John 1:18). Jesus is the complete expression of God in human form and he has revealed God to us. When we love one another, the invisible God reveals himself to others through us, and his love is made complete.

4:12 Some people enjoy being with others. They make friends with strangers easily and always are surrounded by many friends. Other people are shy or reserved. They have a few

friends, but they are uncomfortable talking with people they don't know or mingling in crowds. Shy people don't need to become extroverts in order to love others. John isn't telling us *how many* people to love, but *how much* to love the people we already know. Our job is to love faithfully the people God has given us to love, whether there are two or two hundred of them. If God sees that we are ready to love others, he will bring them to us. No matter how shy we are, we don't need to be afraid of the love commandment. God provides us the strength to do what he asks.

Notes for Verse 13
When we become Christians, we receive the Holy Spirit. God's presence in our lives is proof that we really belong to him. He also gives us the power to love (Romans 5:5; Romans 8:9; 2Corinthians 1:22). Rely on that power as you reach out to others. As you do so, you will gain confidence. See also Romans 8:16.

Notes for Verse 17
The day of judgment is that time when all people will appear before Christ and be held accountable for their actions. With God living in us through Christ, we have no reason to fear this day, because we have been saved from punishment. Instead, we can look forward to the day of judgment, because it will mean the end of sin and the beginning of a face-to-face relationship with Jesus Christ.

Notes for Verse 18
If we ever are afraid of the future, eternity, or God's judgment, we can remind ourselves of God's love. We know that he loves us perfectly (Romans 8:38, 39). We can resolve our fears first by focusing on his immeasurable love for us, and then by allowing him to love others through us. His love will quiet your fears and give you confidence.

Notes for Verse 19
God's love is the source of all human love, and it spreads like fire. In loving his children, God kindles a flame in their hearts. In turn, they love others, who are warmed by God's love through them.

Notes for Verses 20,21
It is easy to say we love God when that love doesn't cost us anything more than weekly attendance at religious services. But the real test of our love for God is how we treat the people right in front of us -- our family members and fellow believers. We cannot truly love God while neglecting to love those who are created in his image.