

## Joy with Difficult People

Have you ever worked with, lived with, gone to school with, or even gone to church with someone who is difficult to get along with? People can be difficult. Philippians 2 speaks to that struggle.

Paul is writing to a good church, but even good churches have people problems. Some believers in Philippi were being selfish. Some were insisting on their own way. Some were becoming proud. And some were making it difficult for others to work together in unity. So Paul begins the chapter with these words:

*1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility **count others more significant than yourselves**. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

Paul is saying, “I know people can be difficult — but don’t forget, you can be difficult too.” So instead of demanding that everyone else bend to your

preferences, you will actually discover a more joyful life by putting others ahead of yourself.

## **EVEN WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE, CHRISTIANS WHO PUT OTHERS FIRST CAN STILL HAVE JOY.**

What does it look like to put others first when people are frustrating, demanding, or just plain difficult? In this chapter, Paul gives us **four honorable examples** who found joy in putting others first.

**Example #1 — Jesus: Jesus showed us there is joy in humbling yourself to benefit others. (Philippians 2:5–11).**

*5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

Jesus is the visible manifestation of God. He is the image of the invisible God. He is God - equal with the

Father. Worshiped by the angels. Ruler of heaven and earth. But what did He do for you?

He left the splendor of heaven. He stepped down into our world. He took on human flesh. He made Himself a servant. He obeyed all the way to the cross. And He died to pay for the things you've done wrong.

**\*EXTRA RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY:**  
The Village Church — Doctrine — Christology —  
The self-emptying of Christ; The hypostatic union;  
Difficult questions.

**Jesus took the humble road for difficult people like us.**

**Example #2 — Paul: Paul shows us there is joy in offering your life for the growth of others (Philippians 2:12–18).**

Paul gives us practical instruction on how to live the Christian life in a way that makes a difference.

- 1. Live differently because God has saved you.**
- 2. Shine by choosing a Christlike attitude in a dark world**

### **3. Hold tightly to the Word so your life has eternal impact.**

*16 holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. 17 Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 18 Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.*

Paul is saying, I'm happy to invest my life, to pour out my life, and even to suffer to the extent of death if that means other people will grow in their faith as a result.

**Example #3 — Timothy: Timothy shows us there is joy in genuinely wanting God's best for others (Philippians 2:19–24).**

Motives matter to God. Paul says something astonishing: *"I have no one like him."* Paul worked with many Christian men and women, and yet Paul says that when you look closely at people's motives, most were still driven by their own interests, not Christ's.

Someone once said there are only two options:  
You're either living in **Philippians 1:21** — *"For me to*

*live is Christ...*

Or you're living in **Philippians 2:21** — *“They all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.”*

Timothy lived in Philippians 1:21. He wasn't perfect, but he sincerely wanted God's best for others.

- 1. Timothy was consistently faithful.**
- 2. Timothy didn't need the spotlight.**
- 3. Timothy cared deeply about people—and that brought him joy.**

If you want to have joy—even around people who are difficult—then start by asking God to make your motives pure. Ask Him to help you genuinely want His best for others.

**Example #4 — Epaphroditus: There is joy in taking risks to strengthen others (Philippians 2:25–30)**

It's one thing to *say* you want to serve the Lord. It's one thing to *sing* “I surrender all.” But it's an entirely different thing to actually do it — to take real risks for God and for the spiritual good of someone else. Paul says: Honor a man like this. Celebrate a Christian like this. This is what joyful sacrifice looks like.

Imagine if Epaphroditus never went. Imagine if he chose safety of a predictable life. He would've missed the sickness. He would've missed making others worry. He would've missed the hardship.

But he also would've missed **the joy...** the joy of obeying God, the joy of strengthening Paul, the joy of being part of eternal work. Joy grows when we take godly risks to strengthen others.