## DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE



#### <u>TEXT SUMMARY</u>

In this week's text, <u>Phil 2:5-11</u>, we examine Paul's quotation of what was probably a well-known hymn about the humiliation and glory of Christ.

### INTRODUCTION (OBSERVATION):

- Context: Although Paul's letter to the church in Philippi is widely regarded as joyful (the words "joy" and "rejoice" appear many times), there were apparently some issues in the congregation. What can we infer from these excerpts from Paul's letter?
  - 2:1-4
  - 3:1-2
  - 4:2
- 2. Our text says several things about Christ. For every place you can find His name or a pronoun referring to Him, what does our text tell us about Jesus?
- 3. Our text portrays the series of downward steps in Christ's humiliation and suffering. What are those steps?
- 4. Where is the turning point in this text? Where does it pivot from Christ's humiliation and death to His exaltation?

#### **DISCUSSION** (INTERPRETATION):

Paul was not afraid to use provocative language. In our text he uses expressions that would have been shocking in his day. Some scholars think the words "even death on a cross" were added by Paul to the lyrics of the hymn. Crucifixion was such a gruesome spectacle that it was considered ill-mannered to use the word in polite company, and yet Paul dares to add those words to his quotation. The hymn concludes with the politically charged expression "Jesus Christ is Lord," which flew in the face of the politically correct expression of the day: "Caesar is Lord." How would Paul's words here be different (much weaker) if he had shied away from using such provocative language?

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#### SO WHAT? (APPLICATION):

- A quick look at the religion section in a bookstore will reveal a wide variety of views on who Jesus was and what His life meant:
  - a Jewish mystic who would be embraced in our own day by the New Age crowd but was misunderstood by His contemporaries
  - a charismatic radical whose advocacy for the poor put Him at odds with those in power
  - a simple rabbi whose story was inflated by later followers into a legend of spirituality that would have been unrecognizable to the people who knew Him.

It's easy enough to account for Jesus in these ways: it costs nothing to relegate Him to harmless categories like mystic, martyr, or country preacher. But Paul sees nothing less than cosmic significance in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, saying that "every knee will bow" to the majesty and authority of Christ.

This is an intriguing thought, especially when you think about some of the great men and women of history and of our own day. Who are some of those people whom we will be astonished to see at the feet of Christ?

- Paul wrote these words not simply as worship to Christ; he was pointing to the example of Christ's humiliation to exhort his readers to imitate His selfgiving spirit.
  - Can you think of a brother or sister in Christ whose life testifies to a spirit of humility and self-giving?
  - Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you became convicted about your own self-absorption? How did God (His Word, His Spirit, His people) help you pivot toward self and self-giving?