

# Hope Church South Haven November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2025

## Habit #5: Christlike Character

### Philippians 2:5-11

We're working through a series about what it really means to follow Jesus – ROOTED CONNECTIONS. A habit is a BEHAVIOR that **comes automatic**. Default setting. No matter what life throws at you.

We are currently focusing on the **GROW habits**. Transformation is an uncomfortable but profoundly SHAPING PROCESS.

Today we are tackling the 5<sup>th</sup> habit: Christlike character.

Christlike character means becoming more like Jesus in how I **think and speak and treat people**. It's about *showing kindness and humility and honesty and love*.

Especially when it's hard. That way, people can see what God is like through my actions.

What is the DIFFERENCE between **identity** and character?

- **Identity** is about who you are deep down. Your sense of *self and values and beliefs and what makes you unique*.

- Character is **how you act**. Your *choices and habits and how you treat others*.

Especially when no one is watching.

Identity shapes your sense of who you are. Character shows up in the way you live and the decisions you make every day.

Open your Bibles at **PHILIPPIANS 2:**

- Paul wrote this letter to the church in PHILIPPI during a time when they were facing trouble inside the church and **pressure from the Roman world outside**.
- This hymn is a **BOLD AND FEARLESS CONFESSION: Jesus Christ is Lord**. Standing up to a world that insisted the emperor was god.
- It's a call for believers to be **united and to stay humble and to practice self-sacrifice**. Even when the world around them was consumed with absolute hatred towards them.

Verse 5:

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

- Not just be a low budget TEMU imitation of Jesus.

- Paul uses the Greek word **φρονέω** / *phroneo* translated as MINDSET. It's not just thinking like Jesus. It's about **the way we live our lives and our attitude and how we treat others.**
- A life lived like Jesus is RADICALLY DIFFERENT than the world around us.

Verse 6:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage...

- Paul DESCRIBES Jesus by using the Greek word **μορφή** (*morphē*) – being in very nature.
- In the FIRST CENTURY people used ***morphe*** to describe two things that shared the **same nature** and the **same qualities**. When two things were EQUAL.
- This hymn is proclaiming that Jesus and God share the **same nature and qualities**.

They are EQUAL. In other words, **Jesus is God.**

- But Paul reminds us that Jesus didn't hold tightly to his GODLY STATUS or **use it for His own advantage.**
- INSTEAD. Seeing our brokenness. Seeing the **mess we made** of our lives. Jesus chose *intentionally to humble Himself* and become one of us.

Verse 7:

...rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

- Jesus didn't just become human. He humbled Himself even more by taking on the role of a servant or a slave.
- Paul uses the word **δοῦλος** (doulos). Back in those days, SLAVES or SERVANTS had no rights or privileges. They were simply **considered as property**.
- Paul again uses the word ***morphe*** to describe Jesus as human. He was fully God and He was fully human.
- Paul *doesn't try to explain* how this works. He just tells us that it's true.

Verse 8:

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!

- Out of His deep love for us and His total obedience to His Father, He gave His life for us. Dying on the cross for our sins.

- ⇒ Crucifixion was **brutal**. A humiliation. RESERVED for *slaves and criminals and murderers*.
- ⇒ Jewish people *believed* that those that were crucified were cursed and abandoned by God.
- ⇒ Yet Jesus **willingly entered into death**. A realm where God had never been before.

- JESUS' SACRIFICE wasn't a sign of defeat. It was a **redemptive surrender**.
  - ⇒ He willingly gave Himself, to become the SOURCE of our **hope and salvation and new life**.

#### Verse 9-11:

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- God lifts Jesus up in a dramatic way. He **turns the shame** Jesus experienced on earth **into honor**.
- But that's not all. God gave Jesus a **NEW NAME**. A name that's above every other name.

- In biblical times, your name was **more than just** something people called you. It told others who you were and *shaped your identity*.
- When God gives Jesus the highest name, He's showing everyone that Jesus has **authority over absolutely everything**. Jesus is the most important in all creation!
  
- In biblical times people believed that **CREATION** consisted of **3 parts**:
  - ⇒ The heaven for heavenly beings.
  - ⇒ The earth for people.
  - ⇒ Under the earth for evil spirits and demons.
- On Judgment Day when Jesus returns – everyone will recognize and acknowledge Jesus as Lord. Whether they are **ANGELS** or **PEOPLE** or **DEMONS**.

Living with a **Christlike Character** is only possible when we understand our Christlike Identity – cycle of grace (achievement). This hymn in Philippians shows us what true Christlike character looks like.

**#1** – Jesus showed us that we need to live with a **CONFIDENCE that knows.**

- Jesus was **CONFIDENT in who He was** and **fully understood His calling and purpose**. God affirmed it at His baptism and through His miracles and in His resurrection.

- Followers of Jesus are called to live with CONFIDENCE. Secure in knowing who they are in Christ.
- We are loved and chosen and accepted by God. Not because of anything we've done, but **because of what Jesus had already done for us.**

⇒ We can be CONFIDENT in the **story of Jesus**, *even when the world doubts it.*

⇒ We can be CONFIDENT that the Bible offers the best game plan for living. **For every dimension of our lives** – when it comes to sex and money and relationships and caring for those who are hurting or in need.

⇒ We can be CONFIDENT in our calling to invite others in. To care for the lost and broken and the vulnerable.

Such confidence we have through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.

**2 Corinthians 3:4-5 NIV**

**#2** – Jesus showed us that we need to live with a **HUMILITY that surrenders.**

- Jesus *embodied* a HUMILITY that fully surrendered. He **gave up everything** for us.

- Followers of Jesus are called to **completely surrender** to God.
- When I completely surrender I **recognize** my brokenness and my flaws.
- I discover that I **need God** with everything inside of me. That I *can't do life* without His love and grace and presence.
- In the **2003** movie **Luther**, there is a *specific scene* where Martin Luther is overcome with desperation. He lies on the ground. Face down and prays:

I am yours. Save me.

Again and again and again.

I am yours. Save me.

- That moment **captures the essence of humility**. The realization of **how much I need God** when I reach the end of myself and my abilities. When I'm honest about my sin and brokenness.

You and I are where we are by the grace of God. It's ALL grace. It's grace alone and grace amazing and grace abounding.

**Leonard Sweet**

- Living with HUMILITY is the cure for the arrogance we see in our culture. It reminds me that **everything I am** and **everything I have** is a *gift from God*. Not something I earned because of my personality and my talents and my achievements.

- Living in HUMILITY means lowering myself. Not because I'm weak, but because I'm **willing to put others first**.

⇒ HUMILITY listens before speaking.

⇒ HUMILITY **resists the urge** for *status or recognition*.

⇒ While the world strives for success, HUMILITY chooses to elevate others.

⇒ Love *flourishes* when I live in HUMILITY. When I slow my pace. When I **make space** for others. When I *let go of my own agendas*.

- The hymn is clear: If you want a life of significance, it starts with HUMILITY.
- When we put others first. **God's love flows through us in a real and beautiful way**.
- HUMILITY transforms us. It changes those around us.

**#3** – Jesus showed us that we need to live with a **COURAGE that acts**.

- Even as Jesus, gripped by fear and sweating blood, faced the *agony of the cross*, He **remained steadfast and COURAGEOUS**. He stayed fully committed to His calling.
- Followers of Jesus are called to grow a backbone and **live with COURAGE**.
- COURAGE does not mean the absence of fear. COURAGE means **trusting Jesus** in the fear and in the challenges and in the struggles.
- It's Jesus who *calms our fears and anxieties* and *guides us through* the storms.
- COURAGE mean that **fear does not dictate** our lives. COURAGE helps us to take a stand when life gets tough.
- One of the most powerful movie scenes is in the movie '**25th Hour**'
  - ⇒ **Edward Norton** plays the character Montgomery Brogan.
  - ⇒ It's his last night before he starts a 7-year prison sentence for drug dealing.
  - ⇒ He's standing in the bathroom of a bar, looking at his own reflection in the mirror.
  - ⇒ He goes on an X-rated rant.
  - ⇒ He blames everyone and everything for his reality. He blames everyone from Pakistani taxi drivers to the homeless and Osama Bin Laden. He blames politicians and presidents and even his own father.

⇒ But at the end of the scene, it all finally clicks for him. He realizes that he can't keep blaming others for his circumstances.

⇒ He tells himself:

You had it all and you threw it away...

- COURAGE means moving beyond a victim mindset. COURAGE means **taking responsibility** for my decisions and my relationships and my circumstances.
- COURAGE isn't about avoiding problems or running away when it gets tough. It faces challenges directly. It's having those difficult conversations. It keeps standing when everyone else choose compromise.
- COURAGE of Christlike Character is more than just physical bravery. It's also about **moral integrity**:
  - ⇒ About forgiving others when they don't deserve it.
  - ⇒ About speaking the truth even when it's uncomfortable.
  - ⇒ About loving the people who are difficult.
  - ⇒ About serving even when it costs me everything.
- Sometimes, we must '**fake it till we make it**'.
  - ⇒ showing patience when we don't want to.

- ⇒ choosing to do what's right when it's hard.
- ⇒ practicing empathy in an unforgiving world.
- We don't change our lives just by thinking differently. When we live differently we transform our way of thinking.
- Our COURAGE **deepens** as we draw nearer to God. We grow more resilient as we *connect more* with Jesus.
- But we need to be intentional. It takes a *conscious effort*.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

**Joshua 1:9 NIV**

As we step into another week as followers of Jesus, let's hold onto this:

- CONFIDENCE **without humility** turns into pride.
- HUMILITY without confidence **leads to self-doubt**.
- COURAGE **brings both** into action.

May we be people who have confidence in who we are in Christ. People who choose the downward way of Jesus. A life of humility. People who stand up with courage no matter how difficult it is.