

**Joining Jesus' Story**  
**Week 5: From top to bottom to top again**

**Position yourself where God can use his transforming power in your life. This is the Joining Jesus' Story Challenge.**

**We have a gift for you** that we think will really help you to interact with the scriptures. It is a journal. If you **haven't been on either campus**, then we would love to get one of these to you. Or you could order your own online through Crossway books.

The whole letter turns a corner with 1:27. **To this point**, Paul has been talking about his situation in prison and how this is really helping to spread the gospel. **Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel... Philippians 1:27**

**The phrase "manner of life"** really carries the idea of citizenship. Paul is challenging them to act like children of the Kingdom, not trying to be a good citizen of Philippi.

**Remember, Paul is in prison** awaiting trial for preaching the gospel. **He hopes to visit them**, but even if he doesn't make it through this, he wants them to live like citizens of the Kingdom of God, not striving to live fitting in as **good citizens of Philippi and the Roman Empire.**

**From this point forward**, Paul wants to teach them about **how to relate to others outside the faith and those within** the body of Christ in a way that is worthy of the Gospel, the story of Jesus.

**This brings us to the heart of the whole letter.** Paul, in the form of a poem, tells the story of Jesus. **This is the story we are invited to join, to fit into.** It's the story of Jesus, starring Jesus, and Bill is in it. **Not the story of Bill, starring Bill, and Jesus is in it.**

**<sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to**

be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup>Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:5-11 ESV

**We have been encouraging you to memorize and feed on verses 6-11.** These are the ones that tell Jesus' story. **Verse 5 is sort of a heading.** It **connects** the section where Paul is challenging them to live like citizens of the Kingdom. **I believe that the way the NLT translates this makes it easier to understand.** Instead of "have this mind among yourselves," the NLT says it this way...**You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. V. 5 NLT**

**These attitudes are what we are to demonstrate** with one another in the church, but also toward those who do not believe or follow Jesus.

Here's a definition I used a few weeks ago. **Attitude...a subtle way of thinking or feeling about something or someone, typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior.**

**It becomes an attitude because it is a "settled way"** of thinking or feeling that is reflected in behavior.

**Look back at those seven verses and mark anywhere you see any words or phrases that describe Jesus' attitude.** You mark them with the letter A or simply underline or circle them. You can put those in your own words across on the journaling page.

**Before we dig into this, I want to look at a couple of phrases that might be confusing.** What you don't want to do with this story is **focus too much energy on each little aspect of it and miss the larger point.** This is Jesus' story, let's treat it like a story and **not like we are dissecting something.**

The ESV, which is the translation we have in our journals, says, “do not count equality with God a thing to be grasped”...NRSV “something to be exploited” or leveraged. He didn't rely upon his daddy's name, reputation, or power to get him out of trouble when he had every right to do so.

Then, there is that phrase, “emptied himself”...gave up his divine privileges...Jesus did not empty himself of his divinity. In other words, he didn't stop being God. He was fully God, fully human. He didn't suddenly become only human. He gave up all the privileges that come from being God. God doesn't die or have a body that has problems and physical pain, or need to explain himself to mortals...

The rest of the passage shows how he emptied himself.

This is where the structure of the poem helps us to get a picture of what it meant for Jesus to empty himself. Here's a different way to say it.

Jesus voluntarily lowers himself.

What I'm going to do to physically show you how this scripture describes Jesus voluntarily lowering himself.

This is where the ladder comes into play. No, I'm not going to work on anything or fix anything.

I'm going to reword these phrases to simplify them.

V He is God.

V Did not use this for his own advantage.

V Gave up his divine privilege.

V Took the role of a servant.

V Was born as a human being.

V Humbled himself

V Obedient to the point of death.

V Even death on a cross.

Why is Paul describing this as voluntarily lowering himself to the people and Philippi? And what does God want to tell us through this?

It all goes back to **attitude**. We are supposed to **emulate this type of attitude in our dealings** with one another and with the world.

**So how can we do our part in having the attitude of Christ?** Keep in mind that we aren't going to make this happen **through our own efforts**, but **the amazing thing is we can have this attitude grow in us when we take some of those steps downward.**

I know this is the **opposite** of the way we think. **"I will get what I want and need by taking steps upward and elevating myself, making sure I'm heard and taken seriously.** Yes, this is the opposite. Who said Jesus' attitude was going to be like the attitude's prevalent in our culture?

**As we take steps of obedience downward, then the transforming power of the Holy Spirit will go to work.** After all, **"his power is perfected in our weakness."**

Then if my people, who are called by my name, will **humble themselves** and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land. **2 Chron. 7:14**

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to **walk humbly with your God.**  
Micah 6:8

**I don't hear a lot of humility in the public setting and in the political setting.** This is radically different from acting like you've got it all figured out and **yelling** the loudest so that you get your way.

**God will do the transforming and healing, but our part is humbling ourselves or lowering ourselves not for any person, but because that's what God asks of us.** And yes, we will get to the "being raised up" part.

**The basis of all of this is that we understand who we are in relation to God. It's the first step.** It's about knowing who God is and who God isn't. It's about a sober realistic view of ourselves. **God is God and I am not.** So what do I do next? **Call Jesus your King.**

Not my "savior" by itself, that's too easy. Lord is harder.

Christ isn't Jesus' last name. "Mr. Christ, Mr. Jesus Christ please report to the ticket counter."

Jesus, the Christ or anointed King.

We like a God who is a life coach, spirit guide, advisor, copilot... We don't like Kings or Lords because they have absolute authority.

This is about seeing reality. It's like we are kids playing with paper crowns and wooden swords, acting like Kings. And God is up there looking and saying, "Can't you just let me do that for you. I love you, but you're making a mess because you aren't equipped for this. Just trust me."

Josiah wanted to be a Duke not a king. He didn't want all that responsibility, but he did want the title, the money and the Castle with estate. But there's still some ego in what isn't there. How about going all the way to the bottom and saying, "I just want to serve the King." One time, another little kid called him "messiah" instead of Josiah. That's a whole different level. We can't be a king or a messiah, just leave that up to the one who is qualified to do it and is also the one who can be trusted to do it.

We don't like kings, because kings tell us what to do.

Is he your king, really? That's the first thing to settle. He won't be your savior if he isn't your Lord. Those go together and they demand that you trust him.

A lack of trust means that we will have a hard time taking this next step...Give up control, the right to self-determination

Jesus, in these steps of lowering himself, gave up his divine right and privilege to control the situation to his advantage. He could have raised himself up instead of lowering himself.

Then he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me. Luke 9:23

**We can't do those three things without giving up control.**

Do you have a control issue?

Maybe your control issues come from a **deep past hurt**. Because you could not or cannot control \_\_\_\_\_ you are going to control everything else. Seek out some counseling please.

**A sign of this is often perfectionism.** People who are perfectionists tend to have control issues. **They also often have issues with anxiety.** When **things are out of control or they perceive they are**, then the desire to control the smallest details gets stronger. That's when the **anxiety goes up**.

**The Holy Spirit blows where God sends it and that's a problem when we have to be in control.**

**Eating disorders** are also an extreme example of control.

**If you are a first born**, it might be hard for you.

**It's almost impossible to call Jesus your king. not just your savior, if you have this control issue.**

**Here's the tip off. Do you have trouble following anyone?** As soon as **someone disappoints you or challenges you immediately**, you disqualify that person from giving you direction.

**Calling Jesus your Lord and giving up control means we can...Practice obedience.**

**Humbled himself...Obedient to the point of death...Even death on a cross**

Listen to this one, it will blow your mind. **<sup>8</sup> Even though Jesus was God's Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered. <sup>9</sup> In this way, God**

qualified him as a perfect High Priest, and he became the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey him. Hebrews 5:8-9

**Obedience cannot be truly learned until it costs us something.**

**Small things will lead to big things**

Here's something from Jesus' life. <sup>39</sup> He went on a little farther and bowed with his face to the ground, praying, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet **I want your will to be done, not mine.**" Matthew 26:39

Here's another. "The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. <sup>18</sup> **No one can take my life from me.** I sacrifice it voluntarily. **For I have the authority** to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. **For this is what my Father has commanded.**" John 10:17-18

Now Paul says it this way. <sup>19</sup> **Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.** Romans 5:18-19

**Jesus is compared and contrasted with Adam who wanted to elevate himself instead of lowering himself so that God could elevate him. That was disobedience.**

**Another way to describe practicing obedience is "training".** Training is doing what you can do today so that tomorrow you can do what you couldn't do today.

**"I cannot hear God's voice today!"** But I can...**read** the Bible...**practice silence** and **ask** for him to speak to me.

**I cannot stop this particular sinful behavior,** but I can go to a meeting to talk with other addicts, I can talk to a Christian friend whom I trust and I can read the Bible when I am tempted...

**What can I do today** that will help me get to the point where I can do what is presently out of my reach? I've used the example of football player, **Payton Manning**.

Let's take those steps again with Jesus to the bottom

God

Advantage

Privilege

Servant

Born

Humbled

Obedient

Cross

**Verse 9 begins with "Therefore..."** The following is a response to what Jesus has done. "Therefore God has..." Whenever you see a therefore, ask what is it there fore. Because of all that Paul has just said about Jesus, God has...and the rest explains God the father's response.

To the point since Jesus lowered himself...God raised him up.

And everyone will confess that Jesus is Lord  
He commands all creation to bow to Jesus  
He gave him the name above every name  
God lifted him to a place of honor

This is the story we are invited to join, to fit our lives into. God will raise up those who voluntarily lower themselves like Jesus did. So if I act like Jesus is Lord, God and I'm not...If I give up my right to control self determination and if I practice obeying God, then I will be raised up.

(TICO boys prison in Columbus, Ohio) They knew they had to fall on the ground or they would be thrown there when the alarm went off.

When it says, "every knee will bow," that means voluntarily until it isn't anymore. When it says that every tongue will confess, it means voluntarily until it isn't anymore. Everyone is going to be confronted with the reality that they are not God and that they will be judged by God. The time

for trying to act like God or think I'm in control is now. **When time is up**, then bowing and confessing will happen. When the truth is revealed, we will have no choice but to say it.

**Because this is the story we are asked to join, then this is our future.**  
**This is the future from any who are his children.**

**If you make that trip down the steps, which we can do as God enables us**, then the trip we have no power to make happen is done for us. He raises us up.

**And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering. Romans 8:17**

You don't get the trip up if you don't take the trip down.

**His children will participate in those last two steps.** They will **bow** to him as their King and they will **call him their king** with their voices and their allegiance.

In this part Paul is saying something that he heard read **from the Prophet Isaiah** many times. Now he knows that those words were about Jesus.

**I have sworn by my own name; I have spoken the truth, and I will never go back on my word: Every knee will bend to me, and every tongue will declare allegiance to me."** <sup>24</sup> **The people will declare, "The LORD is the source of all my righteousness and strength." And all who were angry with him will come to him and be ashamed. Isaiah 45:23-24**

Let's put this all together by taking the trip down and then back up.

God	Lord
Advantage	
Privilege	Bow
Servant	
Born	Name
Humbled	
Obedient	Honor

## Cross

Surely there are parts of this story that are **exclusively about Jesus and that we cannot replicate**. Most of us will not have to **die for the gospel**. None of us are **giving up divine privilege** because we aren't God. **But we can see Jesus' attitude grow in us through humbling ourselves in obedience to his as our Lord.**

### Steps to Joining Jesus' Story:

#### 1. What is God saying to me through this scripture?

Do you need to start living like Jesus is Lord God and not just your personal savior? That's the one whose job it is to pull me out of the fire. Do you have a control problem, which in reality is a trust problem? You don't really trust him. **Is the spirit lovingly leaning and saying, "I know you don't really trust me but you can?"**

#### 2. What do I need to do to align my life to what He is saying?

**This is the step of obedience.** Remember we are talking about practicing obedience. We aren't answering once and for all your control issues or Jesus' right as Lord to tell you what to do. **We are practicing giving up control** and following. **It's like when your kids were little and you practiced trusting them in small ways so you could hand them the keys to the car one day.**

#### 3. Whose help do I need?

This is where you let the body of Christ be the body of Christ. This is another way to take a step down the ladder. **"I need your help because I cannot do this on my own."**

