

A Spirit of Peace and a Heart With No Pride



SABBATH—JANUARY 17

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Philippians 2:1–8; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 8:3; Hebrews 2:14–18.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then do what will make my joy complete: Agree with each other, and show your love for each other. Be united in your goals [plans] and in the way you think” (Philippians 2:2, ERV).



Other angels joined Lucifer in his fight against God's law and government.

WHEN WE ARE UNITED, we are strong. As a church, we know we need to be united. But knowing is not the same thing as doing. We may try very hard to be united. Sometimes we succeed. Other times we may fail. Paul tells the Philippians that their being united is very important. That's why Paul says, “Think about things in the same way as one another [each other]. Love one another completely. In your spirit, agree with one another. And work together for the same purpose [plan]” (Philippians 2:2, EASY).

Paul's teaching about working together for peace comes from Jesus. We read about this topic everywhere in the New Testament. When did we stop working together? The problem started in the heart of an angel in heaven. That angel was Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12–14). Other angels joined Lucifer in his fight against God's law and government. Then in Eden, Adam and Eve joined Lucifer's fight against God's law (Genesis 3:1–6).

This week, we will look at what the Bible teaches about why we must work together for peace in the church. We also will look at the lessons we can learn from Jesus about this topic.

ARGUING IN CHURCH AT PHILIPPI (Philippians 2:1–3)

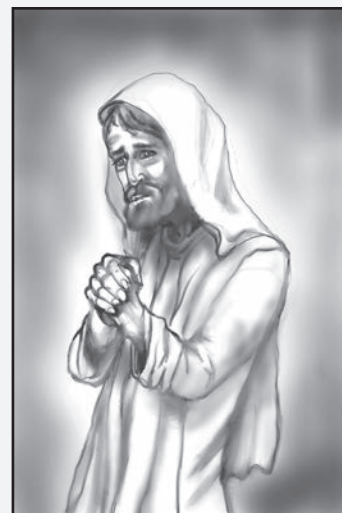
What caused members to argue in the church at Philippi? What does Paul say will solve the problem? Read Philippians 2:1–3 for the answer.

For sure, the problems in the church made Paul sad. Paul loved the church so much. He started the church in Philippi. Of course, the fighting in the church hurt his heart. Paul warns the Philippians not to be selfish or filled with pride, the same as church leaders in Rome (Philippians 1:17). These leaders cared more about getting ahead or being important. They cared less about helping the cause of Jesus.

Paul warns against a selfish heart and the sin of pride (Galatians 5:20). James also says, “If you are jealous of other people and you want to make yourself important, that will cause trouble. People will argue and fight against one another [each other]. They will do all kinds of bad things” (James 3:16, EASY). People who are filled with pride think they are more important than they really are. That’s why Paul writes in another letter, to the Galatians, “We must not feel proud [pride] and boast [brag] about ourselves. We must not cause trouble for each other or be jealous of each other” (Galatians 5:26, ERV).

Paul makes a list of things we can do to solve these problems:

- 1. The Example of Jesus.** Paul shows how Jesus’ life is a powerful example against the sins of the heart.
- 2. Love.** Jesus shows us God’s love. Jesus commands us to “love each other, in the same way that I have loved you” (John 15:12, EASY).
- 3. Fellowship With the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit helps church members to be close in their hearts to each other. The early church enjoyed this close fellowship (Acts 2:42; compare 2 Corinthians 13:14).
- 4. A Kind Heart.** Jesus showed love and forgiveness in His life (read Matthew 9:36; Matthew 20:34; and Mark 1:41). He taught love and forgiveness in His picture stories about the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:33) and the Lost Son (Luke 15:20).
- 5. Mercy.** Jesus showed mercy. The lives of His followers will show mercy, too (Luke 6:36).
- 6. Working Together for Peace.** As Paul says, we must “think and act as Jesus did” (Philippians 2:5, NIV).



The fighting in the church hurt Paul’s heart.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR PEACE IN THE CHURCH
(Philippians 2:3, 4)

Jesus asked the rich young man to sell everything he owned, give the money to the poor, and follow Him.

The religious leaders taught that our behavior was important. But Jesus said that correct behavior didn't make a man clean and innocent. Bad things start in the heart and in the mind. We see this teaching in the story about Jesus and the rich young man. The rich young man told Jesus that he kept the law his whole life. So, Jesus gave the rich young man a test to show him what was in his heart. Jesus asked the rich young man to sell everything he owned, give the money to the poor, and follow Him. Jesus also said, " 'Evil thoughts come out from people's minds. As a result [because evil starts in the heart], they [people] do wrong things. They murder [kill] people. They have sex with another man's wife. They have sex in other wrong ways. They rob people. They tell lies about other people. They insult people' " (Matthew 15:19, EASY).

What must we do to have peace in the church? Read Philippians 2:3, 4 for the answer.

Paul's advice includes emptying our hearts of all pride. We must not think we are more important than other people. We also must care about other people's needs and not just our own. Easier said than done, right? But if we follow these important rules, they will help improve all of our relationships. We also must learn to listen. Often, in our conversations, we want to do all the talking. But we must listen first to understand what the other person is saying. Try to understand his side before you expect him to understand your side. We can avoid many fights and misunderstandings if we listen first. We may not always agree. But when we listen and try to understand the other person first, we can build healthy communication and trust in our relationships and in our church.

Paul talks about how the Holy Spirit helps us cooperate together (Ephesians 4:3). When we agree to work together, we get peace from God. This peace joins us together in faith and love (Ephesians 4:3). If we are fighting in the church, the Holy Spirit can help us stop. He can bring peace. Paul also talks about our need to agree about Jesus and the teachings of our faith (Ephesians 4:13). When we know Jesus and His teachings, we will have the same understanding about Bible truth. When we have this understanding, then the church will be united.

MIND CONTROL (Philippians 2:5)

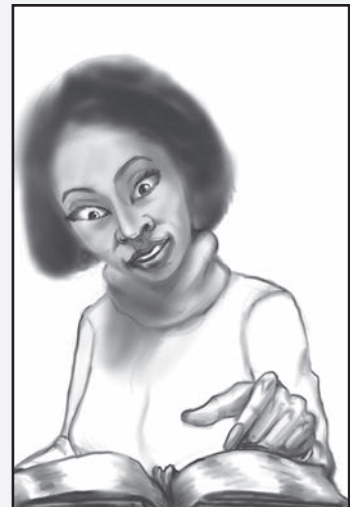
Many companies today are trying to connect computers with the human brain. Scientists hope to use the computers to change our thoughts. Some scientists promise to use computers to help people beat disease. For sure, that's a good idea, right? But just think about all the evil ways people could use these computers to control the human brain.

In many ways, our minds work the same as a computer, only better. Each day new information, knowledge, and ideas enter our brains. This information can change our thoughts and behavior. When we watch a lot of TV, we see the way that people act and think. Soon, we start to think and behave the same way as the actors do. In a way, it's as if their thoughts and ideas are "planted" into our brains!

Jesus wants us to allow the Holy Spirit to control our minds (Romans 8:6). We can let the Holy Spirit control us. Or we can let human ideas control us (1 Corinthians 2:11, 12). Who will teach us? What are we learning?

What does it mean to "think and act like [the same as] Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5, ICB)?

In the end, we can decide what to think. But we can't change our hearts. Only God can change us. The Holy Spirit is the same as a doctor who must "operate" on our hearts. The Bible is a powerful tool that the Holy Spirit uses to help us see inside our hearts: "God's message to us is alive and powerful. It is like [the same as] a sword that has two sharp edges. Even more than a sword, God's message goes very deep into us. It cuts between our soul [mind; thoughts] and our spirit. It is like a sharp knife that can cut deep into our body between our bones. God's message shows what we are really thinking. It shows what we really want" (Hebrews 4:12, EASY). Without the Holy Spirit's help, we can't know who we really are. Our own hearts trick us (Jeremiah 17:9). The Hebrew word for "lies or tricks" is " 'aqov." This word means bumpy ground that causes us to trip and fall. The Bible uses this word to help us understand that we can't trust our own thoughts. We need the Bible to change our hearts and minds first. "Then you will understand what God wants you to do. You will know what is good. You will know what pleases God. You will know what is completely right" (Romans 12:2, EASY).



The Bible is a powerful tool that the Holy Spirit uses to help us see inside our hearts.

THINKING THE SAME WAY THAT JESUS THINKS (Philippians 2:5–8)

Muhammad Ali bragged, “I am the best fighter on earth.” In 1963, Ali won the worldwide boxing championship. Six months earlier, Ali made a record album. The name of the album was “I Am the Greatest [Best].” For sure, Ali was a very good fighter. But he’s not an example for Christians to follow. Not if they want to think the way Jesus thinks.

Jesus was perfect and free from sin. Jesus “knows that we sometimes want to do wrong things. The Devil tried to make him do all those same kinds [types] of wrong things. But Jesus never did anything wrong” (Hebrews 4:15, EASY). Jesus didn’t sin with His thoughts. At the same time, Jesus “still [anyway] suffered, and through [because of] his sufferings he learned to obey whatever God says” (Hebrews 5:8, ERV). Jesus always obeyed His Father, even when obeying was not easy.



**Jesus became human
and a servant.**

Philippians 2:5–8. What is Paul saying to us in these beautiful and powerful verses? What do they mean for us? How do we live this Bible truth in our lives?

Jesus is God. But He became a man. More than that, Jesus became a servant. In Philippians 2:5–8, the word written as “servant” comes from the word “doulos.” Another name for a “doulos” in the English language is a slave. Jesus became human and a servant. Then He gave Himself as an offering for our sins! In another letter, Paul says, “The law says we are under a curse for not always obeying it [the law]. But Christ took away [removed] that curse. He changed places with us [became our substitute] and put himself under that curse” (Galatians 3:13, ERV). The God who made us also died for us on the cross. He also is our Savior. To save us, Jesus needed to become a curse for us.

How can we start to understand what Paul is saying? How do we do what he tells us to do in these verses? How can we follow Jesus and empty our hearts of all pride? How can we give our lives to help other people?

Jesus also said, “ ‘The person among you who is most important will be your servant. Some people lift [honor] themselves [their own selves] up to be important. But God will bring them down low. Other people are humble [with no pride]. God will lift up [honor] those people’ ” (Matthew 23:11, 12, EASY). These words help us understand better Paul’s words in Philippians 2:5–8.

THE SECRET OF OUR LIFE OF WORSHIP (Romans 8:3)

What did Jesus give up when He became human? Read Romans 8:3; Hebrews 2:14–18; and Hebrews 4:15 for the answer.

Jesus, the Son of God, became a human baby, with the Holy Spirit's help. How did this happen? How could Someone who was everlasting become Someone who could die? This mystery is part of what Paul says is "the secret of our life of worship" (1 Timothy 3:16, ERV).

In Philippians 2, Paul talks more fully about the things that Jesus did to become one of us:

1. **"He was like [the same as] God in every way"** (Philippians 2:6, ERV). The words "like God in every way" come from the Greek word "morphē." "Morphē" shows us that Jesus was God (compare John 1:1).
2. **"He chose to leave heaven" (Philippians 2:7, EASY).** Or as the NIV Bible says, "He made himself nothing" (Philippians 2:7) and "became a servant" (Philippians 2:7, WE). Jesus let go of His power and honor as God to become a real human. Jesus understands how we feel when Satan tries to get us to sin.
3. **"He humbled himself [emptied His heart of all pride]"** (Philippians 2:8, ICB). After Jesus became human, He made Himself a servant. Compare Jesus with Lucifer. Jesus came to serve, but Lucifer wanted control.
4. **"He was even willing to die, yes, to die on a cross"** (Philippians 2:8, WE). The worst way to die in Jesus' day was on a cross. Jesus chose this death for Himself. God the Father and Jesus planned His death on the cross. God the Father and Jesus the Son made the decision "together in peace" (Zechariah 6:13, ERV). The Father and Jesus showed their plan to the Israelites hundreds of years before Jesus died on the cross. The snake on the pole was the symbol for Jesus' death. Moses made this snake from brass and lifted it on a pole high above the earth. This snake showed the saving work that Jesus came to this earth to do (Numbers 21:9; John 3:14). As Paul explains: "Christ [Jesus] never did any wrong thing, but God punished him as if he had. He [Jesus] died as punishment for our sins. As a result [because of these things], we become right [accepted] with God when we belong to Christ. We become right, because he [Jesus] is right" (2 Corinthians 5:21, EASY).



The snake on the pole was the symbol for Jesus' death.



“We must become students of Jesus.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “We must become students of Jesus. What shall we learn from our Savior? Will He teach our hearts to become filled with pride? Will we learn that we are wonderful and better than other people? Of course not! The more that Jesus teaches us, the more we shall empty our hearts of all pride. We must not think that we know everything worth knowing. God gave us skills and talents. What is the best way to use these skills and talents for Him? When God changes us and gives us bodies that will live forever, we won’t forget about the good things we learned in this life. We will take this knowledge with us to heaven. There, we will live forever with Jesus. We will study about Jesus and His work as our Savior forever.”—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 36*, 1885, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ What did you learn about God’s love? What experience did you have that showed you that God’s love is real? In class, talk about the different ways you learned about God’s love.
- ❷ What does it mean that Jesus “gave up his place with God and made himself nothing. He was born as a man and became like [the same as] a servant” (Philippians 2:7, ICB)? Compare Romans 8:3. Discuss Philippians 2:7 with Romans 8:3. How are these verses both the same? How are they different? What do both verses teach us about Jesus?
- ❸ This week, we studied about our need for working together for peace in the church. What problems stop your church from finding peace together? Paul gives us some powerful advice to help us when we are in trouble: “In the way that you live, do not just try to help yourself. Do not be proud [filled with pride in your heart]. Instead [but], respect other people. Think about other people as more important than yourself” (Philippians 2:3, EASY). How can this advice help us, as a church, to solve our problems?

MONEY THAT NEVER RUNS OUT

11-year-old Alvan Harold liked feeling coins in his pocket while he walked home from school. Alvan lived in Kisumu, Kenya. With the coins, Alvan could stop at a sweet shop on the way home. Then he could buy some nuts or ice cream.

A fifth-grade Bible teacher surprised Alvan when she scolded him for spending all his money on sweets. She said, "You shouldn't spend all your money on nuts and ice cream. Save some to give to God on Sabbath."

So, Alvan put money in the offering plate on Sabbath. Alvan's father gave him the money that Sabbath morning. Teacher talked about that money, too.

Teacher said, "When you give money from your parents, you are giving for your parents. You aren't giving your own money." She read Malachi 3:8: " 'People should not steal things from God, but you stole things from me. You say, 'What did we steal from you?' You should have given me one-tenth of your things. You should have given me special gifts' " (ERV).

Alvan thought that Teacher was accusing him of stealing from God. Alvan didn't like that. But then he thought, "Maybe Teacher is just a little bit right."

When Thursday came, Alvan already spent all his pocket money for the week. He decided to save money for God the next week. But the next week, he again spent all his money. Two months passed. Alvan was disappointed with himself. He just didn't know how to save his money for the offering.

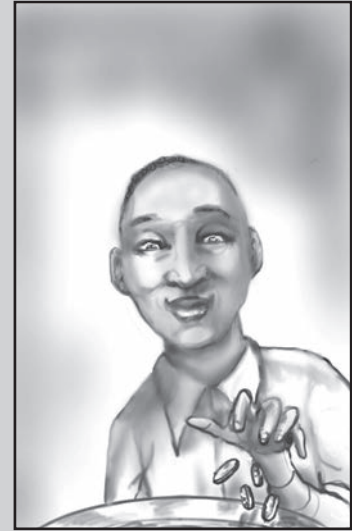
A short time later, Alvan and his 17-year-old brother, Allan, passed an ice cream shop on their way home. Alvan had a 20-shilling coin (20 US cents) in his pocket. Alvan decided to spend his money on ice cream. But his big brother stopped him. He said, "Alvan, walking around eating ice cream is silly and childish." Alvan was upset. He wanted ice cream, but he obeyed his big brother. So, Alvan didn't buy anything.

When Sabbath came, Alvan had the 20 shillings in his pocket. Alvan put the coin in the offering plate, along with the 20 shillings his parents gave him that morning. Alvan felt happy to give his own money. He gave up something he really wanted so that he could give God an offering. Alvan now understood that he didn't lose anything when he gave up the ice cream.

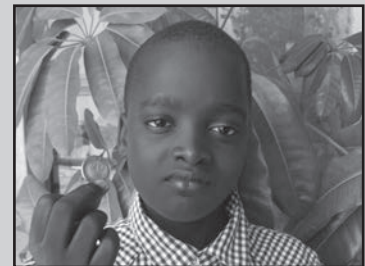
The next week, Alvan saved another 20 shillings. He gave it as an offering. Alvan liked this feeling of giving! To this day, Alvan keeps giving his offering every Sabbath. He never runs out of money. Sometimes Alvan wants to buy nuts or ice cream. But he tells himself that he must have 20 shillings for God on Sabbath.

Alvan said, "I tell myself that supporting God's work is better than anything I could buy."

INSIDE *Story*



Alvan gave up something he really wanted so that he could give God an offering.



Alvan Harold