

## *God's Son Decided to Become Human— Philippians 2:6–9*

It seems that almost everyone is feeling stressed and pressured. We work long hours and struggle with the expectations that others have of us and we have of ourselves. It's true that we have lots of benefits — everything from cellular phones to multiple cars — but a growing number of Americans are beginning to wonder if it is really worth it.

Magazines regularly feature articles telling the story of successful professionals who sell their expensive homes, turn in the company car and quit high paying jobs and move to a small town with the goal of having a simpler life without the prestige, possessions and pressures. Have you ever thought about doing that? Just walking away from the rat race and getting a fresh start on a simpler, lower level?

What would you be willing to give up? How far do you think you'd be willing to go? Would you be willing to live in a home that didn't have indoor plumbing or electricity? Would you be willing to give up medical insurance or nearby medical care? Would you be willing to leave family and friends behind? Would you be willing to live in a different country and have to learn to speak a foreign language? Would you be willing to become truly poor? Would you be willing to become an animal: a sheep, a dog, a cat, a worm or a fly?

Before you conclude that this conversation has gone way too far, let me explain that the Son of God stepped farther down than anything that I have suggested. Take a look at the way the Bible describes in Philippians 2:5-9 what God's Son decided to do:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!

Jesus Christ did not hold tightly to position. That was absolutely amazing! Understand what this Son of God gave up. The Son of God had everything

God has. He was the King of heaven. He got whatever he wanted. He lived in indescribable luxury. He was surrounded by magnificent beauty. He had unlimited wealth, power and wisdom. Every angel of heaven was available for his service. Whatever his whim, they would do. He was at the top of the top — everyone and everything was below him.

To make some comparisons, he was a billion times richer than Bill Gates, more talented and creative than a country full of Michelangelos, more brilliant than a thousand Einsteins. He was more powerful than all of the monarchs, presidents and dictators of history combined. He had it made! He was God!

But Jesus Christ did not hold tightly to any of this. He was not possessive or greedy. He held everything with a loose grip, an open palm. Not that he didn't value all he had, but he was willing to let go of everything.

That is a sharp contrast to some people of high position and great power. For many of us, when we have position and power, we are prone to politicking to get more. We like to defend our territory. Whenever we can wedge in a word, we like to brag about our house, our car, the office where we work, our salary or net worth. Frankly, many of us hold so tightly to what we have that our knuckles are white and our lives are stressed with possessiveness and fear.

As if all of that were not amazing enough, when Jesus came to earth he was willing to serve. I think it would have been more understandable if the Son of God had come to earth in order to rule. It might have made more sense if he came like an entrepreneur to build a large business empire in some distant place and to tell people what to do. But not Jesus. He came not to be served but to serve. It's as though he came with job application in hand and in the blank asking, "position desired," he wrote only one word — servant. The Bible says: "...though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." (II Cor. 8:9)

***Frankly, many of us hold so tightly to what we have that our knuckles are white and our lives are stressed with possessiveness and fear.***

Jesus was not only willing to serve, but he did serve. He worked hard as a craftsman in a carpenter's shop. He got down and dirty with people who were poor and sick, touching those with communicable diseases. He got down on his hands and knees and washed the feet of his followers. People called him by his first name and he didn't mind. The aristocrats of his day were uncomfortable with his simplicity and his servanthood, but the vast majority of ordinary people were thrilled that he became one of them.

Now this, of course, was a long time ago and it takes some stretch of our imagination to think of what Jesus would be like if he were here today. He would be among the first to "Adopt a Highway" in order to pick up the litter that others had carelessly dropped. We might find ourselves a little uncomfortable when we go through the drive-through at McDonald's to find that it is Jesus who is serving up the hamburgers and the milkshakes. Or, when going away on vacation you might come back to find that Jesus had mowed your lawn while you were gone without being asked. At the end of a long work day when the office is a mess, we think to ourselves that we'll straighten up the office tomorrow only to come back early the next morning and find that everything has been cleaned by a night worker named Jesus. And for a minimum wage or less.

If Jesus were here now and you or I had the opportunity to stop him and talk to him and find out his whole story, when we would ask him his name he would simply say "Jesus." Detecting a slight accent in the way he speaks, you sense that he has come from somewhere else. You ask him where he used to live and he would answer "heaven." If you asked him about his previous job experience he would have to say, "I ran the universe."

*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

And that's not all. Jesus humbled himself to obey. It is one thing to proudly be a servant, to have a straight back and a certain stare so that even in a servant role there is some type of retention of personal power. It is quite another thing to humbly be a servant who submits to the orders of others.

Suppose that one day you are driving across the company parking lot. It's spring and there's still ice and snow on the lot, but around the edges of the pavement it's turned to mud. Not paying attention, you overturn a corner and slide off so your car gets stuck in the mud. The harder you try to get it out, the deeper the wheels sink.

While you're trying to figure out what to do next, you see in the rear view mirror a person in a suit walking up behind you and realize it is the president of the company. He volunteers to help push. You are stunned and say, "Thanks for offering but I don't think it would be a good idea. You would get filthy. I'll get somebody else to help." But he insists. (And who are you to tell the president of the company what he can't do?) He stands ankle deep in the mud pushing. As your car pulls out, the mud spins up and covers him from head to foot. As you roll down your window to thank him you think to yourself, "Wow! There is a truly great and humble man." Actually, you're probably thinking, "That would never happen at my company!"

Compare that to a completely different scene where the president of the company takes a leave of absence. He puts all of his stock into a blind trust where he no longer has control over it. He moves across country from the national corporate headquarters to the small Minneapolis office. Before he starts, he undergoes cosmetic surgery so his appearance is changed and no one recognizes him.

When he arrives in Minneapolis he goes to a temp agency and gets a job on the night shift cleaning the parking lot where you park your car. As you are leaving, you slide on the ice and your car gets stuck in the mud. You see the man working and you roll down your window and call out, "Hey, I'm late for an appointment. Come push my car." When he's back there you rev the engine, splattering mud all over him, but the wheels catch and you go rocketing out without stopping to thank him because you're late. That's more like the experience of Jesus, the Son of God: "...being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient."

Jesus even obeyed the order to die. You know he didn't have to. They never could have crucified him if he had not consented. He could have called it all off. He could have called legions of angels to control every circumstance, but he didn't. He decided to obey the most unjust order that was ever

given to any servant in all of history.

Do you think that when the Son of God decided to leave heaven and become human he realized what he was getting himself into? Do you think he had any idea what it would be like? I think he did. Yet he decided to go ahead and do it because of his love for us. God's Son knew that it was the only way that he would ever reach us. He knew that he could never reach us only with words, for we would probably misunderstand them or not listen to them. He knew that if he only gave law, instead of complying, we would rebel; if he threatened punishment, we would rebel. He knew that the only way he could reach us was with love. And the only way that love would ever be believed is if he became one of us.

It was a great decision when the Son of God decided to become human. What can we learn from Jesus for our great decisions? True, our greatest decisions are not near the magnitude of the Son's decision to become human. But, our decisions about life and death, family, job, relationships and possessions are still very important to us.

How then can we make our decisions? Look at Philippians 2:5 again. Do you do you remember the introduction of this description of Jesus? It tells how Christians are to think when making decisions: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." Like Jesus we should have an attitude of trust.

When Jesus left heaven he left his powers and possessions in the hands of God the Father. When he was on earth he had no independent use of his divine attributes. He used to know everything; he was omniscient. But when he came to earth he became ignorant, knowing only the things that God the Father let him know. He used to be all-powerful; he was omnipotent. He became weak, able to do only the things that God the Father gave him the power to do. He used to be everywhere; he was omnipresent. But he became limited, able to go only where the Father let him go.

It was like a blind trust where he took everything that he had and left it in the hands of God to do whatever God chose for him to do, having no control over it himself. That is the attitude that Christians should have when we make our decisions. We

put everything that we have in a blind trust with God in charge, and we fully trust him. We trust him to make the decision if we live or if we die. We give him control over our money — to do whatever he chooses with it. We are convinced that if we have a great deal, it is not because of our great skill and ability; it is because of his generosity. If we have little, we accept it as sufficient, trusting him fully even if our cup has only a drop in it. We trust him with our jobs, our children, our marriages and every other relationship.

When we have that attitude of trust in the decisions that we make, then we do not need to hold so tightly. Then we can loosen up our grip. We can relax and truly trust God. We don't have to be so

intense about defending our reputations. We don't have to be so defensive or so possessive. We don't have to hoard all the good stuff

to ourselves. We don't have to envy other people because they have something that we do not have. Like Jesus, we do not need to grasp if we trust.

But trust is not always easy. I doubt that it was easy for Jesus. We prefer to be in control and to have power. The truth of it is that God is far more trustworthy than we ourselves and does far better with everything that is ours than we could ever do.

Like Jesus, we should also have an attitude of service. Not because we have to, but because we want to. Remember, we're talking here about an attitude. It is possible to hold the highest position in society and to have an attitude of service and it is possible to hold the lowest position in society and not have an ounce of a servant's heart.

Think for a moment about the decisions you face. Ask yourself, "How could I serve others like Jesus?" Do it without them ever even knowing that you did it. Without any special recognition or promise of reward — just to be like Jesus. Decide to serve other members of your family. Decide to serve co-workers by doing the things that other people don't want to do. Volunteer for servant tasks.

An attitude of service is a revolutionary power. It's revolutionary because most people prefer to be served rather than to serve someone else. We prefer that another person do the dirty work. We prefer that someone else do the things we just don't want

*Like Jesus we should have an attitude of trust.*

to do. We would rather that somebody else volunteered to befriend children in the city. We would rather that somebody else tutor kids or work in the church nursery or pick up the trash along the highway or make phone calls for some charity that will impact the lives of those who have need.

It's really not natural to adopt this attitude of service. It's supernatural. It's like Jesus. And like Jesus, in addition to an attitude of trust and an attitude of service, we should have an attitude of humility.

I will confess to you that I find that that is the toughest one of all. I find it a difficult thing to be humble and obedient like Jesus. I like to be right and I like for other people to know when I'm right. When it turns out that I was right and they were wrong, I like for them to acknowledge it! Generally I like other people to do things my way and I don't particularly like obeying the orders of others.

Then I look at Jesus and listen to Jesus. And I am awed by the humility and obedience of this man. He didn't need for anyone to know how important he was or how right he was. He graciously and kindly obeyed the orders of people far inferior to him. He never insisted on his own superiority, although he had every right. If Jesus could be like that when he is so much better than I, then I must adopt his attitude and do the same.

Recently I talked with a man whose name and position would be familiar to many of you. I wish I had asked his permission to tell his name. He held one of the highest and most powerful business positions in the United States until two years ago when he and his wife moved overseas. They lived for two years in a five hundred square foot apartment and gave themselves simply and humbly to the Christian service of others.

As I was thinking about this afterwards, I couldn't help but wonder if those to whom this couple had gone ever had any idea who he was. I wondered if they could begin to imagine what this couple had left behind. I wondered if they had any idea what this couple could have been doing and where they could have been doing it. But I think that this couple would not have wanted them to know.

We are Christians. We are followers of Jesus Christ who "being found in appearance as a man, humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross."

Would you like to take a revolutionary supernatural approach to the great decisions of your life? It promises to be fabulous, but not necessarily easy.

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus . . ." It is an attitude of trust, an attitude of service and an attitude of humility.

*Faith Matters* is the Broadcast Ministry of  
Leith Anderson and Wooddale Church  
6630 Shady Oak Road  
Eden Prairie MN 55344  
612-944-6300  
[www.wooddale.org](http://www.wooddale.org)  
©Leith Anderson