

What if...

We Really Loved Each Other?

Philippians 2:1-4

PPT Title

What if We Really Loved Each Other?

Main Point: When we trust God, we can treat people like they are more important than us.

Key Verse: *Be free of pride. Think of others as better than yourselves.* - Philippians 2:3b

Props: large chocolate eclair, paper plate, plastic knife; Basket of fruit with an apple (cut in half before lesson); box of crayons; Step Ladder; Optional: Short king's robe

INTRO

I have a big, fat, chocolate eclair here. Does anyone like big, fat, chocolate eclairs? Hmm... It's kind of big for one person. I think I should probably split it between two people. **Call up two volunteers.** Instead of *me* dividing it, I think I'll just let you do it. (Hand the knife to one of the students.) Wait! before you do it, I should probably let you know that the other student will get to choose which half he'll get. (Student will most likely be really careful to cut it exactly in half.) Show the two halves to the class. Allow second volunteer to choose his half and both can take theirs and sit down.

Ask class: Has this ever happened at your house? Wow. If you got to cut the eclair and you got to choose the side you wanted, how might that look? Some of us might cut it here or here (indicate on the second eclair a very skewed portion) so we could get the biggest half. But what happens when you know the other person gets to choose? (Call on a child to answer.) Yeah, you are really careful to make it exactly even so the you don't get "cheated" out of one molecule! That's our human nature at work! "I want it, I deserve it, I should get more, I certainly shouldn't get *less*, I, I, I."

TO THE BELIEVERS

Well, let's go back to visit Paul in prison and see what he has to say about this nature of ours. Paul wrote:

Are you cheerful because you belong to Christ? Does His love comfort you? Is the Holy Spirit your companion? Has Christ been gentle and loving toward you? - Philippians 2:1



Paul talking to his friends in Philippi - "those who belong to Christ (Jesus)." What does it mean to belong to something? It means to have a place, a category, or an identity. Look in this fruit basket. I have an apple. Does it belong in the fruit basket? Yes. How do we know it's a fruit? Cut fruit open with a knife. Because it's sweet and juicy and there's a seed inside. I also have a crayon. Does it belong in the fruit basket? No, it's not a fruit. Break crayon in half. There is no seed inside. Where does the crayon belong? In the crayon box. Everything belongs somewhere.

Paul reminded his friends in Philippi that they had a place with Jesus, because they put their faith in Jesus. They believed in Him and trusted Him as their King. Once we

put our faith in Jesus, we belong to him forever. Just like all fruit have seeds, and all crayons have a color, all believers have the Holy Spirit living in them. When Paul wrote this letter to His friends, he used a big Greek word- paraklesis. It means that Jesus has called us near to His side. But exactly how near are we to Jesus?

I have written your name on the palms of my hands. - Isaiah 49: 16

Write your name on your hand in bold, black marker so everyone can see. When we trust Jesus, this is how close we are to Him. We belong. **Close your fist around your name, and wrap your other hand around it.** This is how He holds us in his hands. But His are way stronger than mine! Jesus said, "I give them eternal life, and they will never die. No one can steal them out of my hand." John 10:28

Of you believe in Jesus, YOUR name is written on the palm of His hand. You belong to Him. Jesus comforts you with His love. He has given His Holy Spirit to you. He has been so gentle to you, taking away your sin and bringing you into God's kingdom. Let's see what Paul asks you and me to do -

Make my joy complete by agreeing with each other. Have the same love. Be one in spirit and purpose. Don't do anything only to get ahead. Don't do it because you are proud. Instead, be free of pride. Think of others as better than yourselves. None of you should look out just for your own good. You should also look out for the good of others. - Philippians 2:2-4

Can you picture Paul, sitting in prison—possibly in chains? He's in a crummy situation, but he's not worried about himself. Instead, he said he will be completely filled with joy if the other people who belong to Jesus will love each other. Love means treating other people like they are really important—because they are.

STEP DOWN FROM PRIDE

First, we have to understand what pride is so we can get rid of it! Pride never brings joy. Pride hurts the heart of God. What does pride look like? Pride is focusing on yourself too much.



Let's imagine I get the highest grade on a test in my class. I start to think I am the smartest person in my class. This is pride. **Stand on first step of ladder.** Now imagine my mom asks my brothers and sisters and me to clean up our rooms. I am the first to finish cleaning. I look at all of my hard work and think I am the best kid in the family. I obeyed first. My siblings are still working. **Climb a step on the ladder.** Then I remember the goal I scored at my last soccer game, and I just know for sure I'm the best player on the team. **Climb another step.**

Look at how tall I am. From here, it looks to me that I am above everybody else! I am so proud of myself! But, Paul says I shouldn't think of myself first. **Climb down.** I shouldn't view every situation wondering if it will be good or bad for ME. I should stay grounded. I should put others on higher ground. For example, if my grade is higher than my friend's, I shouldn't think I'm so smart. I should think, "I'm so thankful God gave me ability in this subject. I'd like to help my friend study next week. **Guide a student to step up one rung.** Maybe I should even "take a knee" so that I think of others first. I should put their needs before my own.

(For Older Kids: Pride isn't always thinking too much of ourselves. Sometimes pride is simply thinking about ourselves TOO MUCH. It can look like this. **Take a step up the ladder with each statement.** "I'm the worst soccer player. I don't deserve friends. I really blew it today. My sin is too big for God to forgive." What did each of these statements begin with? I, me my. Focusing on yourself, as if you are the center of the universe, is actually a form of pride. Stop thinking of yourself first, and think of others instead.)

JONATHAN LIVES IT OUT



I'll like to tell you a story about a famous king and his son. The son set aside all pride and he put others first. I bet some of you have heard of them.

Back in the Old Testament, way before Jesus came to earth, there was a king named Saul. He was the king of the Israelites, God's chosen people. Saul was a big, handsome man. He was a mighty warrior and just by what people could see on the outside, Saul looked like the perfect king. But, on the inside, he wasn't very good. He was prideful and jealous of others. And on several occasions, he disobeyed God and did things his own way (1 Samuel 13:13, 15:11).

Saul had one son. His name was Jonathan. What is the title for the son of a king? Prince. Who gets to be king when the king dies or after the king is too old to rule? His son, the prince. Everyone assumed that Jonathan would be the next king. That's just how it worked. For his entire life, Jonathan would have grown up knowing that one day he would be king. I'm sure his parents had lots of talks that started out, "Jon, when you're king... you'll have to do this, or you'll get to do that, or you must never do that." He was the young king-in-training. Jonathan was brave like his dad, but his heart was totally different. Jonathan trusted God (1 Samuel 14:6-14). What do you think the best part about being king would be? (People have to do what you say, no one can tell you what to do, people think you're awesome, live in a cool house...) As far as Jonathan knew, all these great things were in store for him.



The Israelites were constantly at war with the Philistines. There was one particular Philistine soldier who was a giant man. Can anyone remember his name? Goliath. (Now, if this is hard for you to imagine, I want you to take a look at this photo. It's Pastor Buddy at Waffle House with the famous basketball player, Shaquille O'Neal! God just made some people extra large! Shaq is a great guy, but Goliath was not!)



One day when Goliath was out barking out threats and curses against the Israelite army, an Israelite teenager named David came out to visit his big brothers who were in the army. (David was too small to be a soldier. His job was taking care of his father's sheep. It was a lowly job, but someone had to do it.) David saw that everyone was afraid of Goliath. But he wasn't afraid. I think David remembered what the whole army forgot: Years before, God promised to protect the Israelites. God promised that anyone who cursed the Israelites would be cursed by God!

David said to Goliath, "You are coming to fight against me with a sword, a spear and a javelin. But I'm coming against you in the name of the Lord who rules over all. He is the God of the armies of Israel. He's the one you have dared to fight against." - 1 Samuel 17:45

And sure enough, David won that battle - big time! So David became quite famous and king Saul kept David around. You might think that Jonathan would be a bit jealous of David. "Hey, who is this guy, who my Dad is paying attention to and who everyone is praising?" But that's not how Jonathan reacted at all!



After that, Jonathan and David became close friends... Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him just as he loved himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David. He also gave him his military clothes. He even gave him his sword, his bow and his belt. - 1 Samuel 18:1b, 3-4

These two guys became best friends. **Call up two boys. Put a short robe (to avoid tripping) on one boy to indicate he is Jonathan.** Now don't forget, Jonathan was next in line for the throne. It's like, everyone in the world knew he was up here, above everyone else. **Have "Jonathan" step up onto the ladder.** But he willingly took off his robe, military clothes, and weapons, and put them on David! **Have "Jonathan" step down, put the robe on "David" and guide David up a step on the ladder.** This was

Jonathan's way of saying, "What's mine is yours." Can you imagine being the rightful Prince, and just gladly handing it over to someone else? That is such a beautiful, pride-FREE attitude. Even though Jonathan was a Prince, and David was a lowly shepherd, Jonathan didn't consider himself better than David. Just the opposite: Jonathan considered David better than himself. **Thank your volunteers.**

Jonathan wasn't miserable about all of this. He was joyful. He wasn't jealous of David's success. He didn't want to withhold any good things from David. He didn't try to keep himself ahead of David. Humanly speaking, it would be impossible to have this kind of attitude! But Jonathan trusted God. He trusted God's plan. He thought, "I don't have to hold on tight to all my stuff. If I am supposed to have something, God will make sure I get it." (Psalm 138:6)

Next week we'll see an even more incredible example of this beautiful attitude.

Application: Our old human nature says, "I want the bigger half of the doughnut!" **Climb up a step on the ladder.** But Jesus gives us a new nature—a nature like HIS! Our new nature says (**climb down**), "That's ok. You take the bigger half. I trust that God will give me what I should have, and not one molecule more or less. In fact, if there's something God wants me to have, nothing in the world could keep me from getting it." And how does it feel to treat others like this? It brings you joy! (Acts 20:35)

PPT Main Point

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