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## SESSION THIRTEEN

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# Jesus Triumphs

### SESSION SUMMARY

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In this session, we celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus' triumph over death came through His willingness to give up His heavenly status and humble Himself to death on the cross, and through His resurrection from the dead. As the One who humbled Himself for our salvation, Jesus is worthy of all praise and glory. In response, we are called to have the same attitude as Jesus and willingly give up our privileges and humbly obey Him.

### SCRIPTURE

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Philippians 2:5-11

# THE POINT

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**Christians are called to follow Jesus' example of serving others in humility.**

## INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

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### Option 1

When a rocket takes off to the moon, there is a lot to consider. Those who put fuel into the rocket must consider the rotation of the earth on its axis, the density of the air when the rocket travels through its various atmospheres, the weight of the vehicle with all its contents, and thousands of other variables.

The reason these considerations are so critical can be summed up in one word: trajectory. The weather, the amount of fuel, and the weight of the rocket all influence the trajectory of the rocket toward its objective. A small difference on the earth can cause the rocket to miss the moon by miles. Can you imagine the sickening feeling of looking out the window of your rocket and noticing that you have passed the moon?

While there is no single passage that summarizes the entire Bible, the story of Philippians 2 contains the trajectory of the Bible. This passage is poetic and fascinating, but it is also practical: the “trajectory” of humiliation to exaltation we see described of Christ in this passage is to be the trajectory of our lives, too. Getting this trajectory wrong, even if we are just slightly off in one area of our life, can cause us to miss the destination by miles.

- **What are some of the variables that can get us off track as followers of Christ?**
- **Is the path you are currently taking in life one that will lead you and others to Christ? If not, what adjustments do you need to make?**

### Option 2

When things are going well, friendships can be a lot of fun. You laugh together and share fun experiences. But at other times you might be asked to make some sacrifices to help out a friend. How far would you be willing to go to help a friend who just got out of a relationship and needed a shoulder to cry on? whose car was wrecked and needs you to give him a ride to school and practice every day? whose dad is out of work and now he/she doesn't have the money to go to youth camp?

- **We often find joy in giving of ourselves to help the people we love. Would you be willing to do the same for a total stranger? Why or why not?**

Jesus made Himself like us in order to serve us. He didn't do it because He thought we were inferior or because He wanted to look good or because He needed community service hours for His high school diploma. He served because He loves us, and because that's just who He is. You and I are called to follow Jesus' example as we serve others.

# HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

## THE POINT

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**Christians are called to follow Jesus' example of serving others in humility.**

## CHARACTERS

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- **Jesus Christ:** the second person of the Trinity
- **Paul:** an apostle of Christ and missionary to the Gentiles

## PLOT

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During this special Easter session, we are going to look at Paul's words in Philippians 2, which begins with the admonition to serve one another: "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." (vv. 3-4). Almost every problem in relationships with family members, at school, or any other sphere of life would be solved if people would see other's needs as more important than their own. Paul goes on to explain this beautiful truth by showing us the ultimate illustration of Jesus.

## JESUS HUMBLING HIMSELF BY BECOMING LIKE US

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In a world where we usually measure status by what we can gain, God shows us how the ultimate triumph of Christ came through what He gave. In order for the plan of salvation to be accomplished, the Son of God had to step down into the world.

**Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. (Phil. 2:5-7)**

Here we see the apostle Paul encouraging us to make our attitudes like that of Christ. Though the Son of God had all the privileges that came from being one with His Father, He set those privileges aside in order to become human and rescue us. We shouldn't think that He emptied Himself of deity; we should instead see Him as taking on our humanity, submitting to a lowly status and position. God the Son came to serve us, and His service is our salvation.

Think about the most expensive car you can imagine. Now think about it being brand new, right off of the showroom floor. It has never been driven. You are the first person to sit inside of it, and as you do you are overwhelmed with the new car smell.

Now imagine that for your first trip in this car you decide to go off-road. There you are, running the brand new tires through thick mud and clay, flinging it on top of the fresh coat of paint. By the time you are done, the car is so covered in mud you can barely tell what the color is underneath.

This helps us to understand Paul's words here about Jesus being divine, taking on human form. Think about it: Your new car's status doesn't change just because you run it through some mud. It is still the car you bought, just with something added to it from the outside. We can think in a similar way when it comes to Jesus. Christ was God before He came to earth, He remained God on earth, and He is still God. The fact that He took on human form doesn't mean He ceased to be divine—it simply means that while He was on earth He did not take a hold of and utilize certain aspects of His divinity that were always His.

### TIMELINE

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*Beginning Summer 2016*

#### **DEMAND FOR A KING**

*The people desire to be like the surrounding nations.*

#### **SAUL'S DOWNFALL**

*Israel's first king fails to obey God.*

#### **THE ANOINTING OF DAVID**

*The characteristics of a true king.*

## JESUS HUMBLLED HIMSELF BY DYING IN OUR PLACE

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Jesus humbled Himself when He put on our humanity. But His humiliation continued when He died on the cross.

**And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil. 2:8)**

The purpose of crucifixion was not merely execution, but humiliation. Nails were driven through the person's hands and feet. No discretion. No respect for life. This was a public spectacle meant to horrify those who watched and humiliate the victims.

If you've ever been humiliated, you know the horrible feeling that comes with it. Perhaps it was a betrayal from someone you trusted. Someone you loved took advantage of you. Some hurts are so deep that people never recover.

What makes Jesus' humiliation stand out is that He willingly accepted this debasement. He trusted people, knowing they would betray Him. He loved the people who would torture Him. Humiliation is horrible, no matter how it happens, but it is staggering to our imagination to consider God *willingly being humiliated* in order to save us. What more evidence is there of Christ's love for us!

In this vivid scene, we see how the Creator of life, the One with all power, has not only relinquished this power to His creatures, but has given them the power to kill Him. Ultimate humiliation. How could anyone ever sink to lower humiliation than Jesus on the cross?

When the Son of God left the perfection of heaven, He did not consider the use of His privileges more important than the plan of God to save us through the ultimate act of humiliation on the cross. Again, no one has ever faced such humiliation. And yet, this humiliation is part of His triumph.

- **What did Jesus give up in order to save us?** (p. 85, PSG)
- **What does it look like today when someone gives up his or her own interests for the work of Christ?** (p. 85, PSG)

### GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

For further study note the remarkable connection between this passage and that of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. The Messiah is exalted on high: "Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted" (52:13). The Messiah is humiliated: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth" (53:7). The Messiah is again exalted: "Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors" (53:12).

## JESUS IS EXALTED THROUGH HIS RESURRECTION

From ultimate humiliation, now comes ultimate exaltation! It's important to get this order right. We cannot understand how high Christ will be exalted until we understand how low He was humiliated.

**Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:9-11)**

Notice the phrase, "Therefore God has highly exalted him." Paul wants us to see that God's motivation for the exaltation was Christ's humiliation. Christ went lower than any other; therefore, God will make sure that He goes higher than any other. Ultimate exaltation comes after ultimate humiliation.

The truth that God will exalt those who humble themselves comes up often in Scripture.

**Invite students to use their Bible, a concordance, or even their smartphone to look up passages in Scripture where God's love and grace is shown to those who humble themselves before Him. Discuss what they find. Following are a few examples to get started: (p.85, PSG)**

- **Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. (Jas. 4:10)**
- **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you. (1 Pet. 5:6)**
- **Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matt. 23:12)**

The scene in Philippians 2 is not just any humiliation. No, this is ultimate humiliation. This is not just any exaltation; it is ultimate exaltation. The exaltation of Christ is a real event that will happen. Christ was literally humiliated, and He will be literally exalted in a way that is even more public. (See Rev. 5 and 19.)

After His death, Christ was removed from the cross and laid in a borrowed tomb (John 19:41). This was the lowest point of Christ's humiliation. However, on the third day God the Father initiated the first stage of His exaltation by raising Him from the dead.

The resurrection is such a central part of the message of our faith that Paul considered it to be central to the gospel itself (1 Cor. 15:4). And that if this message is not true then our faith is loss (1 Cor. 15:1-19). And further, that His resurrection gives the confidence that we ourselves will one day be raised from the dead (1 Cor. 15:20-58).

And not only that, but there is an actual date on God's calendar in which everyone who ever lived will praise the exalted name of Christ. This is not just

## TIMELINE

**DAVID AND JONATHAN**  
*The gift of true friendship.*

**THE DAVIDIC COVENANT**  
*God reestablishes the covenant with David and his descendants.*

exaltation, but super-exaltation. When someone who is dispassionate about Christ, or even hates Christ, speaks against Him, don't fear! The same voice that mocked Christ will cry out in confession of His lordship one day. The same people who fight against Christ will throw their bodies prostrate before Him, flat on their faces in awe and wonder at His majesty. In the end those who do not follow Christ will still recognize His glory, even as they face His judgment.

## CHRIST CONNECTION

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English speakers love superlatives: the greatest team of all time; the ultimate car; or the most extreme nacho chip ever packed in a cellophane bag. But with over-use comes loss of meaning—if everything is the greatest, then nothing is.

However, this passage of Scripture is definitive: No one was ever lower than Christ at one moment and no one will be more ultimately exalted than Christ for all time. Ultimate suffering leading to ultimate glory. Ultimate humiliation leading to ultimate exaltation. No one ever went lower. No one will ever be raised higher.

The same trajectory is evident in other stories of Scripture. Think of all the people who tried the opposite trajectory: they were low but tried to go high. The tragic examples of Adam, Saul, and Judas stand as steadfast witnesses to what happens when we exalt our desires above God. The examples of David, Hannah, and the apostle Paul stand as examples of how God exalts those who make themselves weak and trust Him.

The question you must ask yourself is: *Will I humble myself and serve others and then trust God to exalt me later? Am I willing to serve my family members, friends, and those around me like Christ. Am I am willing to descend into usefulness?* Most Christians are not afraid of heights, but a great many are afraid of depths.

### 99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

#### Christ's Exaltation

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*Whereas the death of Christ was the ultimate example of His humiliation, the resurrection of Christ from the dead is the first and glorious example of Christ's exaltation. Christ was exalted when God raised Him from the dead, and Christ was exalted when He ascended to the Father's right hand. He will be exalted by all creation when He returns. All of these aspects work together to magnify the glory and worth of Christ, resulting in the praise of the glory of His grace in rescuing sinners.*

# YOUR STORY

10-15 MINUTES

## GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **What are some things you have given up for the good of someone else? What was the result of your sacrifice?** *Answers to this question will vary.*
- **What does it look like when a church is filled with people who have the "attitude of Christ"? What does it look like when a church is filled with people who are unwilling to give up status in order to serve?** *Answers to this question will vary.*
- **How should knowing that exaltation comes after we humble ourselves help us trust and obey God in difficult circumstances?** *If we know that God gives grace to those who are humble (and opposes the prideful), then we can be confident through life's difficulties that He will bring us through if we remain humble before Him.*
- **How does Jesus' example of humility differ from the mind-set of our culture?** *Whereas Jesus instructs us to consider others as more important than ourselves, the culture around us often encourages us to build ourselves up no matter what, even if it means stepping on others in order to do so.*

### HIS STORY

*God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.*

### YOUR STORY

*Where your story meets His.*

# YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



## HEAD

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Think for a minute about the irony in Jesus' crucifixion. Christ was being killed by His own creation. As He looked into the eyes of the soldier driving nails into His hands, He knew his name. He created this person. He knew that the soldier's deepest need was forgiveness. So as He was humbly raised into the air, a suspended spectacle for all to see, Jesus prayed for His executioners (Luke 23:34). Even though they were fulfilling God's plan while executing the Son (Acts 2:23), they had no idea what they were doing.

- **How does Jesus' humble response to others challenge you?** *Answers to this question will vary.*
- **What are some areas in your life where you need to exercise humility?** *Relationships with parents, teachers, peers, etc.*



## HEART

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We often make the mistake of thinking that humility is merely found in our actions or in speaking about ourselves in a lowly way. While humility is certainly displayed in our behavior and actions, it is also true that we can possess false humility, which is simply another form of pride. Humility begins in the heart, and as Timothy Keller says, it "is not thinking more of myself or thinking less of myself, it is thinking of myself less."<sup>1</sup> Given the human propensity toward pride, it is difficult for us to cultivate humble hearts apart from the grace of God and the active work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

- **What are some examples of false humility?** *One example is when someone compliments you on something and you try to deflect the compliment. A more humble response would be to accept the compliment, realizing within your heart that the reason for the compliment could only come as the result of God's grace in your life.*
- **What do you think about Keller's comment on humility? How does it change the way you think about humility?** *Answers to this question will vary.*



## HANDS

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In His humility, Christ came to serve and not be served (Mark 10:45), giving us a true model of what leadership looks like. This type of leadership is often called "servant leadership" and is different from the type of leadership that is domineering. It is the type of leadership all Christians are to display and exercise in the various leadership roles they have been given. By doing so, Christians not only serve those in their area of influence, but also make much of Christ in their service toward others.

- **Who in your life demonstrates servant leadership? Does their service to you and others make you grateful for their leadership in your life? Explain.** *Answers to this question will vary.*
- **How can you begin to display servant leadership to those around you?** *Answers to this question will vary.*

## ► ADDITIONAL INFO

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### SOURCES

1. Timothy Keller, *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*, (10Publishing, 2012).

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to [lifeway.com/TGPJoshSPR16](http://lifeway.com/TGPJoshSPR16))**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

**[GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)**

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit

**[MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject](http://MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject)**

# STUDY PLAN

## YEAR 1

### Fall 2015

God the Creator (Genesis 1-11)  
God the Covenant-Maker  
(Genesis 12-50)

### Winter 2016

God the Redeemer  
(Exodus)  
God the Lawgiver  
(Exodus, Leviticus,  
Deuteronomy)

### Spring 2016

God the Savior  
(Numbers, Joshua)  
God the Judge (Judges,  
Ruth, 1 Samuel)

### Summer 2016

God the King (1-2 Samuel)  
God All Wise (1 Kings, Job,  
Ecclesiastes, Psalms, Proverbs)

## YEAR 2

### Fall 2016

God the Revealer  
(1-2 Kings, Isaiah)  
God the Pursuer (Major  
and Minor Prophets,  
1-2 Chronicles)

### Winter 2017

God the Sustainer  
(Daniel, Ezra)  
God the Provider (Esther,  
Nehemiah, Malachi)

### Spring 2017

God the Son (Gospels)  
God Among Us (Gospels)

### Summer 2017

Jesus the Storyteller  
(Synoptic Gospels)  
Jesus the Miracle-Worker  
(Gospels)

## YEAR 3

### Fall 2017

Jesus the Savior (Gospels)  
Jesus the Risen King  
(Gospels, Acts)

### Winter 2018

The Spirit Who  
Empowers (Acts)  
The God Who Sends (Acts)

### Spring 2018

The God Who Directs His  
People (Epistles)  
The God Who Changes  
Us (Epistles)

### Summer 2018

God's Prisoner (Acts, Epistles)  
The God Who Makes All  
Things New (Epistles,  
Revelation)