

# The God Who Is

## Leader's Guide

### Jesus, The Humble Servant

### Philippians 2:5-11

#### *Background*

Philippians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church located in the city of Philippi (located in present day Greece). Paul had founded the church on one of his missionary trips, and had remained very close with its members. At this time (61 AD), Paul is in prison for sharing his faith. The church of Philippi has sent Paul an awesome care package, hand delivered by one of its leaders, and now Paul is writing a thank-you note back to them. The passage we are looking at today is one of the most important passages in all of the New Testament!

#### *Read Philippians 2:5-11*

Paul writes in v.6 that Jesus, in his very nature, or make-up, *was* God. He could have always lived like a God, but He didn't. What did He do instead (vv.7-8)?

v.7 *Made Himself nothing*

v.7 *Traded His "God" nature for the nature of a servant*

v.8 *Humbled Himself—to the point of death on a cross*

Let's look at each of these more in depth. The exact translation of v.7, where Paul writes that Jesus "made Himself nothing" is Jesus "emptied Himself". What is the significance of this?  
*Although Jesus never ceased having all the attributes of God, while He lived on earth He choose to live like a human. He voluntarily "emptied" Himself of his rights, and waived His prerogative to act divinely.*

What is the significance in Jesus taking on "the very nature of a servant" (v.7)?

*Not only did Jesus veil His divine glory and become human (so that he was "made in the likeness of men"), but he became a low form of human! He could have come as a king, a powerful person, but He chose just the opposite!*

**WORD STUDY: Servant** (or "doulos" in the original Greek language)

From the root meaning "in bondage", this word came to mean "one who gives himself up for the will of another". The "doulos" was the lowest form of servant, and is perhaps better translated "slave". Although a "doulos" slave originally gave himself up for service voluntarily, once he was under contract to his master, his obedience was complete, absolute, and binding.

What is the significance in the fact that Jesus "humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross" (v.8)?

*Again, Jesus, even though He was God, submitted Himself to the authority of the Father to the full extent! He went the farthest He could go—to death. And a gruesome, painful death at that.*

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### Jesus, The Humble Servant – page 2

### Philippians 2:5-11

#### **WORD STUDY: Humble** (or “**tapinoo**” in the Greek)

This word literally means “low-lying” and may be translated “made low” or “humiliated”. It is *not* the idea of acting like a wimpy doormat, or thinking “I’m a worm”, but of placing the needs and desires of others before yours. It has been said that “humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is simply not thinking of yourself at all”. Perhaps the best example of how Jesus humbled Himself was that He not only “lowered” Himself from His throne in heaven to live on earth, but then He also allowed Himself to be crucified. Crucifixion was the most humiliating form of death at the time—reserved only for non-citizens and the worst criminals.

The word “Himself” appears twice in these two verses (7-8). What is the significance of this word?

*It emphasized the fact that Jesus did all of this voluntarily. The Father didn’t force Him to do all of these things—He did them Himself.*

Why did Jesus do these things?

*His primary motive was obedience to the Father. (His secondary motive was His love for humanity.)*

How was Jesus able to do these things?

*His knowledge of the Father enabled Him to have complete trust in Him. He always remembered what was eternally important. See John 13:3-4. He knew who the Father was, knew who He was, and He understood the brevity and importance of His life on earth.*

What did the Father do in response (vv.9-11)?

*He exalted Jesus to the highest place—gave Him the highest name—and one day EVERYONE will bow down before Him and acknowledge that Jesus is Lord*

This passage begins by stating “our attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (v.5). How can we empty ourselves? Take on the nature of a slave? Lower ourselves?

### *Personal Application*

1. Although Jesus had every “right” to live like God, He laid aside his “rights” for the sake of obedience to the Father and His love for humanity. What are “rights” you feel like you have, that you may need to lay aside in order to obey God and love others?

2. Think through how you can practically serve each of the following people this week: your roommate; a classmate; a cafeteria worker; someone who works in your dorm or apartment office; someone who works in the Student Center.

**“There is a God we want, and there is a God who is—and they are not the same God.**

**The turning point of our lives is when we stop seeking the God we want and start seeking the God who is.”**

### Passages For Further Study:

Isaiah 52:13-53:12  
Mark 10:35-45  
John 12:23-33; 13:1-17  
2 Corinthians 8:9  
Hebrews 2:9-18