

## GLOW: Philippians 2:19-30, 6/14/20

Welcome back to our series in Philippians called Glow where we are learning how to find joy through the Gospel in the midst of the darkness, uncertainty and challenges of our lives. Turn to Philippians 2. I know students just finished school, but I have one last quiz for all of us to take...I know that word triggers some of us, 4 Questions. No pen and paper needed, you can just give the answers out loud or in your head. No googling! **Q1: Name the top 5 wealthiest people in the world.** You might be able to name a couple, can you get the top 5? **Jeff Bezos. Net Worth: \$116.9 billion, Bill Gates, Bernard Arnault, Warren Buffett, Larry Ellison.**

**Q2 Name the last 5 Heisman trophy winners.** Some of you are out right away. **Derrick Henry, Lamar Jackson, Baker Mayfield, Kyler Murray, Joe Burrow.**

**Q3: Name the last 5 Governors of DE- let's see if we know our state leaders...** **Dale Wolf, Tom Carper, Ruth Ann Minner, Jack Markell, John Carney.**

**Q4: Who are the top five people who have positively impacted your life?** Name the top five people that come to mind who helped you or made an impact in your life at a time you needed it the most. My guess is that those names come much easier. This is my list: **My Parents, Pastor Bob, Todd Johnson, my wife Shannan, Dave Young**

You probably didn't do so well in the first 3 questions, but I bet you aced the last one...I'm going to guess, that the people who we think are the greatest and we remember most are NOT the ones with the most trophies or wealth or political influence but those who served us in a meaningful way when we needed it the most. The coach or mentor who encouraged us to go beyond what we thought we were capable of. The teacher who didn't just care about the grade, but made us feel valued and help us see our potential. The small group member who sat and cried with us when we got a diagnosis. The person who loved us enough to share the gospel with us and help us follow Christ. The world measures greatness by how much wealth you accumulate, or how successful you are in your field, or how many Youtube subscribers you have. **God measures success through service.** Jesus- **Mark 8:43 *Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.*** During the quarantine most of America seems to have watched **The Last Dance on ESPN**, the documentary about Michael Jordan and the Bulls in the 90s. Now there is no doubt, especially after watching that documentary, Jordan is the GOAT. We sit in awe of his greatness. But here's the shocking truth- If God were watching a documentary about greatness, it wouldn't be Jordan... it would probably be someone obscure that we never met who has poured out their lives to serve others.

**[Next Slide]** And this is exactly what Paul is saying in Philippians 2, exaltation comes through humility. Remember two weeks ago we read about the ultimate example in the incarnation. Jesus Christ put aside the privileges, glory and authority of his deity to become human, and not just human but the servant of humanity. Now Paul is going to humanize it a bit for us by giving us two examples of men who served him during his house arrest: Timothy and Epaphroditus. We are going to see **three examples of true greatness.**

### #1 True Greatness Shows Genuine Concern

*<sup>20</sup> I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. <sup>21</sup> For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.*

This is a really strong statement, Paul says- No one else like him, everyone else looks out for their own interests. Now I was taught not to use absolutes like, “You never listen to me, you always overreact.” But here, I think Paul is using such absolutes to show just how important and unique Timothy was in Paul’s life. What set Timothy so apart from others? Timothy took a genuine interest in Paul’s welfare. This is the Greek word “Peri” where we get the word perimeter. The word means “all-around.” Do you see what Paul is saying? “Timothy cares about my whole person: mind, body, soul, emotions. Timothy cares about how I’m REALLY doing.” Can we be honest? Most of the time we really don’t care that much about how people are doing. When we say, “How are you doing?” We want them to say, “Good.” and move on to what we really want- usually something from them. Information, you want them to do something for you. Sometimes we don’t even wait for a response. See we know the difference between “How are you doing?” and “How ARE you doing?” That the kind of guy Timothy was. And I think this was so impacting for Paul because my guess is that most people wanted something FROM Paul, and didn’t really care that much about how he’s really doing. They wanted healing and miracles, they wanted to be educated by him, they wanted to be seen around him because of his prowess...or in the case of some of the guards, they may have just wanted him to shut up. But Timothy cared about the person, Paul...who was human just like you and me. He got fearful, tired, sick, upset, he got anxious. This must have given Paul such encouragement and joy, which is why he can’t help but give him a shout out.

I can relate to Paul in that sense, as a Pastor most people want something from you: advice, prayer, teaching, counsel, a decision. And that is totally normal and expected because of my position. In enjoy and am blessed by it. But it’s so encouraging when I have people with no agenda just ask, “How are you doing? How can I pray for you and your family? Do you need anything?” And let me tell you, more than any other church I know, Brandywine cares about their leaders and we are so blessed. My family feels it and knows it. Unlike Paul- I feel like I can say I know many people who show genuine concern and aren’t just concerned about their own interests.

**The gospel teaches us genuine concern** for how others are really doing. Because Jesus cares about how we are really doing. He cares about our hearts, not just our external behavior. Jesus says “Come to me all who are heavy burdened.” We can cast all our anxieties on him because he cares for us. Jesus’ genuine concern caused him to leave heaven and live among us and get to know us, not just as our creator but our friend, and he laid his life down for his friends.

**Do you show genuine concern for others?** Let me tell you, is there any more important time than now than showing genuine concern for how others are really doing? Let’s just start in your own house, do you know how your spouse or kids are really doing? What about widows, singles who live alone? What about people who have been laid off? What about couples that are

struggling in their marriage? What about people of color that you know right now, have you asked them how they are doing? Have you taken the time to practice the ministry of presence and listening? Our leaders and I had a conversation that we recorded and put out on our Facebook and our enews about this very subject in light of the open wound of race and police brutality in our nation that I would encourage you to listen to.

## #2 True Greatness Meets Practical Needs

*<sup>22</sup> But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.*

Timothy had developed a reputation of service among the churches. And Paul tells us exactly how Timothy did this- “as a son with his father he has served me.” Now, listen up kids...particularly my kids. In 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman culture, a son would often be at the right hand of the father for whatever he needed, the son would have been very likely to continue in the trade of his father and so he would apprentice his father in the shop, at the desk, in the field. We get that because some of our last names reflect what our ancestors did for a living. Keeler- likely to be fishermen, boatmakers, “Keel” of a boat. So if you were a Keeler that’s just what you did. Found an **old picture of one of my ancestors**...I don’t see a resemblance. **[Next Slide]** And so Paul says, Timothy was at Paul’s right hand, ready to serve him in the practical needs. Do you think Paul had any ordinary needs being quarantined in a little house? Food, clothing, papyrus to write, delivering messages, friendship and encouragement?

The gospel teaches us to care about the practical, ordinary needs of others. What did Jesus do? He washed the feet of the disciples, he healed the blind, he touched the leper, he fed the 5000...not just spiritually but physically. The gospel isn’t just about trusting Jesus so that when you die you go to heaven. It is, but it’s always accompanied by serving others. Jesus authenticated his declaration through his demonstration. This is why James says, faith that is only about beliefs that never changes our behavior is a dead faith. True faith is accompanied by works of service, and motivated by the example of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is how the early church shook the Roman Empire, especially during the plagues, by serving the ordinary, practical needs of others. You want to shake the world? Not through evangelistic rallies, serve your neighbor!

**Who in your sphere of influence needs to see the gospel in action through the meeting of practical needs?** There is a single mom in my neighborhood who I know could use some help from time to time. I have tried to make myself available if there is something she needs. So, another guy from church and I helped her figure out where a leak was coming from, we installed a trampoline and a tree swing. She knows I’m a pastor, but it wasn’t a sermon she needed at those moments, she needed someone to lug heavy equipment, she needed someone with a wrench and availability. And I would say, taking care of practical needs opens up the opportunity for spiritual conversations. Who has practical needs around you right now? Lawn mowing, repairing a fence, grocery shopping, making sense of finances, helping find a job, feeding them. What if instead of looking on social media for someone to argue with, let’s look for those who have needs!

### #3 True Greatness is Willing to be Risky

Here we meet another servant Epaphroditus, who is only mentioned twice in the Bible, both times here in Philippians. He was Greek, and his name meant “one favored by Aphrodite”, who was the Greek goddess of fertility. So he had a pagan background but got saved out of it presumably through Paul’s missionary journeys to Macedonia. Paul tells the Philippians to honor Epaphroditus because...<sup>30b</sup> *He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.*

How did Epaphroditus risk his life? What we find out from v.25 and the end of the letter in chapter 4 is that the Philippian church wanted to send Paul a financial gift and also someone to stay with him to help take care of him while on house arrest. Now a trip from Philippi to Rome is 800 miles, no trains, planes and automobiles- you maybe get a donkey. And along the way you are going to face all kinds of dangers, especially if you are going to carry money. You can get robbed, get sick, get stuck with weather problems. Who is going to make that risky trip to help Paul? This is kind of like the epic meeting in Lord of the Rings where they are trying to decide who will go to Mordor to destroy the ring on a journey, knowing it will very likely cost their lives. And little hobbit Frodo says, “I will go.” To everyone’s shock. Epaphroditus said, I’ll go. Well it was risky and verse 26 Paul tells us he gets sick. So sick that he almost died at one point if not for God’s mercy on him. It brought Paul great joy and an overwhelming feeling of love knowing the great risk he took on his behalf. But notice how Paul sees this risk in verse 30. <sup>30</sup> *because he almost died for the work of Christ.*

Paul doesn’t see this merely as bravery to serve Paul, He says, this was the work of Christ. Being risky in and of itself isn’t the point, it is risk for the sake of Christ. He was willing to leave his comforts, his city, his occupation, his family and everyone he knew, he was willing to risk his health in order to serve Christ on this mission to serve Paul. Does this sound familiar? His is following in the pattern of his Savior Jesus. Philippians 2:6-8.

*Who, being in very nature God,*

*did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*

<sup>7</sup> *rather, he made himself nothing*

*by taking the very nature of a servant,*

*being made in human likeness.*

<sup>8</sup> *And being found in appearance as a man,*

*he humbled himself*

*by becoming obedient to death—*

*even death on a cross!*

*Are you willing to take risks for the work of Christ?* Some of us, if we are honest, stay just inside our **comfort zone**. We stay just inside our geographical comfort zone, unwilling to go to parts of our own town or parts of the world that seem risky or foreign to us. We stay inside our relational comfort zones because it seems too risky and uncomfortable to get to know people that are very different than us or might have different political or religious perspectives. We

stay within our financial comfort zones and maybe miss out on opportunities to support the work of Christ. And I say miss out because with Jesus it isn't "have to" it's "get to." [Next Slide] We get to take risks and see God move and work in our lives and in others for his glory. We get to share in the blessing and the joy of the work of the Lord when we step out of our comfort zones. We get to see people come to Christ or level up in our faith through an adventure with Christ. No one will get to the shores of heaven and wish they weren't as risky in the service of Christ. Instead like Oscar Schindler in the final scene of Schindler's list- you will wish you had taken more risk. Can I ask you to pray about something? The next time you have an opportunity in front of you to take a risk for Christ that is outside of your **comfort zone**- whether it is a relational with a neighbor next door, of you hear about an financial need, or an opportunity to serve- would you consider, like Frodo, like Epaphroditus, like Jesus- would you raise your hand and say, "I'll go!"

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You and I are never going to do this perfectly. We are going to miss the goal and fall into selfishness and comfort sometimes, or even in our service it may be mixed with motives that are self-seeking. But the great news of the gospel is that Jesus was the perfect servant in our place. **Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many.** His service was completely acceptable to the Father. Because he served us completely to the point of death, his greatness becomes our greatness! We inherit the greatness of Jesus Christ in the kingdom of God. So let the world see the glow of our true greatness, serving like our savior.

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