

Philippians 2:1-2

We are an overconfident species given to the magnification of self.” [New York Times]

One of the clearest conclusions of social science research is that we are proud.” “... there is abundant evidence that we have shifted . . . from a culture that once emphasized self-effacement—that is, we downplayed ourselves—to a culture that now glories in self-promotion. Which is another way of saying, in times past honest humility was a virtue . . . and that virtue is vanishing.” [Wall Street Journal]

C.S. Lewis, *“Pride is the mother hen under which all other sins are hatched.”*

Satan, for he said in his heart: (**Isaiah 14:13-14**)

- *“I will ascend into heaven”*
- *“I will exalt my throne above the stars of God”*
- *“I will sit on the mount of the assembly”*
- *“I will ascend above the heights of the clouds”*
- *“I will make myself like the Most High”*

Pride is mentioned 51 times in the Bible and out of the 51 times 48 times it is condemned by the Scriptures:

- **Proverbs 6:16-17** *“These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him; a proud look”*
- **Proverbs 11:2** *“When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble is wisdom.”*
- **Proverbs 13:10**, *“By pride comes nothing but strife ...”*
- **Proverbs 16:18**, *“Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.”*
- **1 John 2:16**, *“For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.”*

It isn’t enough to recognize the problem: we all battle with pride and self . . . we need a divinely inspired text to provide directions toward a life, spirit, mindset and attitude of humility.

“True humility isn’t thinking meanly of yourself; humility is when you do not think of yourself at all.” [Pastor / Author Andrew Murray]

In the original language, these “if” statements are what linguists call “first class conditional clauses.” The particle “if” with an indicative verb can be understood as “since.” Verse 1 could read: *“Since there is encouragement in Christ, since there is consolation of love; since there is any fellowship of the Spirit . . .”*

Dwight Pentecost paraphrases it this way – If there is any encouragement in Christ – and there certainly is; if there is any consolation of love – and there certainly is; if there is any fellowship of the Spirit – and there certainly is; if there is any affection and compassion – and there certainly is – then – here it is, fulfill my joy [by being unified in humility.

1. The first experience is “*encouragement in Christ*”

The Greek word “*encouragement in Christ*” or “*consolation*” is “*paraklesis*” it can be translated comfort or exhortation. Not only are these statements spiritual realities found in the Lord but they are to be delivered, declared, and demonstrated to one another.

This same word “encouragement” describes God, *“... the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction ... so that we can comfort those in any affliction with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”* (**2 Corinthians 1:3-4**)

The record in the Scriptures of Barnabas being an encourager who helped the Apostle Paul get into the circle of Christians is found **Acts 9:19-31**. This Scripture gives us 8 examples of behaviors of encouragers:

- Encouragers are assertive, they take the initiative
- Encouragers are available to listen
- Encouragers are genuine
- Encouragers are diligent – hard working
- Encouragers are selfless – concerned for others
- Encouragers are inclined to forgive
- Encouragers are determined to resolved
- Encouragers are sensitive to potential in other people

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How does my life demonstrate the behaviors of an encourager? Where do I fail as an encourager?

2. The second experience is “*comfort – consolation of love*”

The Greek word translated “*comfort or consolation of love*” can be translated literally – speaking in a friendly manner to another person. It refers to speaking intimately with someone to offer solace. This is Christian love at its best, to console one another.

The word translated as “love” is the Greek word *agape* which is God’s love, the selfless, giving, loyal, long term commitment love. Paul wrote of God’s love in **Romans 5:8**, “*But God demonstrated His love in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*”

How consoling is it that God would pursue us to save us, that God would choose us to be the bride of His Son, that God would take pleasure in offering us eternal life, a regal throne, and never-ending joy?

3. The third experience is “... *fellowship of the Spirit.*”

The word translated as fellowship is “*koinonia.*” In secular Greek culture, the word *koinonia* “common ownership” referred to inheriting a common possession. Believers in Christ are heirs to the Holy Spirit, we have common possession of the Holy Spirit. It is not that some have a piece of the Holy Spirit and others also have some of the Holy Spirit, every believer has common possession.

It is by faith in Christ we:

- “... *have all been made to drink of one Spirit*” (**I Corinthians 12:13**)
- We are all “... *the temple of the Holy Spirit*” (**I Corinthians 6:19**)
- We have all inherited from God the entire person of the Holy Spirit

If the Spirit condescends in great humility to fellowship with us, how willing are we to fellowship with each other?

4. The fourth experience is “... *affection and compassion*”

The word translated “affection” is the Greek word “*splanchna*” deep, emotional feelings; it refers to the inner person. The next words “*tender mercies*” or “*compassion*” are directly connected to “affection” and they are a further demonstration of humility. These words specifically refer to displaying concern over someone’s misfortune.

These words are intertwined – you can’t have one without the other. Affection is the internal source of the emotion and compassion is the actual external expression of that emotion.

Paul now drives home the point where he says as verse 2 opens, “*make my joy complete.*” This is an imperative, fulfill my joy by being of the same mind.

Paul is saying, “This is what would overwhelm me with joy – for you to demonstrate the humility of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in demonstrating their version of love, encouragement, fellowship and caring with all humility.”

What would really make me incredibly happy in life is _____. What should make me incredibly happy is _____?

When Augustine, the great theologian of the late fourth century, was asked to list the three most central principles of the Christian life, he replied, “Number 1: Humility; Number 2: Humility; Number 3: Humility.” This is the unmistakably distinctive virtue that is vanishing all around us. It’s time to bring it back, it’s time to demonstrate humility to one another. And the church is just the place to see it happen . . . first.