

HAVE THIS MIND IN YOURSELF

Thinking like Jesus about self, Philippians 2:1-11

For forty years, Burger King marketed its burgers with the motto "Have it your way." Then, in 2014, the company changed its slogan to "Be your way," stating that its changed saying had been designed to remind people "they can and should live how they want anytime." A year later, the company changed its motto to "Your way," a more familiar slogan that maintained the spirit behind its predecessor.

Slogans offer insights into our culture because they attempt to capture the 'spirit' of a generation to capture consumers' attention. Burger King's mottos points to something I suspect we all recognize – we live in an increasingly individualistic and self-absorbed culture. Paul's teachings stand in contrast to our culture's focus. Because of his understandings of Jesus, Paul urged people to have an attitude about themselves that would motivate them to put others' interests ahead of their interests. We will consider Paul's comments to the Philippians, in which he holds out Jesus as a model for how his audience should think about themselves.

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit" ¹

Having heard about the "opponents" causing trouble for the Philippians (*Philippians 1:27-28*), Paul wrote them a letter encouraging their faithfulness in persecution. He opened his letter by reflecting on his imprisonment (*Philippians 1:12-26*), noting that, while his faithfulness to Jesus resulted in his mistreatment, it also advanced the gospel (*Philippians 1:12-13*) and would result in the glorification of Jesus and future blessings for the Philippians (*Philippians 1:18b-26*).

Paul's reflection on his response to his troubles motivated his instruction on how the Philippians should respond to their troubles (*Philippians 1:27-30*). He informed them that their proper response would reveal them to "be worthy of the gospel of Christ" and would be a "clear sign" about the truth of their beliefs to those opposing them (*Philippians 1:27-28*). Paul's understanding of a proper response differs from the ones often advocated by our world – rather than arguing for self-defense, retaliation, or protection in response to the hostility they experienced, Paul instructed the Philippians to respond by humbly counting "others more significant than yourselves" (*Philippians 2:3*). Consider:

- Paul instructed the Philippians to live in a way "worthy of the gospel of Christ" (*Philippians 1:27*), which involved "being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind" (*Philippians 2:1-2; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; Ephesians 2:11-3:10*).

¹ Philippians 2:3. All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.



- However, the Philippians were not united because, as Paul noted, "selfish ambition" and "conceit" disrupted their relationships (*Philippians 2:3, 14*).
- Their disunity not only endangered them, but it also endangered the cause of Christ in Philippi (*Philippians 1:27-30*).
- Paul, therefore, encouraged them to unite by resisting their self-centered attitudes (*Philippians 2:1-4*).
- He encouraged them to follow the example of Jesus, who practiced humility and selflessness for the benefit of others (*Philippians 2:5-11*) and whose selflessness and suffering led to his identification as the exalted One (*Philippians 2:9-13*).
- Embracing the unity Paul wrote about requires one to recognize the "surpassing worth" of Jesus and place his purposes ahead of self-interest (*Philippians 3:7-11, 13-14*).
- Therefore, consider the following:

Following Jesus involves learning to think correctly about self.

(Philippians 2:4-6; cf. Matthew 19:30; 20:16, 25-28)

Thinking correctly about self requires humbly counting others as more significant than yourself.

(Philippians 2:2-3; Galatians 5:13-14; Matthew 7:12; Luke 10:25-37)

Jesus responded to opposition, persecution, and trouble by humbly serving people.

(Philippians 2:5-8; cf. Matthew 5:43-48; 20:17-19, 28)

We participate in, and advance, the gospel by humbly serving others like Jesus.

(Philippians 1:5, 12, 27-30; 2:14-15)

May God be glorified through our efforts to think about ourselves in ways that follow Jesus' example.

