

# ☐ LIVING FOR ANOTHER WORLD

July 17, 2022 | *Brotherly Affection*

## PREPARATION

### A WORD ON THIS SERIES

This series will study the seven qualities found in 2 Peter 1:5–7. Peter said after stating them, “If these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:8). None of us aspires to be ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ. Instead, with the help of His divine power, we must seek all the things pertaining to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). The word “life” in this verse refers to the transcendent life of one who has received salvation in Jesus Christ. It is a life lived now but with eternity in mind. C. S. Lewis described this life as “another world.” Each lesson in this series will examine the life of a biblical character who exhibits one of these seven qualities. None of these individuals was perfect, but they modeled these qualities for us and inspire us to do the same. This week, we will look at brotherly affection in Epaphroditus, a Philippian who brought a gift from the Philippian church to Paul while he was in prison. While his actions may not seem noteworthy, Paul used Epaphroditus as an example of valuing the needs of others above your own, which is one of the key ways we show brotherly affection.

### GETTING READY

Do you have a good relationship with your siblings? If so, how can this relationship help you understand the love you must have for other believers? If not, or if you do not have siblings, how could this make it more difficult for you to understand the main point of this week’s lesson?

Read Philippians 2:25–30.

Ask God to use this lesson to grow your affection for other believers.

## THIS WEEK

### ☐ KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

Believers must have a familial affection for one another based on our mutual confession in Jesus Christ as Savior.

## THEOLOGY APPLIED

Every believer is part of the one family of God.

## MEDITATE

*“Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another” (1 Thessalonians 4:9).*

## GETTING STARTED

+ *This section introduces the lesson by asking why we should love other believers like brothers and sisters.*

Q: *How would you define “brotherly affection”?*

Q: *How are brotherly affection and love different from the preceding qualities in 2 Peter 1:5–7?*

The concept of brotherly affection is easy to understand. It refers to the affection that should exist between brothers and/or sisters. It is more difficult to understand when it is applied beyond the immediate family to all believers in Christ. How can we show this kind of affection to other believers, and why should we? This lesson examines Paul’s comments concerning Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:35–30 to understand how brotherly affection can be extended to other believers. It also considers how Epaphroditus modeled brotherly affection in his concern for Paul and for the Philippians. Epaphroditus is one of the most unassuming characters in the New Testament. He was only a messenger! But Paul’s comments reveal that we have much to learn from him.

Some scholars have argued that with brotherly affection, 2 Peter 1:5–7 transitions from qualities focused on our relationship with God to qualities focused on our relationship with other believers. This distinction is not absolute. Virtue, for example, certainly focuses on our relationship with God but must be played out among others. Nevertheless, the shift in the qualities Peter mentions is observable. As we look at these two remaining qualities this week and next, consider how they will influence your interaction with others believers.

Q: *What is the relationship between brotherly affection and truth?*

**Q:** *Why is it important to maintain this relationship?*

**APPLICATION POINT** – Before moving into the lesson, it is important to notice the link between brotherly affection, sometimes translated as brotherly love, and truth. First Peter 1:22 says, “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.” In this verse, Peter indicated that sincere brotherly love comes from obedience to truth and a purified soul. We cannot truly show brotherly love apart from being obedient to truth. Paul made a similar point in Romans 12:9–10, which states, “Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection.” At the same time that Paul commanded brotherly affection, he also commanded that we abhor what is evil and hold fast to what is good. Distinguishing between evil and good insinuates making a truth claim about what is evil and what is good. It is important to maintain this link between truth and love because some people believe that love transcends truth in importance. That is why love today is often treated as unconditional acceptance even if it means ignoring what is true. It is the idea that if you love someone, you will affirm whatever he or she believes even if it is untrue or harmful because love matters more than truth. Christians cannot separate love and truth this way. In Ephesians 4:15, Paul said, “Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.” Sometimes the most loving thing we can do for someone is to tell them the truth. As you consider brotherly affection in this lesson, remember that the New Testament sees truth and love as mutual goods that must both be maintained.

## ■ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

+Philippians is about valuing the needs of others above your own for the sake of the gospel. Throughout this letter, Paul provided one illustration after another of this theme, including himself (Philippians 1:12–30; 3:1–11), Timothy (Philippians 2:19–24), and Jesus (Philippians 2:1–11). Epaphroditus is another example of this theme.

1. **BROTHERLY AFFECTION IS CREATED BY THE GOSPEL.**
2. **BROTHERLY AFFECTION IS BASED ON A COMMON COMMITMENT.**
3. **BROTHERLY AFFECTION IS AUTHENTIC.**
4. **BROTHERLY AFFECTION VALUES THE NEEDS OF OTHERS BEFORE ITS OWN.**
5. **BROTHERLY AFFECTION DEPENDS ON GRACE.**

## GOING DEEPER

+This section examines in more detail Paul's comments concerning Epaphroditus and draws applications from these observations concerning brotherly affection.

### 1. BROTHERLY AFFECTION IS CREATED BY THE GOSPEL.

#### ■ PHILIPPIANS 2:25

- ♀: *Why did Paul refer to Epaphroditus as a brother?*
- ♀: *Why does the New Testament use familial language to describe those who believe the gospel?*

In Philippians 2:25, Paul referred to Epaphroditus as “brother.” Since they were not physically brothers, Paul had in mind a greater truth than mere physical descent—the familial bond between all believers that is created by the gospel. The New Testament teaches that every believer belongs to the family of God. John referred to his audience as “God’s children” (1 John 3:2). He believed that becoming part of God’s family is the perfect demonstration of God’s love for us (1 John 3:1). According to Paul, when we believe the gospel, we are no longer strangers to one another but members of the same household of God (Ephesians 2:19). God has adopted us into His family, and we now have all the rights and privileges of an heir (Romans 8:15–17). Since every believer is now part of God’s family, it makes sense that 2 Peter 1:7 calls us to brotherly affection. Our fellow believers in Christ are brothers and sisters, and the New Testament authors anticipated that we would love each other as such.

- ♀: *How does the family of God highlight the issue of disunity among the body of Christ, both locally and beyond?*
- ♀: *In what ways do we fail to appreciate, intentionally or not, the full significance of the family of God?*

**APPLICATION POINT** – The gospel knows no bounds. It saves regardless of gender, race, national identity,

and socio-economic status. Since the gospel is for everyone, anyone who receives it is adopted into God's family and becomes our brother or sister in Christ. We cannot allow these distinctions or any others to create a barrier between us and anyone else who confesses Christ as Savior. Our familial bond in the gospel is stronger than anything that could tear us apart.

## 2. BROTHERLY AFFECTION IS BASED ON A COMMON COMMITMENT.

### ☐ PHILIPPIANS 2:25

Q: *Why did Paul call Epaphroditus a fellow worker and a fellow soldier?*

Q: *What common purpose unites soldiers on a battlefield or workers in a factory?*

In addition to calling Epaphroditus a brother, Paul also called him a fellow worker and a fellow soldier. These words strengthen what was already a strong bond between them. Soldiers on a battlefield are united by a common goal to win the battle. They protect one another. They are driven to fulfill the duties assigned to them because if they fail, they endanger everyone else and the mission. Their common goal creates a comradery between soldiers that Paul used to explain the brotherhood of all believers. The same is true for employees of a company. The company I work for has more than ten departments—production, material handling; supply chain; security, purchasing, maintenance, etc. Even though we do vastly different things, we are all fellow workers in the production of our products. Our product is the goal, and we work together to make the best product we can. For believers, having a common commitment strengthens the ties that bind the family of God together. This is why Paul called Epaphroditus a fellow worker and fellow soldier. They shared a common mission and common purpose. Our brotherly affection is based on a common purpose that is greater than any of us. That common purpose is the mission of God—to make God's redemption known in the lives of others (2 Corinthians 5:18–20) and in creation itself (Romans 8:18–25).

Q: *Does fellowshiping with others in your church ever feel like a duty? Why do you think this is the case?*

**Q:** *How does a common purpose tie the body of Christ together in a way that transcends even friendship?*

**APPLICATION POINT** – For there to be brotherly affection among the body of Christ, we need to maintain a commitment to God’s mission of reconciliation. Apart from this mission, brotherly affection will seem like a duty. A common commitment to pursuing God’s mission, however, will give us the resolve we need to overlook personality differences and differences of opinion. If we ever give up on a common commitment to God’s mission, the familial ties that bind us will slowly dissolve or transform to the point that brotherly affection is no longer a reality. We may still like one another, but our relationship will be more like a social club than a family with brotherly affection.

### 3. BROTHERLY AFFECTION IS AUTHENTIC.

#### ■ PHILIPPIANS 2:27

**Q:** *Why was God’s mercy on Epaphroditus also a mercy for Paul?*

**Q:** *What other elements in this passage highlight the authenticity of Paul and Epaphroditus’s brotherly affection?*

Epaphroditus was a delegate from the Philippian church to deliver a financial gift to Paul and to minister to his other needs while he was in prison. Either while he was traveling to Paul or while he was with him, Epaphroditus became seriously ill. We do not know any details concerning his sickness except that he was near death. By God’s grace, however, Epaphroditus recovered. Paul had become so bound to him that he saw Epaphroditus’ recovery an equal measure of God’s grace on his own life, revealing the authenticity of Paul’s affection for him. Epaphroditus was not just a messenger to Paul. He was not just the means to the gift the Philippians had arranged for him. He was a brother in Christ for whom Paul felt a deep kinship.

Q: *How can you move beyond trite cordiality to authentic brotherly affection with the members of your church?*

Q: *Why do the relationships you form at church feel inauthentic?*

**APPLICATION POINT** – To gain brotherly affection for others in your church, you need to acquire an authentic concern for them. There is a difference between just getting along with others in your church and the kind of brotherly affection Peter urged followers of Christ to demonstrate in 2 Peter 1:7. You can get along with others without any authentic concern for them, but brotherly affection requires more. Building an authentic concern for others requires an investment. You have to invest time in creating this kind of relationship. You have to invest energy in having the kind of conversations that create authenticity. You have to be willing to participate in the body of Christ outside of normal worship services. Authentic brotherly affection is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve in just an hour or two on a Sunday morning.

#### 4. BROTHERLY AFFECTION VALUES THE NEEDS OF OTHERS BEFORE ITS OWN.

##### ■ PHILIPPIANS 2:30

Q: *How did Epaphroditus value Paul's needs above his own?*

Q: *How does this attitude build brotherly affection?*

Epaphroditus nearly died traveling to Paul to deliver the Philippians' gift and to minister to his needs. In doing so, Epaphroditus became an example of the overall message of Paul's letter to the Philippians. Paul wrote Philippians to encourage the church there to value the needs of others above their own for the sake of the gospel. Two women in the Philippian church, Euodia and Syntyche, could not agree with one another. For Paul to address their disagreement in his letter means it must have been a serious threat to the unity of the church. Paul filled Philippians with examples of valuing the needs of others above your own for the sake of the gospel.

Paul himself is the first example. Apparently there were some people proclaiming Christ with the wrong motives. We cannot be sure how, but they apparently thought they were bringing affliction upon Paul by proclaiming

the gospel (Philippians 1:17). What was his response? He said he rejoiced if Christ was proclaimed, even if it endangered him (Philippians 1:18). He sacrificed his own wellbeing for the sake of those proclaiming the gospel. He also used Jesus as an example of one who laid aside His own interests for the sake of others. Though He was in the form of God, He instead became a servant in the likeness of men and even died a cruel death on the cross. Why? So that we might be reconciled to God. Jesus, for our sake and for the sake of the gospel, put aside His own interests. This is what Epaphroditus did in coming to minister to Paul, even at the risk of his own life. There is no reason to wonder why Paul felt such affection for him. Epaphroditus illustrated the kind of brother affection called for in 2 Peter 1:7.

❓: *How can you lay aside your interests for the sake of others and for the sake of the gospel?*

❓: *What is keeping you from doing this?*

**APPLICATION POINT:** The message of Philippians is the most unnatural thing any of us could ever do. We are accustomed to putting our own interests above every other concern. We want to ensure that our needs are met. We want our point of view to be heard. We want our preferences to be prioritized. Nothing destroys brotherly affection and creates disunity within the body of Christ more quickly than following our natural impulse to look after number one. Brotherly affection requires that we follow the model set by Epaphroditus, that we learn to think of ourselves as being of secondary importance. It requires our willingness to sacrifice ourselves for others and for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## 5. BROTHERLY AFFECTION DEPENDS ON GRACE.

### ☒ PHILIPPIANS 2:28

❓: *Why were the Philippians eager to receive Epaphroditus back?*

❓: *Do you think Epaphroditus always displayed the kind of character Paul praised him for?*

Brotherly affection depends on grace. It depends on us showing grace to others. Paul knew the Philippians would rejoice at seeing Epaphroditus again. A man of his character would have been clearly missed in Philippi. Do you think the Philippians would have rejoiced at receiving Epaphroditus back if he were challenging to get along with? Or if he were someone who regularly stirred up dissension within the church? Epaphroditus was the kind of person who was ready to be gracious to others. That is why he was filled with brotherly affection. That is why the Philippians were eager to receive him back.

Brotherly affection also depends on others showing grace to us. Although the Bible does not say so explicitly, I'm quite certain Epaphroditus faltered on occasion. I'm sure there were times when he wanted things to be done his way. But that did not keep the Philippians from being eager for him to return. Just as he was a gracious person, others were willing to show him grace. This is what it takes to maintain brotherly affection.

**Q:** *Can you describe a time when someone was gracious with you?*

**Q:** *Can you think of a time when you were not gracious with someone although you should have been?*

**APPLICATION POINT** – Receiving grace is easier than giving it. We have all received more grace from our Lord Jesus Christ than we could ever show to others. Therefore, we should all be ready to show grace to others. If we cannot show grace to others, it is a good indication we have not truly received the grace of Christ ourselves (Matthew 18:21–35). Learning to show grace to others is a crucial step for creating and maintaining brotherly affection.

## NEXT STEPS

This lesson has provided five applications needed to create and maintain brotherly affection in your church. Choose one of these applications over each of the next five weeks and focus on implementing it. Be strategic. If you know an upcoming meeting will make it challenging for you to maintain brotherly affection, choose that week to focus on being gracious to others or putting the interests of others above your own. If there are people visiting your church who seem to not be fitting in, make the next week you see them the week you emphasize extending brotherly affection as far as the gospel is extended to those who need it. If your church has an upcoming ministry project in the community, make that the week you emphasize creating a common purpose with other church members or getting to know others in an authentic way.

## PRAY

*+Use these prayer points to instill the lessons you learned from God's Word this week.*

*-Father, keep me from ever separating truth and brotherly affection. If I cannot speak the truth, I cannot love with brotherly affection.*

*-Lord Jesus, thank you for the grace I have in you. Help me to show that same grace to others.*

*-God, convict me of the occasions when I have destroyed brotherly affection by placing my own interests first.*

*-Father, help me to have an authentic concern and affection for those who make up my local body of Christ.*