

The Discipleship Wheel Illustration

Chapter Eight The Fellowship Tree and The Scales of Community

Last Revised: 2/9/2012

Scripture Memory

Philippians 2:1-2

If, therefore, there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

Review

- The Wheel Illustration
- II Corinthians 5:17
- Galatians 2:20
- II Timothy 3:16
- Joshua 1:8
- The Word Hand
- Philippians 4:6 & 7
- The Prayer Hand
- John 15:7

The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord,
She is His new creation by water and the Word;
From heaven He came and sought her to be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her, and for her life He died.
Elect from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation, one Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses, with every grace endued.

Samuel Stone/Samuel Wesley

The Fellowship Tree

John Owen: “They must give up themselves unto one another, by the will of God; that is, they must agree, consent and engage among themselves to observe all those mutual duties, to use all those privileges, and to exercise all those powers which the Lord Christ hath prescribed and granted unto His church.” (Sinclair B. Ferguson, John Owen on the Christian Life, Banner of Truth, 1995, page 164.)

Philippians 2:1-8

1 If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,

2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself;

4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

I. How do I evaluate the fellowship I belong to or the fellowship I am considering joining? In the space below make a short list of the criteria you use in making this decision.

A “Does it meet my needs?” This is a common question. Why are you leaving? “It does not meet my needs.” Why are you joining? “It really meets my needs.”

1. Many churches or ministries recruit on the basis of “felt needs.”

2. Books are written from which scientific cross sections of societal polls are analyzed to help ministers understand what the “felt needs” of society are so that they may package their church accordingly. In this way it is hoped that seekers will choose their church out of the smorgasbord of options.

3. This is not how it was in the early church. It has been said that the seeker slogan of the early church was, "Come, join us in the graveyard and die." That is not much of a slogan.
 4. The early church was a persecuted church. It met in the catacombs, the graveyard of the Roman Empire. Those arrested were executed. There have been times of prosperity and peace where church attendance could be based on competing for peoples emotional whims; but this is the exception rather than the rule. The most common experience of the last 2,000 years of Christianity has been a commitment to the church, to Christian fellowship, based on the authority of the Word of God and a deep sacrificial love of God, not on personal gain or having one's felt needs met.
- B. What do you demand of the church: that it meet your needs or that it supply you with the opportunity to serve and meet the needs of others? Consider the following statements, first concerning Christ and then concerning the ministry of the Apostle Paul. How does each compare with the modern trend of choosing a fellowship based on felt needs?

Mark 10:45: *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

Luke 22:24-27

24 *And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest.*

25 *And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.'*

26 *"But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant.*

27 *"For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves."*

John 13:1-5

1 *Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.*

2 *And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him,*

3 *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God,*

4 *rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself about.*

5 *Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.*

John 13:12-17

12 *And so when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments, and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?"*

13 *"You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am.*

14 *"If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.*

15 *"For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.*

16 *"Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.*

17 *"If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."*

2 Corinthians 4:5: *For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.*

II. An Alternative Model

Roy Robertson: "Teach the importance of attending church and being linked with vital fellowship." (Roy Robertson, The Timothy Principle, NavPress, 1986, page 109.)

Philippians 2:1-8 provides the believer with an alternative model in evaluating his fellowship. Rather than the diagnostic question, “Does it meet my needs?”, it provides a completely different model: “Am I dying to self needs?”

Philippians 2:1-2

1 If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,

2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

- A. **Surface Relationships:** Read Philippians 2:1-2. These two verses seem to build upon each other. In verse two, how does the clause “make my joy complete” effect the list of attributes in verse one?

Wuest: The Word “if” is the translation of a conditional particle referring to a fulfilled condition. One could translate “since” or “in view of the fact.” The four things mentioned in this verse are not hypothetical in nature. They are facts.

Translation: “In view of the fact that there is a certain ground of appeal in Christ which exhorts, since there is a certain tender persuasion that comes from divine love, in view of the fact there is a certain joint participation with the Spirit in common interest and activity, since there are certain tender-heartedness and compassionate yearning and actions.” (Word Studies in the Greek New Testament: Vol. II, Eerdmans Publishing, 1954, page 58.)

1. List the principles of fellowship that can be found in verse one.

2. Does this satisfy the Holy Spirit? Explain your answer.

3. In the Fellowship Tree Illustration provided on page 12 beside A. Surface Relationships record a list of characteristics of this most basic level of fellowship as given by the Holy Spirit in verse one.

4. These surface relationships are built upon emotions of the most affable and congenial sort. Even non-Christians would find them acceptable. To leave with a feeling of encouragement, to feel consoled in life's situations, to feel accepted and a member of a community, to feel well liked, to have a real sense that those around you are genuinely interested and concerned with your troubles and losses, what could be a better description of true fellowship, what could make the Holy Spirit happier? Certainly if this characterizes our fellowship, we have, by all means, arrived at our goal. Yet, that is not the case. Many would be surprised and some offended to hear that a church or fellowship so characterized still had far to go, that they were only at the initial stage, that the real test of true Christian fellowship was yet to come.

- B. Root Relationships:** Now read Philippians 2:2-4 and reflect on the characteristics of fellowship described as making the Holy Spirit's joy complete. There are those who would not only take offence at the fellowship of verse one being incomplete, but they would also go on to say that the fellowship of verse two was too confining, too controlling, too rigid and regimented to be mature Christian fellowship. "What about my ideas? What about my needs? What about my feelings? What about my goals? Where is there room for these in a fellowship of one mind, love, Spirit and purpose?"

Philippians 2:2-4

2 *make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.*

3 *Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself;*

4 *do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*

COMPLETE

1. *pleroo* ^4137^ signifies (1) "to fill" (see FILL); (2) "to fulfill, complete," (a) of time, e.g., <Mark 1:15; Luke 21:24; John 7:8> (KJV, "full come"); <Acts 7:23>, RV, "he was well nigh forty years old" (KJV, "was full" etc.), lit., "the time of forty years was fulfilled to him"; <v. 30>, KJV, "were expired"; <9:23; 24:27> (KJV, "after two years"; RV, "when two years were fulfilled"); (b) of number, <Rev. 6:11>; (c) of good pleasure, <2 Thes. 1:11>; (d) of joy <Phil 2:2>; in the passive voice, "to be fulfilled," <John 3:29> and <17:13>; in the following the verb is rendered "fulfilled" in the RV, for the KJV, "full," <John 15:11; 16:24; 1 John 1:4; 2 John 12>; (e) of obedience, <2 Cor. 10:6>; (f) of works, <Rev. 3:2>; (g) of the future Passover, <Luke 22:16>; (h) of sayings, prophecies, etc., e.g., <Matt. 1:22> (twelve times in Matt., two in Mark, four in Luke, eight in John, two in Acts); <Jas. 2:23>; in <Col. 1:25> the word signifies to preach "fully," to complete the ministry of the Gospel appointed. See FILL. (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985.)

1. Verse two speaks of **Agreement** or Oneness. In the illustration on page 12 beside **B. Root Relationships** list the characteristics of this **Agreement** or Oneness characterized by deeper root relationships as specifically mentioned in verse two.
2. Verses three and four speak of **Humility**. In the space provided list the characteristics of this **Humility** which typifies this deeper root relationship.

SAME

1. *autos* ^846^ denotes “the same” when preceded by the article, and either with a noun following, e.g., <Mark 14:39; Phil. 1:30; 1 Cor. 12:4>, or without, e.g., <Matt. 5:46, 47; Rom. 2:1; Phil 2:2; 3:1; Heb. 1:12, 13:8>. It is thus to be distinguished from uses as a personal and a reflexive pronoun. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985.)

3. How do these differ from the principles in verse one?
 - a. What would you say is the overriding theme of the fellowship of verse one?
 - b. What would you say is the overriding theme of the fellowship of verse two?

HUMILITY 5012

tapeinophrosune (tap-i-nof-ros-oo’-nay); from a compound of 5011 and the base of 5424; humiliation of mind, i.e. modesty: KJV — humbleness of mind, humility (of mind, loneliness (of mind)). (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance.)

HUMBLENESS OF MIND, HUMILITY

tapeinophrosune ^5012^, “lowliness of mind” (*tapeinos*, see A, above, under HUMBLE, and *phren*, “the mind”), is rendered “humility of mind” in <Acts 20:19>, KJV (RV, “lowliness of mind”); in ,Eph. 4:2>, “lowliness”; in <Phil. 2:3>, “lowliness of mind”; in <Col. 2:18,23>, of a false “humility”; in <Col. 3:12>, KJV, “humbleness of mind,” RV, “humility”; <1 Pet. 5:5>, “humility.” See LOWLINESS. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985.)

- c. In your experience what percentage of the people initially attracted to a fellowship, as typified by verse one, would continue if they later found out that verse two was mandatory?

What about you?

- d. Review the list below. The terms are taken directly from Philippians 2:2. How would a church be evaluated by the community as a whole which openly held its members accountable to these standards? Would it be seen as a healthy church or a controlling church?

Healthy Controlling

the same mind
maintaining the same love
united in spirit
intent on one purpose

- 4. How is the fellowship in verses two through 4 a deeper fellowship that would tend to make the joy of the Holy Spirit complete?

Wuest: The Greek word order for the expression just noted is “this be ye constantly thinking in you which also was in Christ Jesus.” The position of the pronoun “this” is emphatic and shows that the exhortation reaches back basically to 2:2-4, while the pronoun “who” in 2:6 connects the exhortation with the illustration in 2:5-8. The words “let mind be” are the translation of one Greek word which means “to have understanding, to be wise, to direct one’s mind to a thing, to seek or strive for.” The word seems always to keep in view the direction which thought of a practical kind takes. The expression could be translated in a number of ways, each of which, while holding to the main idea, yet brings out a slightly different shade of meaning. For instance: “Be constantly thinking this in yourselves;” “Be having this mind in you;” “reflect in your own minds the mind of Christ Jesus” (Lightfoot); “Let the same purpose inspire you as was in Christ Jesus” (Way). The sum total of the thought in the exhortation seems to be that of urging the Philippians to emulate in their own lives the distinctive virtues of the Lord Jesus spoken of in 2:2-4. Translation: “This mind be constantly having in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” (Word Studies in the Greek New Testament; Vol. II, Eerdmans Publishing, 1954, page 63.)

C. The Barrier of Self

How do we break through the barrier of self and move from surface relationships to root relationships in terms of our corporate fellowship? The key is found in verses five through eight where the mind of Christ is summed up in two very important attitudes or character traits: **Obedience and Sacrifice**.

1. Read Philippians 2:5-8

5 *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,*
 6 *who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,*
 7 *but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.*
 8 *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

2. In the Fellowship Tree on page 12 beside the section marked C. Barrier of Self, list those actions or attitudes of Christ which emphasize His sacrifice.
3. In the Fellowship Tree beside the section marked C. Barrier of Self, list those actions or attitudes of Christ which emphasize His obedience.
4. When you think of fellowship, do you think of sacrifice or do you think of something more nurturing, something more attuned to the meeting of your needs?
5. The Bible has much to say about sacrifice in the area of relationships, including fellowship. Romans 12 is devoted to the subject of biblical fellowship. Yet, with what subject does it start? The subject is far from the current trend of appealing to felt needs. How does Romans 12:1 reflect the importance of sacrifice in fellowship?

Romans 12:1: *I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*”

6. When you think of fellowship, do you tend to think of obedience or do you think of something more nurturing, something more attuned to the meeting of your needs?

7. The Bible has much to say about obedience in the area of relationships, including fellowship. How does Hebrews 13:17 reveal the importance of obedience in fellowship?

Hebrews 13:17: *“Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”*

D. Summary

1. Root Relationships are characterized by:
 - a. Agreement

Philippians 2:1-2

1 If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,

2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

b. Humility

Philippians 2:3-4

3 *Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself;*

4 *do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*

2. The key to breaking through is the Mind of Christ, characterized by:

a. Sacrifice

Philippians 2:5-7

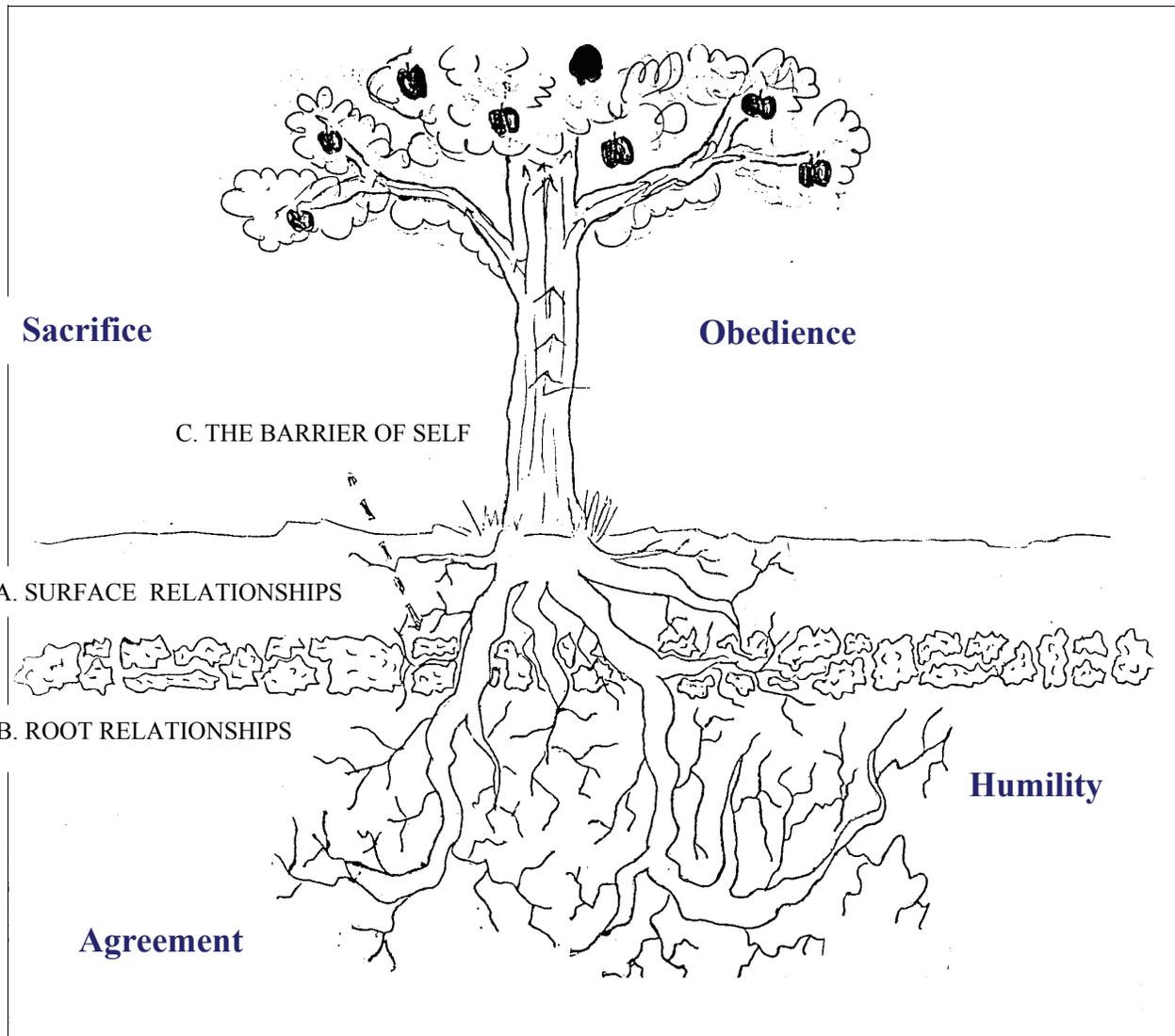
5 *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,*

6 *who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,*

7 *but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.*

b. Obedience

Philippians 2:8: *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*



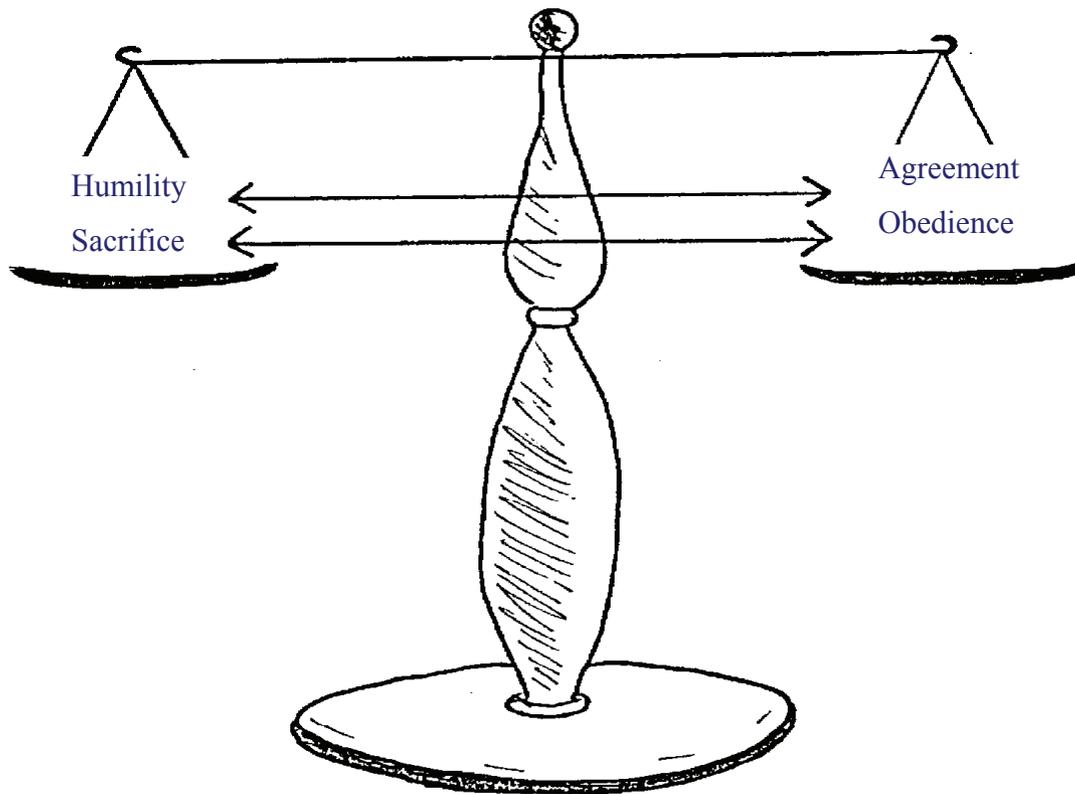
MY FELLOWSHIP TREE

As A Diagnostic Tool

List the attributes of fellowship as they reflect your commitment to the body of Christ. Do not list those attributes which you cannot honestly say are present on a week-to-week, month-to-month basis. What would your tree look like if it reflected the attributes at work in your life?



THE SCALES OF COMMUNITY



Self Diagnostic

Consider now for a moment the results of having these principles of fellowship out of balance. One might say, “Well two out of three is not bad; nobody is perfect. What harm can result?” Below is an evaluation of the result of fellowship which is not balanced by these biblical traits. Consider your own life in light of this and write out a devotional thought concerning your own conduct in terms of your conformity to the Scriptural mandate of fellowship.

Humility without Agreement—The Loner or the Holy Man: Forced, sullen, resentful, hypocritical.

Sacrifice without Obedience—The Legalist: Shallow, self-serving, vain, bitter.

Agreement without Humility—The Complainer: Self-serving, lack of heart, superficial.

Obedience without Sacrifice—The Quitter: Spiritual convenience, only bad sins are the ones others struggle with, no staying power.

First, evaluate your own commitment to the principles of biblical fellowship. In the space below evaluate your life on the basis of each trait.

Humility without Agreement

Sacrifice without Obedience

Agreement without Humility

Obedience without Sacrifice

Next, what actions must you take to rectify this situation?

Are there any individuals in positions of responsibility in your fellowship that you should go to and ask forgiveness?

Quiet Times Alone With God—Jeremiah 15:16—Chapter 8 Theme: Not Ashamed of the Gospel

Passage for Meditation: Psalm 133:1-3

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

Passage for Meditation: Colossians 3:14

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

Passage for Meditation: John 17:22-23

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

Quiet Times Alone With God—Jeremiah 15:16—Chapter 8 Theme: Not Ashamed of the Gospel

Passage for Meditation: Ephesians 4:1-3

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

Passage for Meditation: Ephesians 4:13

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

Passage for Meditation: Acts 4:32

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?