

How to Be Famous
Phil. 2:3-11

Good morning! My message this morning is entitled “How to Be Famous”. Very appropriate because I and the band of brothers here in this church yesterday morning became famous for a few minutes. We had our 15-minute of fame, so to speak, in front of 760 men at Mt. Ararat Church in Stafford when we attended the Iron Sharpens Iron Conference. Why?

Well, after the praise and worship, the founder and emcee of the conference went to the front, welcomed everybody, mentioned a few housekeeping rules, and then suddenly, just called the name of our church, Fil-Am Community Church. Then, he motioned us to come to the front and you know what he gave us? This! Awesome, isn’t it? It’s like we won the Super Bowl!

(Call the men to the front)

Why were we presented a trophy? I don’t know. I wasn’t paying attention. I just heard him call our church. But I think it’s because we’ve been participating in this conference for many years now and our size has grown. And we were the first ones to register.

So, I was first in front then the rest of our men followed and we all lined up and to give some room, I was going to move further to the right but the emcee said, “You stay here” and I thought, “uh-oh, he was going to ask me a question.” And I prayed, “Lord, please don’t make him ask me a question.” Well, the Lord didn’t answer my prayer. So, the dreaded moment came and he asked me, “What’s your name, pastor?” Then, he looked at my tag and turned it around and instinctively, I looked at it, too, and said, “I’m Rolly Estabillo”. And he said, “For a moment I was worried because you have to look at your tag.” Everybody laughed. And then I said, “Oh, I thought I had a different name”.

That was an easy question. I knew he was going to ask me another one. And he asked, “Why do you believe it’s important to invest in your men?” Then, everything became a blur. I felt like I was a Miss Universe contestant. What would I say? How would I answer that? I muttered something but I forgot now. My mind was in a fog. Men, do you remember what I said. I don’t know if I made sense.

Actually, I think I said something like, “I believe it’s important to invest in our men because these men are the leaders in their families. Strong families make strong churches. And strong churches influence the community. In this way, all glory goes to God and we point people to Jesus.”

But, truthfully, this trophy and honor actually belongs to Kuya Alex. Because under his leadership, our men’s ministry really took off. We meet every month without fail. We go through a very good study which he chose. He follows up men and recruits them whenever we have to minister to people like moving and volunteering for activities, etc. He has truly done a great job and I praise God for his vision, commitment, and hard work.

So, Kuya Alex, let me ask you a question. “How does one become famous?” You don’t have to answer that question because I’m going to answer that question, in a few moments, when I go to my message. Thanks, brothers, for being with us in this journey. I praise God for all of you, for being faithful to God in your service for him in this church.

Now, our message comes from Phil. 2:3-11. Please get your Bibles.

We are on the second part of our series we’re calling “Legit: Becoming a Real Christ-Follower.” In this series, we’re looking at things that characterize a true Christian. Because not everyone who claims to be a Christian is a Christian. There’s a lot of fake Christians just like there’s a lot of fake news. I hope this series will help us to evaluate ourselves and see whether we’re real followers of Christ or just mere fans.

Last week, I talked about what it means to follow Jesus. I said that a follower of Jesus leaves the past behind. That person also follows Jesus obviously. That person becomes like Jesus and that person goes and makes other followers. Today, I'd like now to dwell on one very important characteristic of a Christ-Follower. Which is...how to be famous.

Now, based on our passage, I'm not talking about how to be famous in the world's eyes. I'm talking about how to be famous in God's eyes. Many people want to please other people and that's why they go to great lengths to achieve fame or notoriety, but our desire should be not to please other people but to please our heavenly father. How do we that?

The passage we just read will help us to accomplish that. This passage tells us how to be famous in God's eyes. That was the goal of Jesus when he was on earth. To please his heavenly Father. As Christ-Followers, that should be our goal as well.

So, let's look again at verses 3 & 4, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."

That verse answers the question, "How to Be Famous...in God's Eyes". And the answer is "Be humble". According to this passage, being humble is to not think of yourself only but to think of others as well. What's the term for thinking of yourself only? Selfishness! When you desire to do things that will satisfy yourself without due concern for others, that's selfishness. When you seek only your own good, that's selfishness. And selfishness is the by-product of pride. What's the origin of pride?

Pride is a trait that has been passed on to us by our first parents, Adam and Eve. But in the beginning, they didn't have that trait. God created them to share love with each other perfectly.

I believe each of them had the best interests of the other at heart. As such, they had a perfect relationship. It was a give and take relationship. In fact, I believe they had a great relationship with the animals as well. Until the devil entered the scene and disrupted that perfect picture of paradise. He lied and told them that they could be like God. All they needed to do was to be proud like him.

We all know why the devil became the devil, right? He was the most beautiful of all God's angels. He was the leader of the worship team. Then, pride set in. He wanted to please himself, not God. And so he thought he could become like God. And he rebelled against God. According to the Bible, he influenced a third of the total number of angels to rebel against God. And they were thrown out of heaven. So, he tried to extend his dominion on earth by influencing Adam and Eve as well. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve succumbed to his temptation, and they themselves sought to become like God. They ate the fruit that God forbade them not to, thinking it would give them powers that only God has. They were wrong. Their pride produced a selfish act that brought utter misery to the whole human race.

And so, God sent his son Jesus to reverse the situation. We have to be set free from our enslavement to pride and selfishness. These are sins that lead to death. Only Jesus, the perfect and sinless man, could deliver us from death. While on earth, he displayed acts of humility that countered the acts of selfishness of people around him. God wants us to learn humility because that's how he intended us to have our relationships based on. Our relationships must be based on the recognition of the value of other people. There is no place for pride and selfishness in God's family.

So, what's humility? In the rest of this message, I'm going to share with you how humility looks like based on the example of Jesus.

In verse 5, Paul makes this appeal to his readers: “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:” He is saying, “You know how you can improve your relationships with one another? Become like Jesus in his humility.” And then he proceeds to show three ways in which Jesus displayed humility. So, let me share with you how humility looks like.

First of all, humility is

1. Not taking advantage of your position.

Verse 6 says, “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.” Paul obviously is referring to Jesus. In this passage, we see how Paul is a great apologist for the deity or the Godhood of Jesus. He firmly believed that Jesus is God. He says that Jesus in his nature is God. Other versions say that Jesus was in the form of God. In the Greek, “form” doesn’t imply mere appearance. It connotes “nature” or “essence”. Thus, Jesus is equal with God which Paul asserts in this verse.

So, Paul was saying that even though Jesus was God he did not take advantage of this position. You see, if Jesus took advantage of this position, he would have arrived on earth with all the pomp and circumstance of royalty. Instead of a manger in a stable, he could have arranged for him to be born in a palace and be laid in a gold-studded crib. Instead of a quiet, uneventful evening, visited only by shepherds, he could have arranged for him to be born in broad daylight with the news of his birth announced by royal heralds and visited by kings and queens and other people of dignified positions. No, Jesus did not want all these things to herald his coming. He came virtually unnoticed. He did not want the attention of the world.

This is so different with how some people act because of their position in life. They want to have the best seat in the house, so to speak.

They want to be noticed, they brag about their achievements, they flaunt their successes and everything. They think that the world owes them a favor.

Years ago, when Michael Jordan was so famous in basketball, somehow, someway, Michael Jordan wasn't voted by the fans to start for the East team. Instead, he had to come off the bench. But Iverson and one other guy offered Jordan their starting positions. Jordan declined. He could have said, "Thanks, guys, I'll start. I think I deserve it. I guess people won't mind. But he declined. In the end, before the start of the game, Jordan accepted Vince Carter's offer. The point is, these guys were willing to set aside their own personal agenda to give preference to another person.

Giving preference to another person. That's the key. This is what the passage is all about. Jesus, even though he was God, gave preference to us, human beings, instead of himself. He wanted to be just like the rest of us that's why he became one of us.

Now, here's what the Bible has to say about it. **Romans 12:10 (AMP) says, "Give preference to one another in honor."** That's difficult to do. Easy to say, but difficult to do. Because our natural instincts say, "Me first."

Leonard Bernstein, the famous orchestra conductor was asked, "What is the most difficult instrument in the orchestra to play?" He said, "Second fiddle."

I think that's true. Everybody wants the top spot. In a symphony orchestra, there are usually a number of violinists, maybe 20 or more. But only one person could have the premiere chair. He's the concertmaster. He ranks just behind the conductor. He leads the orchestra. Everybody else had to be backup, second fiddle. How about the rest of us in the many facets of life practicing being second fiddle? To paraphrase the verse we just read, Romans 12:10, "Practice playing second fiddle."

Guess what? When you practice playing second fiddle, you're acting like Jesus. You're becoming a real Christ-Follower.

Humility is not taking advantage of your position. In short, you give preference to others. The second way in which humility looks like is this.

2. Serving others in love.

Verse 7 says, "rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."

How many of you play tennis? Not table tennis, but lawn tennis. In tennis, you score in big numbers like 15, 30, 40. And when you don't score at all, what do you have? Love. It's just a sweet way of saying that you have nothing. So, in tennis, when you have love you have nothing. Which, of course, is not good. But tennis players use this as a motivation to improve their serve and hopefully to win.

When Jesus came to earth like one of us and then to serve us, what was his motivation? Love! He says, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45) That's the best expression of love. Jesus took on the form of a servant, became one of us, in order to show true love to others. He became nothing to give us something.

You see, relationships are defined by our service to one another. The more we serve others, the more we show how we love them. That's why Jesus led the way. He showed us the example of true love through service.

Different people have different views about service. Some serve for the wrong reasons. What are those reasons? Let me give you three common reasons:

a. For Selfish Gain

Some people, before serving, ask the question, "What's in it for me?" They wonder what benefit they can get out of serving others. They usually expect something in return. Maybe a little monetary award, maybe a gift or token, maybe a praise or compliment. They must be rewarded in some way for their service.

b. For Self-Esteem

There are some people who are people-pleasers. They want to please people. They want to appear nice and good before others. And so they show extraordinary kindness to others. They are the first ones to volunteer; they rarely say “no” to others, they will keep asking whether there are other things to do. Usually, people-pleasers have low self-esteem. They want to get approval from others. A smile, a pat on the back, a little “Thank you” will go a long way toward stoking their damaged egos. And helping others, serving others, is their way of incurring the favor of others.

c. For Self-Aggrandizement

What does this mean? It sounds high falutin but all it means is that there are those who serve others because they want to increase their power or influence or draw attention to themselves. These are people who take pride in their service to others even boasting about what they did for this person and that person or for this cause and that cause. Anyone comes to mind? How about politicians? Not everyone, of course. But you may know some who are in it for the money, for the power, for the influence, for the attention. And maybe, you know someone who may not be a pompous politician but is acting like one.

Note that all these reasons point...to... self. It’s all about me. I may be serving on the outside, but it’s all about me. People may notice the helpful, congenial, friendly me but they don’t see the selfish, insecure, and inward-looking me.

So now that Jesus Christ has set us free, the apostle Paul gives us the right reason for service. Before, we were slaves to sin, and being slaves, our service was actually focused on ourselves. But now that we have been freed, we are still slaves, but slaves to righteousness as Romans 6:18 says: “You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.”

And that righteousness involves serving others in love. As **Galatians 5:13** says, **“Serve one another in love.”** Service can now be defined as “Love in action.” It is not just an act of helpful activity, but it is love in action. This kind of service should be shown first within the church family. Then to the world. Jesus says in **John 13:34**, **“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”**

Serving others in love also means telling the truth in love. It means being gentle with our words. We should think first before we speak. We should think of the other person’s feelings. James says, **“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”** (James 1:19) If we practice this, then our relationships would really improve, right?

But you ask, “How can I love that brother when he always looks grouchy? “How can I love that sister when she has a critical spirit?” **Proverbs 10:12** says, **“Love covers over all wrongs.”** To cover a wrong is to forgive an offense, to let an offense go.

I read the story of this woman who was traveling on business away from her husband and kids and left him home to hold down the fort for her children. She called back one night to see how things were going, and he said, “Not so good. The poodle died today.” She said, “That’s bad news, but what’s worse is the way you delivered that news to me. You could have kind of eased me into it, kind of built me up to that news, let me get ready for it. Like the first night I call home, you could have said, ‘Honey, somehow the poodle got up on the roof.’ Then the next night I called you could have said, ‘The poodle fell off the roof and isn’t doing so well.’ Then the third night you could have said, ‘The poodle died.’ Then I would have been ready for the bad news.

In short, you could have told me the truth in love.” He said, “I’ll try to do better next time.” She says, “Well, let’s just change the subject. You’re home with the kids, watching over the house, I know that my mom came down for a visit. I know that you don’t like her very much. How’s that going? How’s Mom doing?” He said, “She’s on the roof.”

The point is, be very gently with your words. You just don’t know how it will affect the other person.

Finally, humility looks like this.

3. Surrendering your plans to God.

Verse 8 says, “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!”

Many of us want to take control of our lives. We think that we can go it alone. We think that we don’t need God until we hit a wall. So, we make plans without consulting God. In my life, I’ve done that many times. And many times I fell into a hole. Now I’m a Christian, that monster sometimes rear its ugly head. But I’m learning. And the way to learn is to look at the example of Jesus. He was fully surrendered to his Father. He obeyed his father to the point of giving his life for us by dying on the cross. He set aside his will, his plans, his ambitions, in order to please his Father.

James 4:6-7 says, “God opposes everyone who’s proud but He gives grace to everyone who is humble.” Surrender to God. You really don’t want to be opposed by God, because there’s no way you’re going to win that battle. The Bible says that when I am prideful, God is not just mildly irritated at me. He’s in opposition to me at that very moment. I’m playing God. God’s opposed to me. I’m an enemy of God any time I get full of pride. That’s how serious it is. So he says, “Surrender yourself to God.” What does it mean to surrender yourself and your plans to God?

Romans 6:13 says, “Give yourselves to God and surrender your whole being to Him to be used for His righteous purpose.” Surrendering means, “God, I’m going with your plans for my life, not my own.” That’s humility. That’s called being humble, surrendering your plans to God.

Have you done that? Have you made that decision? Have you come to the point in your life when you say, “God, I’m not going with my plan any more. I’m going totally with Your plan for my life. I don’t know what it is, but I’m already signing my name on the check saying, ‘Yes, Lord. Whatever You want to fill in is fine with me.’” That is surrendering your plans to God.

Have you heard of the phrase: “Blessed is the man who knows his limitations.” It’s not in the Bible. It’s actually a quote from that great theologian Clint Eastwood. In the movie “Dirty Harry,” Harry says, “A man’s got to know his limitations.” But since I’m a pastor I have to make it sound spiritual, and so I said, “Blessed is the man who knows his limitations.”

You know, that’s where humility begins. Knowing your limitations. Not pretending you know it all, but knowing your limitations. Humility is an accurate and unbiased understanding of your strengths and your weaknesses

Folks, that’s how humility looks like. When we become familiar with this, and we practice this, guess what? God will lift you up. He will honor your obedience to him. That’s what he did for Jesus.

To close, let me read these verses again.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,

10

that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11

and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.