

## **IF – THEN**

### **Philippians 2:1-11**

The hula-hoop has been around for a long time.

- Some people claim that the Greeks used it as a form of exercise to tone their abdominal muscles
- Around 1300 AD, hooping – a type of dance using a hoop- was introduced to Great Britain.
- In the 1800’s British sailors first witnessed hula dancing in the Hawaiian Islands. They noticed hula dancing and hooping looked quite similar, and the name “hula hoop” was born.
- Hula hoops have undergone lots of changes—they weren’t always made of plastic. Some were made from bamboo, wood, grass and even vines.
- Although they might not be the inventors of the hula hoop, Richard Knerr and Arthur “Spud” Melin of the Wham-O Company hold the trademark on the name “Hula Hoop.”
- In 1958, Wham-O began manufacturing the toy out of plastic tubing and sold 25 million hula hoops in the first 4 months of production for \$1.98 each. By the end of the second year they sold more than 100 million hula hoops.

I sure you all know how you are supposed to hula hoop ... right? You put it around your waist and spin it. The object is to keep it spinning around you.

We have no clue whether or not the Apostle Paul ever hula-hooped ... but there is a good chance that he did see Greek athletes do so.

So, what in the world does the Hula-hoop have to do with **PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11?** Great question ... the hula-hoop is a great illustration of the mindset of our culture today ... everything revolves around us.

This way of looking at life says....

- What is important is that I am happy. If my marriage does not provide that ... I am out.

- I am going to get by with as little as I can at work. If they want me to do more ... they will pay me more.
- I am taking the last shot even if our team loses. I deserve it.

It is a mindset that is all about me! I come first. AND guess what ... every one of us has to fight that mindset don't we?

It is like what Oscar Wilder once said, "Come over here and sit next to me, I am dying to tell you all about myself."

### So what does Paul have to say about this Hula-hoop life?

#### 1 ... BE LIKE-MINDED

Paul uses 'if-then' clauses in this passage. You know how the 'if-then' clauses work ... right?

- If I turn off the water in the shower ...then I will stop getting wet
- If 50% of the people sitting in here this morning are awake ... then 50% of them are asleep
- If you meet someone with poor hygiene, matted hair, and bad breath ... then you have met a Purdue fan.

That is how the 'if-then' clause works.

Let's look at **VERSE 1** and see the 'if-then' clauses ... **Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion**

Here they are ...

- If you experience encouragement from being in Christ
- If you enjoy comfort from the Body of Christ
- If you share in the presence of the Holy Spirit
- If you experience the tenderness and compassion of Christ

Paul is basically saying ... if you have these things ... and he is not questioning if they do ... he knows they do ... SO ... because you have these things ... THEN there is something that you need to do.

It is like the story about Nikita Khrushchev, the leader of Communist Russia during the Cuban Missile Crisis of the 1960s. There was a huge corn crisis at the time in terms of production. Farmers just weren't planting and raising enough for the country's needs – yet it was well within their capabilities.

So Khrushchev assembled all of the Russian farmers into a great assembly hall, and behind a bank of microphones, asked them if they were committed to solving the corn production problem. And they all raised their hands in affirmation. Then Khrushchev simply stared at them, and let their hands hang in the air. Then, finally, he said: “Then where is the corn?!”

IF you have these things going on in your life ... THEN there needs to be some production from that.

What production is Paul looking for? Let's look at **VERSE 2 ... <sup>2</sup>then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.**

What is the production that should come from what Paul lists in **VERSE 1**?

- By being like minded
- Having the same love.
- Being one in spirit and purpose...

All three of those commands of Paul are facets of one thing ... unity! Paul is telling the Philippian Church ... be sure you with each other ... not against each other.

In Bruno, Nebraska, a farmer by the name of Herman Ostry purchased a piece of land and a barn. Shortly after his purchase a nearby creek rose and the barn was under 29 inches of water. He half-jokingly said to his family, “I bet if we had enough people, we could pick up that barn and carry it to higher ground.” To his surprise, one of his sons, Mike, started thinking about it and by counting the number of boards, timbers, and nails—estimated that the barn weighed about 19,000 pounds. Mike figured that 344 would have to lift about 55 pounds to carry the barn to higher ground. Mike designed a grid of steel tubing and attached it to the outside of the barn in order to provide “handles” to lift and move the barn. On the morning of July 30, 1988, a huge crowd gathered to watch 344 people lift the barn and carry it 50 yards up a hill in just three minutes.

Paul has a reason to tell the Philippians about unity. If you jump forward to **PHILIPPIANS 4:2-3** you see one of the reasons why ... <sup>2</sup> I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

The fact is ... when the church works together ... great things happen!

Paul does not tell the Philippian Church to do something without telling them how to do it ... he says to ...

## 2 ... BE OTHER MINDED

**VERSES 3-4** ... <sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

There were two friends who met for dinner in a restaurant. Each requested filet of sole, and after a few minutes the waiter came back with their order. Two pieces of fish, a large and a small, were on the same platter. One of the men proceeded to serve his friend. Placing the small piece on a plate, he handed it across the table. "Well, you certainly do have nerve!" exclaimed his friend.

"What's troubling you?" asked the other. "Look what you've done," he answered. "You've given me the little piece and kept the big one for yourself." "How would you have done it?" the man asked. His friend replied, "If I were serving, I would have given you the big piece." "Well," replied the man, "I've got it, haven't I?"

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That is the hula-hoop mindset ... the world revolves around me. And guess what ... if everyone is thinking about themselves and wanting to fulfill their own desires ... there cannot be unity. And if there is no unity ... God's purpose for the church is thwarted.

It was Charles Spurgeon that said "Perhaps one of the hardest struggles of the Christian life to learn is this sentence ... "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be glory."

- IF I value myself more than my wife ... there will be conflict
- If I value myself more than my fellow-workers ... there will be conflict
- If I value myself more than my brothers and sisters in Christ ... there is going to be conflict.

Rick Warren ... in his book “Purpose Driven Life” writes ... A few years ago Church Growth Consultant, Win Arn conducted a survey of nearly 1000 churches asking the question: Why does the church exist? Of the church members surveyed, 89% of them said the church’s purpose is to take care of me and my family’s needs. Only 11% of the church members said the purpose of the church is to win the world to Jesus Christ.

That is a scary stat! If that survey is true ... then we have lost our focus! We have taken on the Holla-hoop mindset ... even in the church.

Paul is simply saying ... “If we want the church to be what Christ wants it to be ... then we have to be other-minded.”

Great idea Paul ... but how do we do that ...

### 3 ... BE CHRIST-MINDED

Paul says that for us to be like-minded and other-minded we have to be Christ-minded ... See **VERSE 5 ...** <sup>5</sup> *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

What does being Christ-minded look like according to Paul?

**VERSES 6-8 ...** <sup>6</sup> *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!*

**I want us to catch the gravity of these verses.**

Jesus Christ’s mindset was this ...

- He ... being part of the Trinity left Heaven ... became a human being. That might be in the order of you or me leaving our human body and becoming a cockroach.

- He ... being the King of all creation ... became a baby completely dependent on a teenage mother.
- He ... being the God of Heaven ... left heaven where the streets are made of gold ... to be born in a feed trough ... in a barn ... where the floor is covered with animal manure.
- He ... being the One who owns the cattle on a thousand hills and all the hills they stand on ... became a child living in desperate poverty in a hick town of such ill-repute that no one could believe anything good could come from it.
- He ... who holds all things together by his very word ... gave into a cross of complete humiliation.

Are you getting the picture of what Christ's mind was ... complete humility.

But just in case you miss the gravity of this ... did you know ... that in a Roman crucifixion that the person being crucified was stripped completely naked and paraded through the city streets? And then they are hung on that cross they are carrying ... totally naked ... for all to see. Total humiliation!

Why? For you and for me ... that's why!

**And that is what Paul calls you and me to ... willing to take on total humiliation for the sake of others. Paul is not calling us to a hula-hoop mentality. He is calling us to a cross!**

In conclusion ... there is one more thing that Paul shares with us ...

#### **4 ... BE HEAVEN-MINDED**

Look at **VERSES 9-11** ... <sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Because Christ was willing to be humiliated for the sake of the Kingdom ... God exalts him above everyone and everything else. Everything in all creation will bow down to him. First comes humility and next comes exaltation.

Yes, but that is Jesus Christ ... that is not us. You are right ... not all creation is going to bow down to us ... even if we are like-minded ... other-minded ... and Christ-minded.

BUT ... listen to this ... this is really important ... In the sermon on the Mount Jesus gives us what we call the Beatitudes. They are short quips of living out life in humility. After he delivers those he says this ... **LUKE 6:23** ... <sup>23</sup> "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven

God does not forget those who humble themselves in the sight of the Lord. Listen to James the half-brother of Jesus ... **Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. (JAMES 4:10)**

Wow! Sounds like a great tradeoff to me! So, what is it going to be my friends ... a hula-hoop or a cross?