

# Philippians 2:19-29 | The People Every Child Needs

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Date: 23 August 2026

Preacher: Simon Lawrenson

[0:00] This morning, we are as a church going through actually two different books of the Bible right now, but not at the same time, so don't panic. We're going through the book of Philippians. And so if you do have a Bible, why don't you flick there?

And I'm grateful for Joe for preaching last week on the first part of chapter two. And so this morning, we're going to pick up from where he finished, which is verse 19 this morning.

And as you flick there, what I'd like to ask you is a simple question about children. And the question is this, what does a child really need?

Now, I know that you, if you've been to Sunday school, your immediate answer will be Jesus. But take a moment to think about that question. What does a child really need?

You may be thinking, well, in my mind, I think a child needs loving parents. That's pretty top of the list, would you say? Yeah. What about financial security? Is that part of being a good parent? Don't know.

[1:20] Good education. Opportunities. All true, right? But in this section of the Bible that we're looking at today, Paul gives us a different answer.

So, what a child needs is, as they are growing up, they need people, they need to see people who genuinely love Jesus.

See, this chapter in Philippians ends in a little bit of an unusual way. If you have read the first part of this chapter, or you're familiar with the first part of this chapter, it starts in rich theology, right?

It talks about Jesus. It talks about what he's done, how he did it. He's talking about his humility. But Paul doesn't then finish the chapter with theology. He doesn't make these crazy, you know, statements that we stick on the fridge.

Like these statements that we remember or maybe highlight or underline. In fact, can I be honest with you? This portion of Scripture is so ordinary that we forgot about it.

[2:37] Now, what I mean forgot about it, those people in the preaching team will know exactly what I'm talking about. As I sent out, whenever it was earlier this year, the teaching plan for this period of this year, I forgot about this section of Scripture.

It is so ordinary. I got to verse 18 and I went straight to chapter 3. And I can't remember who it was. Maybe it was Joseph or Zach or maybe it was Joe who said, you've missed out a bit of the Bible, pastor.

I'm like, oh, embarrassing. Because actually what Paul doesn't do is finish on seemingly what seems like a high after the high of the theology in chapter 2.

He kind of comes down to earth with a bit of a bump. And it's so ordinary, you kind of think, oh, I'll just skip over this. So in this section, he points to two ordinary men.

Why? Well, look, simply because doctrine eventually becomes visible in people. And I don't mean just Christian doctrine.

[3:53] Whatever you believe in, whatever you put your weight and trust in, whatever it is, eventually it will come out. It will be shown as being visible in your life.

And Paul is highlighting to the Philippians and to us that when it comes to children, children learn what Christianity looks like by watching Christians.

Which is scary, isn't it? And maybe you grew up in the Christian church and maybe now your mind is being reminded of those people that you remember from your youth, maybe.

If you can remember that far back. Bill. And maybe you're calling to mind people's names who you would look at as a young person and you would say, I remember that person.

Because of his way of life and because of her way of life. And of course, it's true and it's sad, isn't it, that one of the reasons Christians or children can be turned off from Christianity is for precisely the

same reason.

[5:11] Because they've seen people who have said they're Christians and maybe are not living the Christian life. They have examined the claims of Jesus and they haven't rejected those claims.

But they have rejected and have examined the claims that people are making about what they believe. They've watched other Christians and they've seen a disconnect between what they say and how they live.

They hear us talk about grace and they see us hold grudges. They see us talk about mercy and joy and they hear us griping and complaining.

We tell them Jesus is worth everything. And yet they see us in our comfort. They see our reputation and our preferences that often come first. And children are remarkably good at spotting hypocrisy. Remarkably good. They may not have the theological vocabulary to explain it, but they have a sense. They can sense when Christianity is something that we talk about rather than something that has actually changed us.

[6:34] And this is why Paul doesn't simply give us a Christian teaching in Philippines too. He now moves on to say, hey, an example of Christian teaching, an example of two people who really believe this.

Let me introduce you, Timothy Epaphroditus. If you want to see what Christianity looks like, he writes to the church of Philippi, Timothy Epaphroditus. Now, it's worth remembering, if you've got your Bibles open, that Paul has just given us one of the greatest descriptions of Jesus in the entire New Testament.

Right? So in verse 8, he said that Jesus, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. And Joe expounded that for us last time.

And then in verse 12, just flick down, it says, therefore. And so Paul is now trying to draw application. And then what follows there in verse 9? Timothy Epaphroditus.

To ordinary Christians. And that is super significant. Paul has just told us what Christian or Christ-like humility looks like theologically.

[7:53] Now he's going to show us what it looks like practically. You could say the first 18 verses of this chapter, Paul tells us what Christ-like living looks like.

And then the rest of the chapter, he shows us what it looks like when someone actually believes it. And my question for you this morning, before we go any further, is that do you actually believe it? Have you actually examined the claims of Christ?

Have you come to believe them as being true? And have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Yeah. Because look, someone once said, Christianity is like measles.

You have to have it to give it away. And so that's particularly appropriate today. As we're dedicating Micah Raphael, one of the things we instinctively think about when a baby is born is what kind of person will this child become?

Now, we don't know the answer to that question, do we? And actually, ultimately, we can't control the answer to that question either. But we can ask a different question.

[9:01] And the question is this, what kind of people will we surround this child with? Because children learn what the Christian life looks like by watching Christians live it.

And so then Paul gives us two examples, Timothy and Epaphroditus. And so the first thing that we see in verses 19 to 24, it's coming on the screen, is that gospel-shaped people, church people, people who are following Jesus, genuinely care for others.

So he says there, he writes, I hope in the Lord, I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you. This is verse 19.

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you. So Paul is not with the church at this time.

He's writing to the church. He's writing actually from probably from prison at this time. And he's saying, my plan is to send to you Timothy, so that when he comes back to me, he can tell me how great you're doing.

[10:08] Now, would you notice that there is a little theology here that's easy to miss? The Christian life involves making plans. Did you know that? The Christian life involves making plans.

But the Christian life is never ultimately controlled by our plans. And we like to think they are. I have a plan. I have this plan. I have this plan.

I have several spreadsheets. I could bore you to death with how many spreadsheets I have. Honestly. Ask Laurie. But listen. Our plans are never controlled. Our lives are never controlled by our plans. Our lives are never dependent on our plans. James says, if the Lord wills, we will live and do this and do that. That's how James writes about it. See, Paul had plans, but Paul's confidence isn't ultimately in his plans. It's in the Lord. And that's a really, really important principle for all of us, but also, especially I think this morning, for parents.

[11:10] You'll make decisions. You'll pray. You'll worry. You'll hope. But ultimately, Michael Raphael and all our children, and ourselves actually, belong to the Lord, and you can't control their future.

All you can do is faithfully steward the child that God has entrusted to you. And then Paul gives Timothy an extraordinary commendation.

Verse 20. Look at it with me. He says, I have no one like him. And that means I have no one like Timothy, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. Which, look, that's a remarkable thing to say. Paul doesn't say, I have no one as talented as Timothy. Like, I have no one who has the certificates like Timothy has. I have no one as intelligent as Timothy. I have no one as gifted as Timothy. He doesn't say that. He says, I have no one who genuinely cares.

[12:15] That's what Paul values. Paul values care. And look, that word genuinely, it's not performance. It's not image.

It's not pretending to care. Timothy actually cares. And there's something deeply countercultural about that, isn't there? Because our natural instinct, ourselves, is to make, and you'll know this if you've had small children.

If you've had children. What am I saying? Like, if, and we're all children. We were all children at some point. Still are, maybe. Right? The natural instinct is to make life about ourselves. Right? Like at 3 a.m. in the morning when Micah's crying and he wants feeding. Like, he's not thinking, I probably shouldn't wake the household up. Right?

He's probably not thinking, the neighbors are probably trying to get some sleep. I should pipe down. I know what I'll do. I'll wait till breakfast. Like, he's not thinking that.

[13:21] And surprise, surprise, like when they get older and they're toddlers, they're not thinking that either. And when they get to teenagers, it don't change.

Our natural instinct is to make life about ourselves, isn't it? And our comfort and our success and our reputation and our preferences.

But listen, Christianity turns us outward. And changes the question from what can I get to what can I give.

And the problem that we all face, whether you are a few months old or older, just put it like that, is that sin curves our hearts inwards, doesn't it?

That's what sin does. Someone once described sin as the soul bent in on itself. Sin is the soul that is bent in on itself.

[14:26] We are the center of our universe. Everything revolves around us. It's me, myself, and I. Everything becomes about me, my comfort, my reputation, my preferences, even religion, even Christianity can become self-centered.

Church becomes, what am I getting rather than what am I giving? And so Timothy isn't impressive because he's talented.

Timothy isn't impressive because he can perform. He's impressive because he isn't the center of his own story. Timothy has behaved in such a way that he is pointing his life as best as he is able, as most as he is able, to Jesus, even when no one is noticing.

And look, I know that you've already found this. I know that you found this. No one applauds changing nappies. Do they? Like if you're applauding changing nappies, like what's wrong with you?

And being a parent is hard. And the late nights are the easy bit. Right? The interrupted sleep you can deal with.

[15:48] Why? Because you have this thing like this says, you know why? It's not always going to be like that. It's not always going to be like that. And then you go through this period in your life where you go, I'm not sure I believe that anymore.

And yet, look, this dedication isn't about promising perfect parenting, is it? It's about saying we're going to keep pointing Micah Raphael to Jesus, even when nobody notices, even when nobody applauds.

Because this calling isn't only for parents. Paul is writing to the church. Every child should grow up surrounded by Timothy, spiritual Timothy.

Timothy's who genuinely care. And then look, verse 21, he gives the contrast to that. And this is quite sobering. Verse 21, he says, For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. There's some people that don't seek others' interests, only their own interests. There were some, we don't know who he's talking about, perhaps they were so well known to the church that Paul doesn't even need to name names.

[17:03] He's like, yeah, you know them. I'm not going to name their names, but you know them. He doesn't need to name their names, names who seek their own interests, not those of Jesus.

Now he's connecting us back. If you, again, if you've got your Bibles open, just look at verse 3 of chapter 2. Paul is connecting us back to verse 3. Verse 3 says, Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. So he's connecting us back. And it's almost like Paul is saying, Can you believe that?

Can you believe that in the church? That there are those who act for their own gain and their own selfishness? Paul is wanting us to go, What?

What? Paul says, That's the problem. And it's a problem largely. It's a problem because largely it's hidden.

[18:09] It's a hidden problem. Paul doesn't say they seek evil things. He says they seek their own interests.

Isn't that a strange thing to say to the church? There could be a group of people or people in the church, in God's family, who are not outwardly seeking evil, but inwardly there's a problem.

It's an inward problem. It's a hidden problem. And that's often what makes self-centeredness so difficult to see and so difficult to diagnose in our own hearts.

Because unless we've got people around us who are willing to call that out when they see it, that will go unnoticed and it will breed. We don't necessarily become terrible people.

We simply become people whose world is revolving around us. And that is fundamentally opposed to the message of the Bible. Because the message in the story of Jesus is that at the beginning of the chapter, he is the one who did not seek his own interests, but the interests of others and laid his life down to save those.

[19:35] Again, verse 6. As we've been going through this letter, Paul wrote, who though he was in the form of God, this is talking about Jesus. He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, which means that Jesus moved towards us.

Jesus humbled himself. Jesus served. Jesus gave. And so Timothy becomes an example of someone whose life has been reshaped by Jesus. But again, you've got to know Jesus to be reshaped by Jesus.

And my question is, do you know Jesus? Paul continues and he says, but you know Timothy's proven worth, verse 22. How as a son with a father, he has served with me in the gospel.

And you can sense that kind of affection there, can't you, of Paul. This isn't simply Paul talking about a ministry partner that he kind of has some connection to somewhere, in some way.

This is family language. And I think that's important for this morning. One of the things that we're doing this morning is recognizing that living the Christian life doesn't happen in isolation.

[20:45] Do you believe that? It doesn't happen in isolation. Parents have a unique responsibility and they are the primary influence over their children.

But parents aren't the only influence over their children. The church has a role. Older Christians have a role. Grandparents have a role. Youth leaders have a role. Friends have a role.

The whole church becomes part of a spiritual environment in which a child grows. And that's why this dedication simply isn't congratulations to being a parent.

It's also a moment where the church says, we want to be the kind of church that helps this child see what following Jesus looks like. And in verse 23, he says, I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me.

And I trust in the Lord. You see that? I'm planning, but I'm also trusting. That surely I myself will come also.

[21:47] And then the second thing he says in verse 25, again coming on the screen, is that gospel shapes people joyfully sacrifice. And that's a problem, isn't it?

Joyfully sacrifice are two words that don't normally go together. Joyful sacrifice. He says in verse 25, I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and fellow worker and fellow soldier and your messenger and minister to my need.

So Paul now introduces this other guy and he's fascinating because Timothy is relatively well known, right? Like he has two books of the Bible named after him. Like he's fairly well known. Epaphroditus. It takes like a week just to figure out how to say his name. Paul spends a significant time, however, telling us about him.

Why? Well, simply because God values faithfulness that the world doesn't necessarily notice. Look at how Paul describes him. He says, here's my brother. And I don't think that he was like his literal brother, brother, but a brother in the Lord.

[23:07] Fellow worker, fellow soldier, three descriptions. One that describes the depth of the relationship, the brother. One that describes the level of partnership, the worker.

And then the other one, that's the conflict that they have experienced together. And he calls him your messenger and minister to my need.

And if you know anything about the early church and early church history, it was this church that Paul is writing to now that had seen Paul in difficulty and gathered up this kind of like just giving kind of thing and got some money together and gave it to Epaphroditus.

And Epaphroditus took it to Paul. And that's what he's referencing here. He was your messenger and minister to my need. And then at some point, like we all do, Epaphroditus gets sick.

Probably on that journey. And so in verse 26, he says, for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. Now think about that.

[24:17] He's sick. Like he's the one in bed. He's the one with the temperature. He's the one that's like, if he's a proper guy, the world is coming to his end, right?

Because he's got a temperature of whatever it is, right? And yet it says that he's the one who needs encouragement because he's worried about them. Indeed, he was ill.

Verse 27, near to death. But God had mercy on him and not only on him, but also on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. Verse 26, 28, he says, I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again and that I may be less anxious.

And so Paul says in verse 29, he says, so receive him in the Lord with all joy. Receive him with all joy and honor such men.

Why? Well, simply because verse 30 says, for he nearly died for the work of Christ. Honor him.

Why? Because he nearly died. Look, we admire sacrifice, don't we?

[25:24] I think it's absolutely right and absolutely good for us once a year. More often probably than that, we come together and we honor those who have fallen for the country, haven't we?

You know, remembering Sunday once a year comes around and we remember sacrifice and we admire sacrifice until it interrupts our plans.

And then we don't really like sacrifice too much. Like we celebrate, we celebrate, for example, missionaries that are doing tremendous works in other countries and our hearts complain when asked to serve in children's church twice in one month.

We love stories of radical faith and maybe you're one who reads biographies or autobiographies of those who have this radical faith and done radical things in the name of Christ.

We just don't want them to happen to us. Well, Paul says, honor men like him. Why? Because the church honors what heaven honors. Not platform, not influence, but just faithfulness.

[26:33] He says that he was risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me. And there's that word risking. He put himself in danger because Christ was worth serving.

Paul says, honor people like that. Don't honor celebrities, not powerful people, not necessarily impressive people. Honor people who give themselves away for Jesus. Now, you might be asking this question this morning as we draw this thing to a close.

Is what does all this have to do with a baby dedication? Good question. Let me put it like this. Some parents today feel inadequate. If that's you this morning, good.

Because you are. We all are. Like, at what point, you know, for those of you who don't know, I'm the father of four girls. Like, and at what point did I ever think like that I could do any good for my girls? [27:40] Like, at what point was I so delusional that I thought that their future rested on me? We can feel inadequate.

And actually, I think, like, that's good. We're not enough. We're not enough for our kids. Micah Raphael doesn't ultimately need hero parents.

Now, you will be. You're going to be great. You already are great. Aren't they great? Yeah, good. But listen, Micah Raphael doesn't need a hero parent.

He needs a heroic savior. Right? He, he, he, he needs parents living in community with other Christians who keep bringing him to Jesus.

And that's my, my final point is that Jesus is greater, is the greater Timothy and he is the greater Epaphroditus. Jesus is the greater Steve. He is the greater, greater Ash. It's Jesus.

[28:38] And I think the important thing to take home is that this passage isn't speaking only to parents or saying, parents, here's what you need to do. Be like Timothy.

be like Epaphroditus. If we go home with that message, then I think we've, we've probably really missed the message. Paul doesn't give us Timothy and Epaphroditus so that we can simply imitate, imitate nice people or become nice people.

He gives us people who have been transformed by the work of Jesus. He's, look, go back to verse five. It says, have this mind among yourselves. But what mind is it, Paul, that you want us to have? This mind. The mind that is yours in Christ Jesus. Why can Timothy live like Timothy? Why can Epaphroditus live like Epaphroditus?

Why can Steve live like Steve and Ash live like Ash and all of us live like us? How can we do that?

Well, it's not because if there's anything good in us.

[29:44] It's because Jesus has first given himself. Like, Timothy is not the gospel. Epaphroditus is not the gospel. Steve, you're not the gospel. Ash, you're not the gospel.

Church, you're not the gospel either. Jesus is. And Timothy, yes, he cared for people. But listen, Jesus came for people who didn't care for him.

Like, that's the crazy thing. Isn't it? Epaphroditus risked his life. Absolutely risked his life. But Jesus actually gave his life.

Epaphroditus served Paul. But Jesus became a servant to all. And the great promise of the gospel is that Jesus didn't simply show us what sacrificial love looks like.

He demonstrated it for us on the cross. And so the Christian life isn't, look at Timothy, try harder. Be like Epaphroditus. It is, look at Christ, receive his grace, and then empowered by his spirit, become like him.

[30:49] And so fundamentally, Paul isn't speaking only to parents. He's describing the culture of a church that is following Jesus. And so I want us to imagine this morning. I want us to imagine two things.

I want us to imagine what, I want you to imagine Micah Raphael growing up among us. Imagine that, just for a moment.

what do we want him to see as he's running around, hopefully causing chaos.

Love that. After service, in this, in that, running around, brilliant. What do we want him to see?

People who serve, people who genuinely care, people who pray, people who sacrifice, people who open their homes, people who forgive, people who turn up when life is difficult, people who don't need recognition, people who put Christ before themselves.

Because look, eventually he's going to ask, what does Christianity actually look like? What does it actually look like? And my life and your life will answer that question before our words do.

[32:08] And so today, we're not promising that Micah Raphael will become a Christian. We can't make that promise. We can't believe for him. We can't save him.

Only Jesus saves. But we can say we want to be the kind of church where Micah Raphael sees Jesus clearly. A church where people genuinely care, people genuinely serve, sacrifice, and a church where people don't live for themselves.

A church where the gospel isn't simply preached from the pulpit but seen in the lives of ordinary people. So wouldn't it be wonderful if, here's what I want you to imagine, if in 20 years' time Micah Raphael could look around this church and say, I grew up surrounded by people who showed me what Jesus was like.

I want you to imagine a second thing with me. wouldn't it be even more wonderful if 20 years from now Micah Raphael wasn't simply looking at Timothy and Epaphroditus and us and saying that's what Christianity looks like.

But he was looking to Jesus and saying that's who Christianity is about. Shall we pray together? Father, Father, thank you for your word.

[33 : 33] Thank you for your instruction this morning. Lord, we thank you for this young family. Lord, who are determined to follow you wherever you may lead.

Lord, we thank you for them. Lord, we pray your blessing on them, your hand on them. Lord, your wisdom for them. Lord, we pray, Lord, for that humility that Paul was talking about this morning to know that they're not going to be the hero parents.

They're just going to point to the hero that matters. Lord, and we pray this morning, Lord, that as they, well, continue that journey on being parents but start this journey being parents for Micah Raphael, we pray this morning, Lord, that we would be the kind of church that when Micah is growing up, he would see Jesus.

Help us all, Lord, to know you personally, to walk with you, to be changed by you, to have you so radically in our lives that it's just easy to give you away. Lord, we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Let's stand together and sing our final songs.