



December 14, 2025

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Philippians 2:1-11

## Introduction

This week's message explores the heart of Advent—not the upward movement of stars and angels, but the downward movement of God's love. Sandy Hughes shows us how Jesus reveals true greatness through humility, trading a throne for a manger and majesty for servanthood. Through Philippians 2:1-11, we discover that love doesn't climb higher; it bends low. From houseboat trips with high schoolers to Jesus washing His disciples' feet, we see that unity in the church and transformation in our lives only happen when we adopt the posture of Christ—choosing the lower place, serving others first, and releasing our need to be recognized. This Advent season invites us to follow the One who descended from heaven to earth, from glory to the cross, all to lift us up.

**Key Texts:** Philippians 2:1-11; Mark 10:35-45; John 13:1-17

## Icebreaker:

Think of a time when someone unexpectedly served you in a way that required them to "bend low" or put your needs ahead of their own. How did that impact you?

## Discussion Questions

1. Sandy shared the "second violin" illustration—how the most complex instrument requires someone willing to play the supporting role rather than demanding the spotlight. In what areas of your life (family, work, church, friendships) do you tend to want to be "first chair"? Where might God be inviting you to joyfully play second violin?

2. **Read Philippians 2:1-4 together as a group.** Paul calls the church to unity built on humility—being "of the same mind" and doing "nothing out of selfish ambition." What specific challenges or conflicts arise when a church (or family, or community) lacks this others-first mindset? How have you seen unity strengthen when people embrace humility?
3. **Read Philippians 2:5-11 together as a group.** Paul shows us four ways Jesus bent low: releasing His rights, becoming a servant, being obedient to death, and then being exalted by God. Which of these four movements challenges you most personally? Why?
4. Sandy told the story of cleaning poop out of the church van—a moment where she knew what Jesus was inviting her to do but didn't want to do it. She said, "Humility almost never feels holy in the moment. It feels inconvenient." What "basin and towel" moment are you currently avoiding? What's holding you back from bending low in that situation?
5. **Read Mark 10:35-45 together as a group.** James and John asked for the best seats in Jesus' kingdom, and the other disciples were indignant—not because they were humble, but because they wanted those seats too. How do you see this same pattern playing out in your own heart or in our culture? How does Jesus redefine greatness in that passage?
6. Sandy gave five practical ways to bend low like Jesus: choose the lower place before you're asked, pay attention to needs around you, release the need to be first/right/recognized, practice one hidden act of humility this week, and remember humility is impossible without Jesus. Which of these resonates most with where you are right now? What specific step could you take this week?

## Key Takeaways

- Love bends low and finds greatness in humility
- Unity in the church requires an others-first, humble mindset
- Jesus didn't just teach humility—He embodied it from heaven to the cross
- Greatness isn't found in climbing higher but in bending lower
- Humility almost never feels holy in the moment—it feels inconvenient
- We don't manufacture humility; we receive it from Christ who lives in us
- When we bend low, we reveal the One who bent lower still

## Notes