

Philippians

by Peter Steinke

Part Four

Introduction

"One person's gain," we say, "is another's loss." How can we be successful and still remain servants? Some achieve great things while others struggle to get along. While some have their pictures in the newspapers, others deliver newspapers. How can we share the sunlight when only some have the limelight?

In Philippians Paul agonizes over a few "partisan" preachers who lack good will. They exalt over Paul's imprisonment as they make names for themselves. Still others live "as enemies of the cross," overly concerned with their bellies. And, two women—Euodia and Syntyche—have an argument going on between them.

We will examine how servants in Christ live together, despite degrees of difference in fame or disparity in success or levels of authority.

Sharing the Sunlight

Success Pie

Pass out sheets of paper with a circle drawn in the middle. Then, using the list, "slice" the pie. Make bigger slices for the successes you value most and smaller slices for the least valued. Some of the listed items will be omitted. Choose the successes you would like to have.

Success List:

Financial well-being	Raising a family
Good Friends	Being seasonal
Respect	Owning a business
Being an expert	Being a decision-maker
Creativity	Serving others
Sensitivity to others	Quietness, peacefulness
Popularity	Writing a book
Acceptance and care in my family	Self-esteem
Being compassionate	(your own choice)

Divide into triads.

Compare the slices and views of success. Ask the triad to combine its "big" slices and describe to the whole group the triad's view of success.

Sunlight Living

In God's sunlight you see things in a different way. Luther says, for instance, that you can even see Christ in a needy neighbor.

Read Philippians 1:12-14. Why can Paul "see" his apparent failure as success? Can you think of other Bible stories where defeat is really victory?

Read Philippians 1:15-18. Why do the partisan people abuse Paul in his difficult situation? How do we turn partisan? What is Paul's antidote to such partisanship?

Read Philippians 1:19-26. Describe the "sunlight" which changes Paul's perception.

Read Philippians 4:10-14. What is the key to servant sunshine?

Read Philippians 2:5-11. Can humility really be a "successful" stance in our kind of world? God exalts the humble. Why?

Meditation in the Sunlight

Read the teenager's comments below. Share some of your own thoughts about sharing. How can the sunlight of grace be exchanged? Look at your sliced pie. Is there room for service and others?

Many people dream of professions in the "limelight"—ballet dancers, actors, models, singers, composers and sports stars. If achieving one of the "limelight" occupations is so coveted, why is there disappointment, divorce, mental breakdown and hurt in their worlds, too? Limelight people are human. Success is no guarantee for rising above human failure and suffering.

Each of us has a gift from God which makes us shine. We should develop it and share it. Simply pleasing ourselves with our accomplishments and gains may satisfy us for a short time, but the greatest joy comes in serving others with the abilities God has given us.

Sometimes our friends or acquaintances may need help in discovering their gifts from God. Some may even need help in acknowledging their self-worth. (In this case, honest praise and compliments can do wonders for a down-in-the-dumps person! Your recognition of another means more than you think.) We can all share in the "light" of our Lord's blessings—for what God gave to each is for everyone's benefit, even as God gave Christ because He loved the whole world, not just me or my friends." (Rene Steinke)

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