

How would you define the word “mindset”? What’s a mindset? That’s one of those words that probably all of us have used at some point in time, but that you sort of have to pause and think about before trying to define it. Mindset. It can refer to something pretty big - like how you look at all of life and the world. Or, it can be very specific – like your outlook, viewpoint, or perspective towards just one aspect of life or living. I was fascinated to learn that at the start of every new school year, Beloit College in Wisconsin publishes the Beloit College Mindset List, which offers a glimpse into the hearts and minds of the next generation. As expected, the list finds that this fall’s freshman class is unique in how they see the world, hear the world, speak in the world, and experience the world. Apparently, faculty members, military officers, and pastors eagerly await the list, hoping to find effective ways to communicate with younger generations. Here are just a few items from the mindset list for the class of 2016:

1. They have always lived in cyberspace, addicted to a new generation of “electronic narcotics.”
2. Michael Jackson’s family, not the Kennedys, constitutes “American Royalty.”
3. If they miss *The Daily Show*, they can always get their news on YouTube.
4. Bill Clinton is a senior statesman of whose presidency they have little knowledge.
5. They have never seen an airplane “ticket.”
6. They have had to incessantly remind their parents not to refer to their CDs and DVDs as “tapes.”
7. There have always been blue M&Ms, but no tan ones.
8. Billy Graham is as familiar to them as Otto Graham was to their parents.
9. They watch television everywhere but on a television.
10. History has always had its own channel.

Did you know that Jesus had a mindset? Jesus had a distinctive, unique, one of a kind perspective on life and how to live it. That’s a mindset! Let’s look at our Bible passage for today. A man by the name of Paul, a great Christian leader, wrote this letter to a small group of Jesus followers who lived in the town of Philippi in what is now the country of Greece some 30 years after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth back to Heaven. Paul was in prison over in the city of Rome for telling people everywhere that Jesus was the true Savior of the world and the Lord of everything and everyone. The letter is all about Jesus. But in the process, Paul uses the word “joy” – or another word like “joy” – no less than 15 times. Jesus and joy just go together. Joy – because of Jesus – results in a life full of wonderful, godly excess which is the title of this journey through Philippians: “Joy: Life in Excess.” This portion of God’s Word is all about Jesus’ mindset, all about how Jesus’ mindset can be described, all about how Jesus’ followers can both get and share His mindset, and all about what can happen when you do get Jesus’ mindset. Let me start with the end in mind. If, and when, you ever replace your own sinful and flawed mindset with Jesus’ perfect and beautiful mindset, you will discover and possess joy. Here’s the first of two questions this passage helps me to answer:

WHAT IS A JESUS MINDSET?

Jesus possessed a personal outlook or perspective towards all of life that shaped and motivated everything Jesus did and how He did it. When Paul says here, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (Ph 2:5 NIV), that word for “attitude” there could be just as easily be translated “mindset.” In fact, one translation does just that, “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.” (Ph 2:5 NIV) Now, verses 5-11 together is one of the great Christological passages in all of the New Testament. In other words, we find here expressed and taught some of the greatest truths about who Jesus is and what He’s done. It tells us Jesus pre-existed with God the Father in Heaven... that He was and is God Himself... that He became incarnate meaning He became fully human without ever ceasing to be God... that He died on the cross to make our salvation possible... and that He ascended back to Heaven as the exalted Lord above and over all. But in sharing all of that truth with us, Paul wants to emphasize Jesus’ mindset above all. What was that mindset like?

First of all, Paul says that for Jesus our needs were more important than His own comfort. Who would ever have blamed the Son of God for staying in Heaven and never agreeing to become a human being? Imagine Jesus giving up the perfection, beauty, and blessings of Heaven and taking upon Himself all the limitations of being a human being. Jesus was sinless, that’s true, but He had to put up with all the common human hassles we endure like getting tired, getting sick, being misunderstood or feeling lonely. But, more importantly, God in human flesh had to put up with being scorned and ridiculed by the creatures He had created, being beaten savagely, then being put to death in about the most hideous, painful way imaginable – death by the cross. But, the only way that you and I could ever escape an eternity in Hell and obtain an eternal relationship with God in Heaven was for Jesus to do what He did. I don’t know who said it, but I surely agree: “Love begins when someone else’s needs are more important than my own.” Jesus put our needs before His own comfort. That’s His mindset.

Secondly, His advantages were put at the disposal of our disadvantages. Paul tells us here that God is not a grasping, selfish being. How do we know that? Because Jesus, who is God, didn’t try to hold on to all the obvious advantages of being God. If you’re God, you don’t have to suffer. If you’re God, you don’t have to deal with limitations. If you’re God, you don’t have to be treated unjustly. If you’re God, you don’t have to die. But, instead of holding onto or hoarding all of the advantages of being God, Jesus put all of that at your disposal and mine. He made all of that work to your advantage and mine. In fact, He gave up, in a sense, all the advantages of His advantages in order to address our enormous disadvantages: being sinners, being destined for eternity in Hell, being cut off from God’s life and presence. He took on not just the role of a human being, but the role of a servant – a common, looked down upon, despised slave – and humbled himself to the point of death. Jesus’ advantages were put at the disposal of our’ disadvantages. That’s His mindset.

Third, He completely extended Himself on our behalf. Paul says here that “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing” (Ph 2:6-7 NIV) Paul says that He emptied Himself on our behalf. He didn’t empty Himself of His essential “God-ness”, so to speak. Jesus was God living out a truly human life. You athletes out there know what’s meant by the expression, “leaving it all on the field” or “leaving it all on the court.” It means you hold nothing back. You give it your all. Every ounce of effort is expended. You pour yourself out. When it came to the task of rescuing you and me from Hell and eternal damnation, Jesus left it all at the cross. He poured Himself out on our behalf. Everything that could be done and given was done and given. He didn’t just become a human being. He took on the role and attitude of a human slave. He didn’t just die in our place. He died in our place on that terrible, cruel cross. So terrible was death by crucifixion that when Roman citizens were sentenced to death for some crime, they were never crucified. It was considered too humiliating a kind of death to be endured by a citizen of Rome – even a condemned one. Jesus completely extended Himself for you and me. That’s His mindset.

Fourth, He obeyed God despite the suffering His obedience would bring upon Himself. That’s what Paul is getting at when he says here, “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Ph 2:8 NIV) Who was Jesus obedient to? His Father in Heaven. It’s important to remember always that the death of Jesus on the cross wasn’t some kind of colossal mistake. Of course, it was unjust and terribly wrong, but it didn’t catch God off guard somehow. No, in fact, Jesus dying on the cross was the plan and purpose of God Himself. This was the only way the guilt of my sin, your sin, and the sins of everyone could be addressed. The wages of sin is death, says the Bible. When you and I commit sin, we earn death in every way that you can die – physical death, spiritual death, eternal death. Jesus took our place on the cross. He died in our place. He took the penalty of our sin upon Himself. Truly, then, Jesus obeyed God knowing full well what suffering His obedience was going to bring upon Himself. That’s His mindset.

Roger Carswell remembers leading a mission event with children at a public beach in North Yorkshire on the coast of England. The happy group had had a tug of war, sang some choruses, and were enjoying a quiz when suddenly a Royal Air Force jet flew by, skimming the surface of the sea before it turned and flew inland. A minute or two later it returned and went into a steep incline over a nearby castle. Roger thought the pilot was doing a stunt. Then, to everyone’s horror, the plane flipped and dramatically dropped towards the sea. It crashed less than 200 yards away from the beach. The plane disintegrated on impact. The pilot was killed instantly. The headline in the newspaper the next day read “Pilot Gives Life to Save Crowds.” It described how instead of ejecting from his malfunctioning jet and risking it crashing onto the crowded beach, the pilot had made an instant decision to stay with the jet and steer it away from the crowds. He sacrificed his life to save those people. Now, the pilot had probably not

anticipated his death in such tragic circumstances. Jesus, however, deliberately left Heaven and came to this earth with the express intention of giving up His life so that we might receive the gift of eternal life.

Now, just before we move on to a second question and its answer, let me remind you again of something Paul says here: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” or “...have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.” (Ph 2:5 NIV). Isn’t that amazing? Paul says that you and I can actually have the same mindset as Jesus. In fact, he doesn’t just suggest it to us as a good option to explore. Paul’s statement has the force of a command. “Do this! Have the same mindset as Jesus. Get the same mindset of Jesus.” How is that even possible, you might ask? Well, without going off into a whole other message, let me suggest that you can’t ever obtain Jesus’ mindset on your own. You have to receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord. You have to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. But, by the same token, it doesn’t just happen automatically to every follower of Jesus. This is something you work at, something you give yourself to, something that requires personal effort and spiritual change at the deepest points in your life. It’s something that God does in you over time and through life’s experiences.

The simple, observable fact is that some followers of Jesus have a whole lot more of the mindset of Jesus than others. Why is that? The difference is found in how much you’re willing to surrender to Jesus, change to become like Jesus, and be transformed to resemble Jesus’ character. None of that is ever easy. That’s an important question for each of us to ask, “How much of the mindset of Jesus that I read about here do I really have? Are the needs of others more important than my comfort? Do I put the advantages I have been given in life at the disposal of other’s disadvantages? Do I ever fully extend myself for anyone else? Am I willing to be obedient to God even when it’s going to mean inconvenience, much less real suffering, for me?” Those are hard questions to ask yourself, aren’t they? But we should be asking them of ourselves. Now, here’s a second question that this passage of God’s Word helps me to answer.

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF HAVING A JESUS MINDSET?

Why does Paul say here, “then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose” (Ph 2:2 NIV)? Being like-minded is another way of saying, “Have the same mindset, Philippians!” or “Get on the same page, Philippians!” It wasn’t enough for each of them to have Jesus’ mindset personally or individually; they needed to work hard at getting and keeping the same mindset. Why even mention this at all? If you read between the lines of Paul’s whole letter, it becomes apparent that all was not sweetness and light in the Philippian church. Can you imagine? “We need to get back to being like the New Testament Church!” Really...? We don’t know for sure what was going on, but there seemed to be some kind of internal strife, dissension and disagreement among the good church people at Philippi. You get a strong whiff of it later on in Paul’s letter when he has to call out a couple of influential ladies in

the church to work out their differences, because it was affecting the whole church! “I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.” (Ph 4:2 NIV) Why would you say that unless you had to say that?

Why was this such a big deal for Paul? Because, first of all, the mission of God advances when His followers have the same united mindset. Paul was putting his finger on some kind of messed up relational stuff going on there in the Philippian church that he felt threatened God mission in Philippi, namely bring lost citizens of that city into a saving knowledge of Jesus. But in order for that to happen, the Philippian Christians had to get their act together. They had to get along with one another. They had to cut out the murmuring that was draining the spiritual energy out of their fellowship. They had to learn how to love each other even when they didn't always agree with one another. They were facing the beginnings of persecution there in Philippi. My goodness, there were challenges and obstacles aplenty! They didn't have to add to them by giving into petty grumbling and bickering with one another, and thereby threatening their unity which was so critical to the accomplishment of God's mission in Philippi.

How much that truth still applies to every church and to our church right here and now! God's mission for the Philippian Christians was to reach lost Philippians with the good news about Jesus. God's mission for the Christians at KRBC is – along with other Christ-preaching churches in our community – to help reach the lost residents living in the Northland area with the good news about Jesus. You know what can cripple that effort? Messed up relational stuff. Dissension. Bickering. Grumbling. Murmuring. Our challenges and obstacles are different than the Philippians, to be sure. Nobody's persecuting us, yet! But we have challenges just the same. We're growing older as a church. We're smaller than we used to be. We've had a challenging year financially. We're trying to figure out how to reach this community intentionally. And God is blessing! My goodness, we had somewhere near 150 kids – most of them from the community – here this past Wednesday! But we can allow relational static and stuff to threaten God's mission happening through us. How? Grumbling. Murmuring. Can you hear Paul's heart? “Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Is there any encouragement from belonging to Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.” (Ph 2:1-2 NLT) In other words, get the same mindset! Keep your mind on the mission and don't get pulled off course!

For years scientists were baffled by the mystery of floating fire ants in the Amazon region. When placed in water, an individual fire ant will flounder, struggle, and then eventually sink. But when the fire ants band together they form life rafts that help them survive the flash floods of the Brazilian rain forests. As a unified raft, they can even travel for months before reaching dry land. A new research study has unlocked the secret of this natural mystery. After collecting a bunch of ants, scientists dropped them into containers of water. The

ants quickly spread out and formed themselves into rafts. Each individual ant used its claws and the adhesive pads on their legs to grip onto each other. Then the insects use air pockets that form around their bodies to keep themselves afloat. I don't know if those ants all liked each other. I don't know if every ant agreed with every decision that the group made. But they were on a mission that was bigger than the likes, the dislikes or the opinions of any individual ant! The Bible says that we need to stay connected to fellow followers of Jesus in order to survive and grow spiritually. Alone, we sink. But *clinging to and growing together in Jesus, we can ride out any storm, any challenge and any obstacle.*

The mission of God advances when we have the same mindset. That's a very important kind of collective result. I believe there's also a very important result personally. Secondly, getting and keeping Jesus' mindset is the pathway to real, lasting joy personally. When I was in Sunday School as a kid, I learned a little acrostic that probably many of you did as well. It's JOY. The truth being taught was that if you want to have joy in your life, what comes first? Jesus. What comes second? Others. What comes in last? You. That's a pretty nifty analysis of what Paul is saying here. When you put Jesus first, others second and yourself last, God's mission advances and, oh – by the way, you get real, lasting joy as a direct personal result. Wasn't that Jesus' mindset? True, He didn't put Himself first, because He is Jesus. He put God His Father first, but you get the idea. God first, others second, Himself third. That was Jesus' mindset. And it can be your mindset. JOY: Jesus, Others, You. The more you make that your mindset, the more you discover real, lasting joy personally.

By the way, isn't that the exact reversal of the world's mindset? The world says put yourself first, others second and God last - if at all. Paul says here, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit...." (Ph 2:3 NIV) That pretty much covers the world's mindset: selfishness, self-centeredness, getting ahead at others' expense, thinking of yourself as more important than everyone else. Some of those Philippian Christians were kind of drifting off in that direction and Paul has to call them on it. "...Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." (Ph 2:3-4 NIV) JOY: Jesus, Others, You. The more you make that your mindset, the more you discover real, lasting joy personally.

Here's a third and final result of having a Jesus mindset. Above all, God is glorified and Jesus is exalted. "Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Ph 2:9-11 NLT) All of this stuff about mindsets: Jesus' mindset, your mindset, my mindset, the church's mindset – all of this needs to be for God's honor and glory ultimately. And when your mindset and my mindset get transformed by the Holy Spirit into Jesus' mindset, we begin to live in harmony with the rest of the

created universe which will one day acknowledge the glory of God and the fact that Jesus is Lord of all.

In the movie *The Poseidon Adventure*, the ocean liner S.S. Poseidon is on the open sea when it hits a huge storm. It gets hit by this enormous wave which actually tips the ship over. Lights go out, smoke pours into rooms and, confusion is everywhere. Because of the air trapped inside the ocean liner, it floats upside down. But in the confusion, the passengers can't figure out what's going on. They scramble to get out, mostly by following the steps to the top deck. The problem is, the top deck is now 100 feet under water. In trying to get to the top of the ship, they drown. The only survivors are the few who do what doesn't make sense. They do the opposite of what everyone else is doing and climb up into the dark belly of the ship until they reach the hull. Rescuers hear them banging and finally cut them free.

In life, it's as if God has turned the ship over. The world says if you want to be happy adopt a mindset that puts yourself first, others second, and God last – if at all. But God says that the only way for us to find real joy is to reverse that mindset. You have to choose what doesn't make sense. You put Jesus first, others second and yourself last. That spells JOY. That's a Jesus mindset. And real, lasting joy is only ever found when you become like Him.