



Big Idea: We can show our love for God and others by humbly lifting them up and choosing to be third.

Scripture: Philippians 1:1, 3-8, 21-25; Philippians 2:3-8

INTRO

You've seen the memes. You've heard the phrase. You might have even uttered the phrase jokingly to a friend or loved one.

"You're the real MVP." Or "you da' real MVP," as the meme goes.

The line was uttered during Kevin Durant's acceptance speech when he received the NBA's Most Valuable Player award for the 2013-14 season. The award suggests that he played basketball better than anyone in the world that year. By receiving the award, he had earned the right to take the proverbial stage. He could say whatever he wanted about any topic he wanted.

Durant spent four or five minutes talking about his teammates and how they had inspired and pushed them, giving them credit and acknowledgement on his big day. Then he turned towards the person he valued the most:

"And last, my mom. I don't think you know what you did. You had my brother when you were 18 years old. Three years later, I came out. The odds were stacked against us. Single parent with two boys by the time you were 21 years old... We weren't supposed to be here, you made us believe, you kept us off the street, put clothes on our backs, put food on the table, when you didn't eat, you made sure we ate, you went to sleep hungry, you sacrificed for us. You're the real MVP."

TENSION

"You're the real MVP." It's an iconic line. It's a line used to this day. It wasn't given in honor of the one who had won the MVP award; it was delivered by the MVP to honor his mom in front of the world. The man of honor on that day chose to honor someone else, to lift someone else up.

We're beginning a new series on the book of Philippians today. It was written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Philippi. I believe one of the central points Paul made was that you can show your love for God and others by lifting them up and honoring them. It's a selfless expression of the love you have. It's choosing to give someone else the spotlight when you might feel like, in certain moments, you've earned your place in that spotlight.

Paul began the letter letting us know exactly where he had chosen to place himself.

Philippians 1:1 (NLT)

1 This letter is from Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus. I am writing to all of God's holy people in Philippi who belong to Christ Jesus, including the church leaders and deacons.

We get really good information in one verse. Who's writing the letter? Paul. On whose behalf? Paul and Timothy's behalf. To whom are they writing? The entire Christian body in Philippi, including leaders and deacons. Now, that's interesting, and I'd be happy to offer my opinion on why he might have chosen to specify that.

It might have been easy for the leaders and deacons of the Philippian church to see their congregation in the letter, especially in the corrective pieces. It's usually easier to see the faults in those who vex us. But Paul wanted the leaders to know specifically that he was calling them into something, too. He was calling them into an inverse view of leadership, a leadership built on humility and putting others first.

I think that invitation gains credibility in the very way Paul chose to describe himself. He called himself and Timothy "slaves of Christ Jesus." The word used for "slaves" here also translates to "servant," but it's not any old type of slave or servant. The word used gives the indication that it's what was known as a bondservant. A bondservant would have started out enslaved. Perhaps they had a debt they could not pay, so they became the slave of the debtor until the debt was satisfied. At the time when the debt was cleared, through repayment or redemption, they could choose to go their own way. But there was a choice to be made. Would they leave and go back to life as it was before they were enslaved or not?

This wasn't like western slavery. If you read it like it was, that doesn't seem like much of a decision. Of course, you'd go home. But in those times, it was different, and the treatment was generally vastly different. Some chose to stay as a servant to their master. They were no longer enslaved. They weren't conscripted to serve. But they chose to stay and serve. They were bondservants: free men and women who chose to serve their master with their freedom.

Paul and Timothy were bondservants of Christ Jesus. Jesus had set them free. When you accept Jesus as Lord, He sets you free. Paul and Timothy used language to let the leaders, the church, and us know that they chose to use their freedom in service of Christ. No one made them serve Him. In their freedom, there was nothing they'd rather do. And now they're inviting you to join them in the way they served Jesus. They're inviting us into choosing to live out our freedom by serving Jesus and others. Are you a leader in the church? You're invited. Not a leader, just a Christian who attends? You're invited, too. All of God's people are invited. You're invited into a life of humility.

TRUTH

Paul and Timothy established something right up front: nobody is too important to humbly put God first. Paul and Timothy were a big deal. In God's kingdom, that's not really a thing, but I'm just speaking to the way we process it. Paul and Timothy's standing and influence were and are far greater than any Christian pastor, author, influencer you could think of today. But they humbled themselves before God, willingly making themselves His servants.

After establishing where they stood with God, Paul told the Philippians that they were the real MVPs.

Philippians 1:3-8 (NLT)

3 Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. 4 Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, 5 for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. 6 And I am certain that God, who began the good work within



Big Idea: Mature Christians haven't arrived and they know it. They continue to passionately pursue Jesus, knowing Him, and becoming more like Him.

Scripture: Philippians 3:3-4, 7-9, 12-20

SURFACE

How have you changed in the last five years? What sorts of things are you into now that you weren't then? What aren't you into now that you were then?

SERIOUS

Growing up can hurt. We experience growing pains, and not just physically. Why do you think growing up can hurt?

SPIRITUAL

Why do you think we tend to compare ourselves to others when assessing our own walk with God?

Read Philippians 3:14 again. What is the mark Paul is speaking of? What are we supposed to be aiming at?

Read 2 Peter 3:17-18. How would you relate this to what we talked about tonight?

What do you think it means to grow in grace? How do you think we grow in knowledge?

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