



The  
*Piscataway*  
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*"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19, NASB).*

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### **Jesus Emptied Himself: A Basic Approach**

That Jesus "emptied himself" is not a debatable issue (**Phil. 2:6-7**). Of what he emptied himself, or exactly what that phrase means, has been an ancient debate.

Any position which effectively destroys the deity of Jesus is wrong. This is the effect of the position that teaches Jesus gave up his divine attributes and characteristics. Those who teach this need to explain how Jesus could remain God while giving up the nature of God. The nature of something is the attributes and characteristics that make it what it is. If Jesus did not have the nature of God, he was not God (**Gal. 4:8**).

The context of **Philippians 2** itself shows what it means by the phrase "emptied himself." Paul's point of the text is to urge the brethren to be of the same mind, to be united and intent on one purpose (**v. 2**). To accomplish this, he instructs: "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others" (**vv. 3-4**). These are the instructions, but how does one do this? "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus" (**v. 5**). To reach the point of selflessness, one must look to Jesus. Why? Because he is the perfect example of these instructions. Though he himself is God, while on earth he did not grasp after his godhood by trying to exercise his own independent will apart from the Father ("did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped"). Rather, he "emptied himself," which is the perfect phrase to describe the attitude of **verses 3-4**.

So what does it mean that Jesus "emptied himself"? Jesus Christ, in his role of the Servant, did nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but in lowliness of mind he regarded others as more important than himself. He looked out for the personal interests of others. How did he do this? Ultimately, by dying on the cross.

So, Paul's point is that, as Jesus emptied himself, so must we all empty ourselves. It is simply another way of saying that we need to deny ourselves (**Luke 9:23**), for this is what Jesus did when he fulfilled his mission for a lost world. He set himself aside so that everything he did was selfless. Mark says it this way: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (**Mark 10:45**). These passages say the same thing.

Very simply, then, the text tells us that we should empty ourselves. We should deny ourselves, doing nothing out of selfishness. We do this by taking the attitude of Jesus, the supreme example of self-denial. He emptied himself. As a servant, he completely submitted to the Father and poured out himself unto death. Afterwards, he was exalted. If we, too, will humble ourselves in like manner, God promises that we will be exalted (**Jas. 4:10**). --- excerpted, Doy Moyer ([The Auburn Beacon](#), June 4, '17)

