

Ron Armstrong • April 25 & 26, 2020

Letters from Prison: Emotional Trigonometry

Philip. 2:1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. ⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

A. Feelings are changeable.

1. You can change your own feelings by your actions. Feelings will follow actions.
2. Paul has selected activities and attitudes that lead to celebration (rejoicing).
 - a. Be like-minded. (Disagree agreeably, overlook small offenses, and lower your sensitivity.)

- b. Be humble. (This was the opposite of typical Greco-Roman culture.)
- c. Think about the well-being of others. (Not just your immediate family.)

B. Negative triangles will negatively impact happiness.

1. Triangles are unavoidable because you have multiple relationships.
2. Paul was in a positive triangle with Timothy and the people. It was affirming and selfless.
3. People move into negative triangles because of anxiety/fear and the desire for fuzziness.
4. Triangles are dynamic (always shifting). So:
 - a. They will have lots of drama. (Triangles continue on TV because resolving the triangle stops the drama.)
 - b. Unhealthy participants will take their turn in the “odd man out” position. (You’re next.)
 - c. Difficult to just “say no” or avoid.
5. Your goal is to be a resource to help them lower their anxiety and address the distance with the other corner. (Be a resource; not a participant.)
6. Three suggestions to help them reposition:
 - a. Ask questions to help them see their struggle and anxiety more clearly.
 - b. Make suggestions about how to talk to the other corner and to see their own role in the conflict and resolution.
 - c. Sit down with the two corners.
 - I. Only works when there is still some goodwill.
 - II. They still have to work it out.
 - III. You can’t fix it, take sides, or make decisions. Stay in your corner.