

Dear Class Member,

An additional discussion sheet for this week looks at the recent death of Prince Philip, husband of Queen Elizabeth II, and the longest-serving royal consort in British history. His willingness to accept a supportive role provides us with the opportunity to explore the meaning of service in relationships, whether in marriage, in the family of God or in the community at large.



Prince Philip, Patriarch of Britain's Royal Family, Remembered for Loyal Support of Queen Elizabeth II

The Wired Word for the Week of April 18, 2021

In the News

For the first time in their long life together, perhaps, Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, preceded the queen. After a lifetime following two steps behind his wife, he went before her in death. Queen Elizabeth II was by his bedside at Windsor Castle when he died Friday, April 9, at the age of 99, just two months shy of his 100th birthday. He was the longest-serving consort in British history.

Queen Rania of Jordan, reflecting on the challenges of being a consort, said the role is "defined as you go along based on how and where you can make a difference, where you are needed and where your passions lie."

"Being married to someone who is under so much pressure means you have to do whatever you can to try and alleviate some of that pressure, even if that's by being a distraction," Queen Rania remarked. "By providing an environment at home which takes their mind off the heaviness outside the house.

"That's instrumental because the well-being of your spouse eventually has an impact on how well they carry out their duties," she added. "There must have been times when it wasn't easy for [Prince Philip]," she added. "But at the same time he was a constant anchor for Her Majesty and I think she probably wouldn't have been able to carry on her journey the way she did without him by her side."

Born in Greece, a prince of that country and Denmark, Philip first met Elizabeth when he was 13 and she was eight. Five years later, they met again, and began a correspondence that blossomed into love, leading to marriage in 1947. At that point, Philip renounced his Greek and Danish royal titles, became a British citizen and an Anglican. He also gave up a promising naval career in 1951 upon the death of Elizabeth's father, King George VI, when Elizabeth became queen.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said, "Prince Philip continually demonstrated his unfailing support and unstinting loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen for 73 years. He consistently put the interests of others ahead of his own. ..."

"That is indisputably true, and was demonstrated, for decades, by the sight of Philip patrolling in the slipstream of the queen, like a frigate in the wake of an aircraft carrier -- a step or two behind her, to one side, with his hands diplomatically clasped behind his back," wrote film critic and contributor to *The New Yorker* Anthony Lane.

"To maintain that secondary position, without tiring of it or (in public, at any rate) carping about it, requires a formidable level of self-control, especially in a man who had once, as a naval officer, enjoyed command of a ship," Lane added.

In September 1952, the queen granted Prince Philip "place, pre-eminence and precedence" next to herself, a position normally reserved for the heir to the throne. But at Elizabeth's coronation in 1953, Philip was not anointed or crowned, the way a queen consort to a king would be.

Instead, he knelt before her and declared, "I, Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, do become your liege man of life and limb, and of earthly worship; and faith and truth I will bear unto you, to live and die, against all manner of folks. So help me God."

While the duke did not demand recognition or advancement to higher positions, he sometimes chafed privately at having to surrender certain rights most men took for granted. His children did not receive his surname of Mountbatten, for example, which was viewed as not British enough. At the time, he reportedly complained: "I am nothing but a bloody amoeba. I am the only man in the country not allowed to give his name to his own children."

Cognizant of the many sacrifices Philip made to support her in her role as queen, Elizabeth made him a Prince of the United Kingdom in 1957. Since 1967, he had the honor of sitting on a consort's throne next to the queen.

People who knew the royal couple well indicate that the queen often deferred to Philip behind closed doors.

On their golden wedding anniversary in 1997, the queen said of Philip: "He ... doesn't take easily to compliments. He has, quite simply, been my strength and stay all these years, and I, and his whole family, and this and many other countries, owe him a debt greater than he would ever claim or we shall ever know."

The duke responded that "tolerance is the one essential ingredient of a successful marriage," adding with his characteristic self-deprecating sense of humor, "You can take it from me that the queen has the quality of tolerance in abundance."

Dr. John Sentamu, the former archbishop of York, said the royal couple's marriage was strong because they were "so deeply rooted in Jesus Christ."

Once, when Philip asked Sentamu for counsel as the duke's children's marriages were failing, the cleric advised him that "if people are married they are not just a couple, there is a third and that's Jesus Christ, and they should begin to go to Jesus Christ."

Philip replied, "Of course, the queen and I are so strong in Jesus Christ." Then he requested prayer for his children.

In 2011, the Royal Mint issued a commemorative 5-pound coin in honor of Prince Philip's 90th birthday, with his portrait on one side and the image of the queen on the other.

In her Diamond Jubilee year of 2012, Elizabeth called Philip "a constant strength and guide" to her throughout her reign. For his part, the Duke of Edinburgh always held that his first duty was to support the queen in her work.

Sentamu said that in solidarity with the nation, the royal family would hold a small, short funeral for the duke. "They want to be part of the grieving for the nation, for the many people who died from Covid-19 and for those who have not been able to be present when their loved one is being buried." The former archbishop joked that Philip would have approved, because "the duke could not stand what he called 'long church.'"

Gavin Ashenden, an honorary chaplain to the queen from 2008 until 2017, imagined the monarch's faith would help her cope with her husband's death. "She'll understand that he will be in heaven and she will meet him there, and that's how all Christians manage death."

More on this story can be found at these links:

[The Duke of Edinburgh 1921 - 2021. *royal.uk*](#)

[Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, Dead at 99. *CBC*](#)

[Prince Philip 'Persuaded' the Queen to Talk for the First Time About Her Own Faith in Christmas Broadcast. *Premier Christian News*](#)

[Prince Philip's Most Memorable Quotes After Royal Dead at 99. *Newsweek*](#)

[Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip: 8 Milestones in Their Marriage. *History Extra*](#)

The Big Questions

1. Would you prefer to have a starring role, or a supportive role? What positives and negatives might come with being a star? With working behind the scenes?

2. How does the willingness to take a subordinate position reflect the life of Christ and the kind of life to which Christ calls his followers?
3. How can taking the role of a servant actually powerfully transform lives and relationships? In what sort of interpersonal dynamic might taking that role invite abuse or scorn?
4. Describe a relationship in which you hold an advantage over someone else because of your age, race, gender, education, social status, class, etc. How can you use your advantage to benefit the other person rather than to advance your own interests?
5. In his letter to Philemon, Paul says he could command Philemon to welcome home his runaway slave, Onesimus, without punishment. He describes that action as "doing his duty," as a debt Philemon owed Paul, and as "obedience." But Paul appeals to Philemon to act voluntarily and freely, out of love and compassion both for Paul, as his elderly, incarcerated partner, and for Onesimus, "no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother" (Philemon 1:8-17). Elsewhere, Paul writes: "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21). How do reverence for Christ, love for other people, and freedom of choice factor into how submission operates in healthy human relations?

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

Exodus 17:9-12

Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some men for us and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; so his hands were steady until the sun set. (For context, read 17:8-13.)

This incident occurred during a time of war between the nation of Israel and the Amalekites, when Moses was the recognized leader of the Israelites. But this passage reveals that even the strongest leader needs the support of other people to succeed.

The two men assisting Moses were his brother Aaron, and his nephew Hur, the son of Caleb, who with Joshua spied out the land of Canaan and believed God would help them achieve victory. In the struggle against the Amalekites, Moses was able to fulfill his responsibility to intercede for the warriors on the field of battle because he had the support of these two men. As a result, Joshua and the Israelites prevailed in the skirmish.

Questions: When have you required the assistance of others to fulfill your own responsibilities? Who aided you so that you could carry out your mission? When have you assisted others so they could do their jobs?

When you are receiving assistance from others, how do you recognize and honor their contribution to your work?

When you are rendering assistance to others, what, if anything, compensates for your not playing the central role in your work together?

John 3:26-30

[John's disciples] came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, the one who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you testified, here he is baptizing, and all are going to him." John answered, "No one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven. You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but

I have been sent ahead of him.' He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. For this reason my joy has been fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease." (For context, read 3:22-36.)

After John baptized Jesus and testified that Jesus was the promised Messiah, Jesus and his disciples also began to baptize people, which caused John's disciples some concern. No doubt they revered and loved their leader and didn't want him to fall out of favor with the people.

But John himself was not upset about the turn of events. He used the metaphor of a wedding party to clarify how he saw his role in relationship with the role of Jesus in God's salvation plan. Jesus, the bridegroom, came to be joined with the bride, the people of God. John, the bridegroom's friend, didn't resent or covet the bride for himself, but rejoiced in Jesus' joy.

John could accept a supportive role because he understood that Jesus was "[t]he one who comes from above" who "is above all" and that he himself was "of the earth," "belongs to the earth," and spoke "about earthly things" (v. 31).

Questions: Have you ever caught yourself nursing a bit of a Messiah complex, wishing for more acknowledgement of your importance in the kingdom of God? How can you guard against that tendency?

What can you do to ensure that Jesus increases and that you decrease? What do those terms mean?

Luke 22:24-27

A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But [Jesus] said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves." (For context, read 22:14-27.)

Hours before Jesus would be arrested, falsely accused, tried and convicted in a kangaroo court, and executed, he shared the Passover with his disciples to commemorate the deliverance of the people of Israel from bondage in Egypt. He told them of his imminent suffering and of the one who would betray him. But somehow, the disciples latched on to his remarks about his coming kingdom, and glossed over the parts they didn't understand or didn't want to hear about suffering. They focused on who would have the highest rank in the coming kingdom.

Jesus was having none of it. It's as though he told them, "You're forgetting that my kingdom is not like the kingdoms of this world. Instead, in my kingdom, the first shall be last, and the last, first. Everything is flipped, so the greatest become like the youngest and least significant, the leader becomes like a servant, the honored guest becomes a waiter at the table."

In another narrative about this observance of the Passover, Jesus washed his disciples' feet, even though he was the honored master at the table, who had every right to be served. But he served the needs of his disciples, and then said, "You call me Teacher and Lord -- and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them" (John 13:13-16).

Questions: When have you witnessed followers of Jesus squabbling over who should be regarded as greatest in the church of God? How do Jesus' words to his disciples redefine the meaning of greatness?

Philippians 2:1-5

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus ... (For context, read 2:1-8.)

Paul urged the Philippians to adopt the mindset of Christ Jesus, "who ... emptied himself, taking the form of a slave," even sacrificing himself on the cross of Calvary for the sake of others (vv. 6-8).

Questions: If Jesus had looked only to his own interests, rather than to the interests of others, how do you think he would have acted when faced with the suffering of the cross?

What do you think would happen if Christ-followers in our nation actually regarded others as better than themselves? If we looked not to our own interests, but to the interests of others?

For Further Discussion

1. Reflect on this, from TWW team member Frank Ramirez: "It's not always a bad thing to be in the background. I remember touring a theater program with my oldest son a couple of decades ago. The director of the program pointed out that if you wanted to be an actor you could expect to struggle financially and artistically, but if you went into the technical theater fields you could count on solid employment your entire career. (Of course that probably went out the window with the pandemic).

"I'm amused about people who wouldn't dream of agreeing to be a worship leader because they can't imagine standing in front of people and talking out loud. The thought petrifies them. But they'll talk boisterously with people at fellowship time.

"Someone has to stand in front, like the queen. It's not always a bad thing to be standing back and slightly to the side."

2. Think about this: Prince Philip was known for occasionally making remarks, sometimes intended to be witty or humorous, that seemed to many to be ill advised at best and racist at worst. Apparently he was aware of his proclivity for verbal gaffes, commenting in 1956: "It's my custom to say something flattering to begin with so I shall be excused if I put my foot in it later on."

3. The duke's strong Christian faith has been noted by many. John Pritchard, former Bishop of Oxford and Bishop of Jarrow called the Duke's faith "intelligent, thoughtful, questioning" and "real."

Royal photographer for *The Sun*, Arthur Edwards, observed the prince deep in prayer when he attended worship services. Rev. Ian Bradley, the author of "God Save the Queen," said that Prince Philip took copious notes of sermons. "He was extremely interested in theology, he had a wonderful knowledge of the Bible, and then he would sort of quiz you at lunchtime, ask you about your sermon and really put you on your mettle. ... he was particularly interested in what the Bible had to say about creation and our relationship with creation."

Bradley recalled that "it was Philip who really persuaded the queen to make more of her own Christian faith and he said, 'You should be talking about this.'"

How do you think observers would describe your faith, how it shapes your life, and how it influences others?

4. Capitol Police Officer William "Billy" Evans, who died in the line of duty April 2, was honored this week with a service in the Capitol Rotunda, where Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and President Joe Biden offered words of condolence to his widow and family. In her remarks about Evans, Pelosi quoted John 15:13, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

Few people literally sacrifice their lives for others. How have you seen people "lay down their lives" for others in other ways? How, if at all, do you endeavor to lay down your life for others?

5. React to this, from *The Gospel of Ruth: Loving God Enough to Break the Rules*, by Carolyn Custis James: "Submission is *not* an occasional event. It is a lifestyle. It isn't a negative obligation on women, but the natural outworking of the gospel in every Christian's life. Submission is an attribute of Jesus, so it ought to show up in all of his followers. ... New Testament writers ... never talk about submission without talking about Jesus, and in particular of the cross. Jesus' version of submission is thoughtful, strong, purposeful, and sacrificial. It involves the full and determined embrace of his Father's will (which governs everything Jesus does) and the voluntary pouring out of his life to rescue a lost world."

Responding to the News

If you have access to Shel Silverstein's book, *The Giving Tree*, take time this week to read or reread the text, and ponder what it has to teach us about service and sacrifice. You can also view the fable at [this link](#).

Prayer adapted from a prayer from the Church of Scotland:

Almighty and everlasting God, 'the life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.'

But you are forever, from everlasting to everlasting, and we put our trust in you for you have promised never to leave us nor forsake us.

Loving Lord, in this last year, through the worst of a global pandemic, we've been face to face with our fragility and vulnerability, perhaps for some of us as never before.

Against that backdrop of hurt and loss, we give you thanks for the life and service of Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh. Some are called to the front of the stage, others to supporting roles, and we rejoice in the way he supported Her Majesty the Queen through all of the years of her reign.

We pray that you would comfort the queen and her family in their loss, bind up their wounds and grant them the consolation of a store of treasured memories. Likewise, we pray for all who have suffered loss and grief in this difficult time, that you would grant them your peace that passes all understanding.

This we ask in the name of Jesus, who through his life, death and resurrection offers us hope instead of despair, life instead of death.

Amen.

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