

Adult Bible Discovery- September 13, 2020

For Starters:

*What does it mean to be a partner?
How is it different than being an associate, follower, or franchisee?*

Paul generally begins his letters with an expression of thanksgiving for the recipients. However, his letter to the Philippians is unique in that he emphasizes the believers' partnership with him in sharing the gospel and expresses his confidence that this continuing partnership—in spite of the fact that he is in chains—will culminate as God intends when they stand together before Christ. Paul clearly has a deep affection for this Macedonian congregation, which he demonstrates through his faithfulness in prayer for them.

Read Philippians 1:1-5

The word translated as partnership in v. 4 is the Greek word **κοινωνία** (koinonia) and it has several meanings:

- To share in something
 - To give a share of something
 - Fellowship
- *What are some things that all people share?*
 - *What are some things that all Christians share?*
 - *What does it mean to have Christian fellowship?*

This Gospel partnership in which the Philippians shared was a special gift of God's grace to them. Through the gospel God had continued to nourish and strengthen their faith and to fill them with enthusiasm for the Savior's cause. Paul was confident that, through that same gospel, the Lord would continue this gracious work until the day of Christ's return.

- *What partnerships are you thankful for?*
- *How do you share a gospel partnership with those in your church?*

Read Philippians 1:6-11

When Jesus had completed his work of redemption he said on the cross, *"It is finished."* Here Paul uses a related word to assure his readers that God will also complete the work of redemption in our lives.

Respond to the following statement, "God never leaves anything unfinished."

Verses three through eleven of Philippians chapter one are basically a prayer to God. Paul gives thanks to God for his friends and partners, he encourages them to have confidence and trust in what the Lord is doing, he prays for the love of the church to be increased with knowledge and discernment and that on the last day they will all stand before the Lord pure and blameless all while giving thanks to God.

- *How does Paul's prayer compare to the ones you tend to pray?*
- *Paul prays "that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment." (v. 9) How would this help you grow through what you are going through?*

I'd like you to think about someone. His name is not important. His looks are immaterial. His gender is of no concern." I'd like you to think about someone. His name is not important. His looks are immaterial. His gender is of no concern. His title is irrelevant. He is important not because of who he is, but because of what he did.

He went to Jesus on behalf of a friend. His friend was sick, and Jesus could help, and someone needed to go to Jesus, so someone went. Others cared for the sick man in other ways. Some brought food, others provided treatment, still others comforted the family. Each role was crucial. Each person was helpful, but none was more vital than the one who went to Jesus.

He went because he was asked to go. An earnest appeal came from the family of the afflicted. "We need someone who will tell Jesus that my brother is sick. We need someone to ask him to come. Will you go?" The question came from two sisters. They would have gone themselves, but they couldn't leave their brother's bedside. They needed someone else to go for them. Not just anyone, mind you, for not just anyone could. Some were too busy, others didn't know the way. Some fatigued to quickly, others were inexperienced on the path. Not everyone could go.

And not everyone would go. This was no small request the sisters were making. They needed a diligent ambassador, someone who knew how to find Jesus. Someone who wouldn't quit mid-journey. Someone who would make sure the message was delivered. Someone who was as convinced as they were that Jesus must know what had happened.

They knew of a trustworthy person, and to that person they went. They entrusted their needs to someone, and that someone took those needs to Christ.

*"So Mary and Martha sent someone to tell Jesus, 'Lord, the one you love is sick'"
Someone carried the request. Someone walked the trail. someone went to Jesus on behalf of Lazarus. And because someone went, Jesus responded. (From *The Great House of God* by Max Lucado)*

- *How would you describe your willingness to carry out requests for others when asked?*
- *How faithful are you in praying for others when they request such spiritual support?*
- *What elements from Paul's prayer do you need to incorporate more into your life?*

Someone observed that joy is found in focusing on Jesus first, others second, and ourselves last. These were Paul's priorities, so it's no wonder he could write such an upbeat epistle even when he was incarcerated! Paul begins his letter with an excited, Christ-centered description of his habits of intercession. As he talks to the Lord about his Macedonian friends, he not only remembers their past acts of love with thanksgiving but also requests heavenly wisdom for their worldly struggles. Furthermore, he looks ahead confidently to their certain maturity. Paul prays with faith and assures the believers of his spiritual support. The result is a contagious joy—for both them and for him. As King David wrote to the Lord, "You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." (Psalm 16:11)

Father, thank you for the reminder that we can pray for others no matter where we are and no matter our circumstances. Help us to develop a more consistent ministry of interceding for our family members, friends, coworkers, congregation members, neighbors and even those we may disagree with. Give us joy as we pray—and let us always see prayer as a privilege and not a duty. Amen