



Sermon Series: Thrive: Living on Purpose

To be used with Session 6: Purpose Exemplified

Sermon Title Possibilities: Partners on Purpose

Scripture: Philippians 1:1-11

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the Bible study “Thrive: Living on Purpose” this sermon teaches the importance of partners in the faith, which cannot be overstated. The church of Philippi exemplified the true meaning of partnership by providing unwavering support for Paul, especially as he found himself in chains for the gospel. Their prayers, encouragement, and tangible support were a lifeline for Paul during his imprisonment. This sermon seeks to highlight the intentionality of the Philippian church, showcasing their deep commitment to the mission of spreading the gospel and their heartfelt care for Paul and how he encouraged them continue their support.

Introduction: The saying "fast alone, far together," often quoted by many famous people, is credited as an old African proverb that beautifully addresses the power of partnership. Paul assures the church at Philippi that their efforts are not in vain and that their partnership in the gospel is bearing fruit both in his ministry and in their own spiritual growth. This mutual support and encouragement encapsulate the essence of Christian fellowship, where believers are called to bear one another's burdens, pray for each other, and strive together for the faith of the gospel (Philippians 1:27).

In examining the intentionality of the Philippian church and the depth of Paul's love for them, we are reminded of the vital role that partnerships play in our Christian journey. The Philippians were not just passive supporters; they were active participants in Paul's ministry, providing prayers, encouragement, and material support. Their commitment to the gospel mission was a testament to their deep faith and love for Christ.

This example of partnership serves as an inspiration for us today in three ways: First: It shows us that through intentional and committed relationships, the church is strengthened. Second, due to the example model before others, the love of Christ is made manifest. Third, due to the communication of the Christian community, the gospel is advanced. We are encouraged to be deliberate in our support for one another, recognizing that we can go further together. By

Lifeway

© 2022 Lifeway Christian Resources
www.biblestudiesforlife.com
www.lifeway.com/you

honoring the bonds of faith that unite us in Christ, we can create a vibrant, supportive, and effective Christian community.

1. Partners Who Inspire (Philippians 1:1-5).

In these early verses, Paul highlighted the crucial role of inspiration and support within the Christian community. He honors the Philippian church for their profound support, especially in his time in isolation. Despite being in solitary confinement, Paul received immense support from the church in Philippi, which played a vital role in keeping his spirits high and his mission on track.

Paul had a profound gratitude for the support he received. Often, individuals may take the kindness of others for granted, but Paul emphasizes his thankfulness. In Philippians 1:3, he expresses this clearly, saying, "I thank my God every time I remember you." Paul's prayers are filled with joy because of the Philippians' unwavering support. In Philippians 1:4, he notes that he always prays with joy, recognizing that their partnership extends beyond mere physical assistance to a shared commitment in spreading the gospel. This comprehensive support was crucial for Paul's ministry, highlighting the importance of a collective effort in advancing the gospel.

Paul's relationship with the Philippians serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of inspiring and supporting one another in our faith journeys. His gratitude and joy reflected the deep bonds formed through mutual encouragement and partnership. This passage teaches us that being part of a faith community involves both giving and receiving support, and that such relationships are essential for spiritual growth and resilience.

2. Partners Who Encourage (Philippians 1:6-8).

Paul transforms his inspiration into encouragement for the Philippian church, acknowledging their good works and expressing his confidence that Christ Jesus will bring their efforts to completion (v. 6). Paul's joy and admiration are so profound that he refers to them as "partners in grace" and acknowledges their solidarity with him even in his imprisonment. This strong and affectionate language signifies the deep respect and love he has for them, as expressed in Philippians 1:7.

Paul's encouragement serves as a model for us to follow in our relationships within our faith community. First, Paul recognizes and affirms the good works of the Philippians. In our communities, it is essential to acknowledge and encourage the positive contributions of others, reinforcing their efforts and inspiring them to continue. Second, Paul expressed confidence that Christ will complete the good work begun in the Philippians. We, too, should trust in God's faithfulness and convey that trust to others, providing assurance that their labor in the Lord is not in vain. Third, Paul's letter is filled with expressions of fondness and gratitude. We should not hesitate to communicate our appreciation and affection for those who support us, fostering a spirit of unity and mutual respect.

Lifeway

This mutual encouragement not only strengthens individual believers but also enhances the collective mission of the church. Let us strive to be partners in grace, supporting and uplifting one another as we advance the gospel together.

3. Partners Who Endure (Philippians 1:9-11).

Paul shifted gears and prayed that their love would continue to grow, but more specifically in discernment and knowledge. Given the fact that there are so many false teachers, Paul specified knowledge and discernment as critical components of love growth. Paul's prayer in Philippians 1:9-11 emphasized the need for a love that is not blind but informed and perceptive. He desires that the Philippians' love abounds "more and more in knowledge and depth of insight." This means that true love is not just about emotion or affection but also about understanding and wisdom.

In an era where false teachings were rampant, Paul knew that the church needed to be discerning. Knowledge and discernment would enable them to distinguish between truth and falsehood, helping them to "discern what is best" and to live lives that are "pure and blameless" until the day of Christ. This purity and blamelessness are not just about moral integrity but also about being clear of false teachings.

Furthermore, Paul prayed that they be "filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ" (v.11) This indicates that the ultimate source of their righteousness and discernment is Christ himself, and the outcome of such growth in love, knowledge, and discernment is the glory and praise of God.

Conclusion: Michael Jordan is probably the most decorated professional basketball player in history. His God-given ability and natural work ethic are known worldwide. What he accomplished on the basketball court placed him in the discussion as the greatest of all time. However, as great an athlete as he was, it took him seven years in the NBA before he won his first NBA World Championship. From 1984-1990, he went without a championship. He had a problem: he kept running into teams like the Boston Celtics and Detroit Pistons who hindered him from winning it all. He was labeled a great individual player, but year after year, he got beat by teams. However, that would change as teammates like Scottie Pippen and Horace Grant joined the Chicago Bulls and helped Michael Jordan obtain the thing he could not get on his own. Their partnership grew, and as he trusted them more, they won more games, ultimately achieving a total of six championships.

In like manner, if we are to win the game of life, we will need to partner with Jesus through the Holy Spirit for inspiration, encouragement, and endurance. We cannot do it on our own. We must seek to honor the Lord for all He has done for us. In doing so, we gain the perspective of Paul and are grateful and encouraged to endure the race that is set before us. Let us run with Jesus.

Lifeway

Dr. Mark Louis Johnson Sr. is a third-generation pastor with over 30 years of experience. He received a Master of Divinity and Master of Theology from Princeton Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry from New Orleans Baptist Theological, where he serves as a Professor and Evangelism and Pastor Ministries.

Lifeway

© 2022 Lifeway Christian Resources
www.biblestudiesforlife.com
www.lifeway.com/you