

Partnership 2016
One for the Team
Philippians 1:3-6
April 24, 2016, David Horita

I. Introduction

A. Team Sports Guy

1. Most people are either team sport oriented, or individual sport oriented – and while some combine both – it can be a source of contention
2. Lots of studies done on the benefits of each kind of sport & kind of people who are attracted to them – vastly different
 - a. **Individual SPORT people** – tend to be more concerned with autonomy and winning – gain greater focus and competitiveness
 - b. **Team SPORT people** – more inclined towards interaction and team dynamic, but greatly increase the number of uncontrolled variables
 - (1) Result in Team sports – success or failure is not determined by any single player – the final result hinges on the entire team // Promotes the virtue of working together – complex tasks done simultaneously towards the same goal // increases performance levels of players
 - c. THAT IS THE SCIENCE – but NONE OF THIS SHOULD SURPRISE US – even a cursory look shows the difference
 - (1) For example - People who play Individual Sport such as Tennis:
 - (a) Are continually raising a racquet
 - (b) They are litigious, and always want to go to court
 - (c) They say they want to serve – but only because it gives them an advantage in winning
 - (d) **BOTTOM LINE:** They are people for whom LOVE MEANS NOTHING
 - (2) Compare it to a wonderful TEAM SPORT like Baseball:
 - (a) Play with others, on sand & grass, in a Park
 - (b) Player gets in trouble, you bring in a reliever
 - (c) In Tennis, you smash the ball; in Baseball you sacrifice
 - (d) Whole point of baseball is to come home, and be safe

B. Wondering What My Point Is?

1. First – acknowledge I am biased – since I coached baseball for almost 20 years
 - a. Truth about baseball is that it is an individual sport played on a team – the spotlight is on one individual at any given time, but it will take the entire team to win. When pitching – focus is on that player / switches to the batter / switches to the fielder – focus keeps moving
 - b. I believe church is somewhat like that – individually gifted people playing on a team where everybody is needed: it takes the team to win, but every person is needed
2. I would like to take a few minutes to bring this idea home.
 - a. Fellowship Pacific is a team of churches throughout BC and Yukon, who are working together for the sake of the Kingdom of God: It is Christ's team – he is the owner, manager, and coach
 - b. Each one of your churches is a family of individuals, who are working together in one local body – for the sake of the Kingdom of God: Your church is also Jesus' team – he is the owner, manager, and the coach.

- C. We are, in fact – a Team: a Partnership. This is what Paul is talking about in **Philippians 1:3-6**. Paul is writing to a church that he appreciates – he had been the church planter back during his second missionary journey – and they had continued to be part of his team ever since. He writes:**

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion in the day of Christ Jesus."

II. Paul is Thankful and Joyful for the People Working on a Team Along-side of Him

- A. Makes a very strong, all-encompassing, very personal kind of statement:
1. *"I thank My God"* – because his thanks is directed at God – but it is based on an intimate relationship
 2. *"I thank my God every time I remember you"*
 - a. Pounds this idea home by using the word **"all"** six times in 5 verses: *In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy*
 - b. VS 7&8 – continues it by saying *"feel this way about all of you // all of you share in God's grace with me // I long for all of you"*
- B. For all of the people in the church / with all of his heart – he prays with JOY
1. That is quite a statement about the church in Philippi! Or maybe it is quite a statement about the apostle
 2. I can tell you that I can't make that same claim – that in every memory, *all* the time, for *all* the people, I *always* pray with **JOY**
 - a. I could say *"in some memories, most of the time, for a portion of the people, I usually pray with joy."*
 - b. Problems is this - In my role of serving churches, I go from church to church having to help pour cold water on flames -- I could tell you conflict stories from churches about: price of lightbulbs // direction the lawn got mowed // the colour of the ceiling // which child played with which toy in the nursery // brands of coffee // what to do with hymnbooks // where bulletin boards go // about children being too cheerful & exuberant.
 - c. If I had kept any of them -- I could read to you nasty letters or emails from people that far transcend terms like "criticizing / argumentative / caustic / blaming" -- most of them suggesting I don't really love Jesus at all -- probably not a Christian, and likely destined to a fiery pit. ***Not really nice*** – I think there is a strong likelihood that the people who sent those letters play tennis. Or worse – they golf.
 3. So when I read Paul's words here – *"In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy."* -- I am left with some doubt
 - a. Especially if you consider the rest of his letter to the church in Philippi: We are told that there were people that disliked Paul, and were acting out of envy and pride. We read Paul telling them to stop complaining and fighting. He describes some as *"their destiny is destruction, their God is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame."* We know that Paul tells Euodia and Syntyche to start getting along.
 - b. This was a real church with actual people, having real problems – **So how did Paul get to the point where he was filled with JOY at belonging to this team??**

Beginning of Verse 5 – starts with the work "because" – tells us his reasons

III. He Explains – and Gives Two GREAT Reasons why he enjoyed the Team and why WE Should

- A. First Reason for Joy: Partnership in the Gospel – ***"I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now..."***
1. **Partnership**: comes from a word that used to be in vogue: koinonia
 - a. Word that also means Fellowship: See how that works: Fellowship Pacific / Partnership Pacific – it is almost like we planned it
 - (1) Word used by Paul 19 times – and is central to his argument for unity in Philippians 2 – where he writes *"If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any*

fellowship (partnership, koinonia) with the Spirit, if any tenderness or compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose...”

- b. Word **KOINONIA** has two elements to it: (1) concept of a common faith; (2) the idea of common participation
 - (1) It means that we are in ministry together out of a common belief
 - (2) It means that whatever else we may believe about the Christian life -- it is definitely a TEAM game -- where everyone is involved
 - c. Paul tells us that they had been in Partnership from the “*first day until now*” -- Yes, there have been critics, but from the time they heard the gospel 10 years earlier -- the church and Paul had been part of a team
 - (1) In Acts 16 -- told he had experienced hospitality in Philippi from Lydia
 - (2) Same passage - He had enjoyed fellowship with Philippian jailor and his family -- told that it was a JOY filled experience
 - (3) Received gifts from the church when he most needed help, when Paul was in Thessalonica (Phil 4), or when he was in Corinth (2 Cor 11:9)
 - (4) In this thank you note to the Philippian church, Paul mentions that they had even sent Epaphroditus to encourage him while he was in jail in Rome (Phil 2)
 - d. **They were VERY much in this together: person to person and church to church: In partnership**
2. **IMPORTANT ADDITION: It was Partnership in the Gospel**
- a. The GOSPEL -- the good news of Jesus -- was both the *environment* and the *goal* of the Partnership
 - b. The gospel message is what binds us together: For Paul and for each of us -- It is the story of salvation based on historical fact / theological foundation / and experiential evidence
 - c. **Bottom Line: Team does not exist just for the sake of having a team** -- it existed for the sake of joining in the work of Christ in our world
 - (1) Mattered enough that Paul would say this 9 times in his letter -- in the Gospel / for the Gospel / defending the Gospel / proclaiming the Gospel / and advancing the Gospel
 - d. **ILL: REALLY VERY IMPORTANT** -- Know what the goal is // what winning looks like:
 - (1) **ILLUSTRATION:** Another fun Team Sport: Curling -- Can be very difficult for kids -- because as you move along, the goal changes:
 - (2) With young players on beginner teams -- the goal is all about development / fun / recreation
 - (3) Son -- curled competitively -- eventually represented BC as Junior Men's championship team
 - (4) **LEARN QUICKLY** -- because Curl BC and Curl Canada are putting money into the players -- still want a great team environment / still want fun / still need to develop players -- but in high level teams the goal gets more and more about winning
 - (5) Teams have a purpose -- and we need to know what it is
3. **Similarly, we want great Partnerships in our churches and between our churches -- BUT IT IS ALWAYS A PARTNERSHIP IN THE GOSPEL**
- a. Step out of this text for a minute -- and take a look at our family of churches
 - b. We have spent the last five years experimenting with a concept called Partnership 2016 -- it was a conscious and thoughtful attempt to build a partnering culture, in which we actively and consciously chose to behave more like a team.
 - c. There was no desire to change authority structures or gain power -- but it was a prolonged discussion of what it means for our family of churches to have Partnership in the Gospel
 - (1) We believe it is what Paul is talking about in this passage
 - (2) We believe it is what Jesus was talking about in his High Priestly Prayer in John 17, where he prays “*May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*”

- d. At our annual convention, Impact 2016 in Parksville this April – we voted on whether or not to continue in this direction.
 - (1) As we make this video, I don't know the outcome of that vote. **Let me be really clear:** I am praying daily that it would be a resounding YES, because I don't believe a Biblical perspective on the New Testament church that would lead us to say NO to Partnership.
 - (2) **But let me be equally clear** – the Partnership we are talking about is Partnership in the Gospel... and far beyond just being *willing* to do it – I believe it should be a deep source of JOY
- e. In the last few years we have rejoiced as agencies, camps, Seminary, and churches have served God well, often joining together in new ways for the sake of the gospel. And we have seen large numbers of people – young and old – committing their lives to Christ.
 - (1) But whether the number itself was large or small is not the point – the point is that we should rejoice when the Gospel is proclaimed.
 - (2) It is what the team is for. Partnership in the gospel is worth giving our lives to.

B. Second Reason for Joy: Our Confidence is in God, Who is Building His Team

- 1. Paul tells us in Vs 6 - Thankful for what God has already done – *“He who began a good work in you”*
- 2. Thankful for what God is still going to do – *“will carry it on to completion”*
 - a. This is God's work – and Paul says God's work is so certain that we should rejoice in anticipation of it.
 - b. God initiates salvation, and God completes salvation
 - (1) In his letter, Paul will tell the Philippian believers to stand firm in the face of opposition / to continue to work out their salvation / to press on toward the goal
 - (2) **But in every case God is the effective power** – in the face of opposition God will save / work out salvation – for it is God who works in you / press on to the goal for which God has called you
- 3. Paul takes a whole season approach – *“will continue to do his work until the day of Christ Jesus”*
 - a. It will keep going on until the time when Jesus returns
 - b. **And it is clearly a reason to be joyful**
 - c. **PLEASE REMEMBER:** Apostle Paul is talking to both individuals in the church, but also to the church in Philippi as a whole: God **is** going to work *in* us, *on* us, and *through* us
 - (1) BRING THIS AROUND THE BASES FOR YOUR CHURCH & FOR FELLOWSHIP PACIFIC
 - (2) The Regional Board & Staff believe that actively, consciously, volitionally – understanding and choosing Partnership in the Gospel is important.
 - (a) It sets a culture of interdependence and mutual accountability that is worth doing and worth pursuing.
 - (b) It makes a statement about what we are here for, in certain and unequivocal terms
 - (c) It is worth joyfully pursuing, and even having a party over, now and then
 - (3) We believe that God is calling each of you as people to that same reality in your own church.
 - d. But because it is my job – People ask me all the time what will happen if our churches were to vote NO to Partnership 2016 – which I in no way expect to have happened – but it could because it was rightfully your choice as member churches
 - (1) First – If that happened -- then by the time you watch this video I will be in some corner of a dark room, huddled down making incoherent mumbling sounds – because with whatever spiritual or practical metric we choose to measure it by – Partnership has been really really good for our Fellowship Pacific Team & for our ministry together - and will continue to be

- (2) Second – From an entirely different perspective -- I there is a part of me that realizes that it doesn't matter at all
- (3) **WHY? Because it is God who is doing the good work, and he will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus; It is God who calls us; It is God who empowers us; It is God who does the work in us; and it is God who meets our needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus**
 - (a) His purposes are not going to be thwarted by one vote at a Fellowship Pacific convention
 - (b) **God wins. God wins.** Neither you nor I, nor the decisions of our Team of churches are the determiners of that result – although I sincerely believe we all want to be part of what He is doing.

IV. Conclusion

- A. That perspective allows Paul can honestly say that -- in every memory, *all* the time, for *all* the people, he *always* prays with **JOY**
 1. They have a wonderful partnership in the gospel, and God is going to accomplish what God is going to do - that will be true in the spreading of the Gospel, and it will be true in each of our lives
 2. I can happily and joyfully tell you that I believe we all believe both those things, and want them to happen. Even if we don't always agree on the exact way to get there.
- B. Fellowship Pacific began way back in 1927, with a strong sense of team
 1. Very necessary at the time, since they were in a broad based battle with the modernism controversies of their generation
 2. Throughout our history, that sense of team, of partnership, of fellowship, of REAL KOINONIA, has sometimes been stronger, and sometimes waned.
 - a. While certainly not everybody would agree, I would argue that we have bought into an individual sport perspective (which has some value) – but that we have done so at the cost of TEAM
 - b. We have, at times, succumbed to our own generation's desire for individualism, autonomy, and independence, and they are every bit as dangerous as the modernism of the 1920's and 30's.
 - c. God has called us to a Partnership in the Gospel. It is not really a negotiable idea. And not only SHOULD we do it – when we pursue it relentlessly – it will be a source of JOY
- C. Before I finish I need to confess: I started out this video by making fun of Tennis players. I know some of you are out there
 1. So here is my confession: I have finished coaching baseball after 20 years, and am just starting to play tennis now and again. Sad though it may be – I have gone over to the dark side and am occasionally playing an individual sport.
 2. But I want you to know – I hardly ever golf – unlike my co-workers Bruce Christensen, and Doug Fordham. Please pray for them.



Partnership 2016
One for the Team
Week of April 24th, 2016

Objective of this study: To discover the purpose of the church and how the Gospel of Jesus is a team effort, not an individual endeavour. We need each other to fulfill the mission of Jesus.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalm 133** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you.

Welcome

What's your favourite sport to play? What is your favourite sport to watch? Do you prefer team or individual sports?

Word (30 - 45 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read Philippians 1:3-11
 1. Look for all of the "alls" and "always." How many are there? What do they refer to?
 2. What are the reasons Paul is thankful? Where does Paul's joy come from?
 3. Paul talks about what is best, or what really matters. What does he say is most important?
 4. David Horita says that the church is like a ball team, with individually gifted players (that means everyone) contributing to the team. What is the purpose of teamwork?
 5. Look at verse 11. Pull out what you see in this verse. Why is it important? How does it contribute to teamwork? What are some examples of the opposite of what's described in verse 11? How do these undermine teamwork?
 6. Read John 17:20-26. What is the purpose of unity? Don't miss this. It's important.

Sermon Quote: "Teams have a purpose — and we need to know what it is...Bottom Line: Team does not exist just for the sake of having a team — it exists for the sake of joining in the work of Christ in our world."

Work (30- 45 minutes)

[It's really important when doing the Work part of this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

1. What kinds of things do you tend to "fight" over? Do they really matter and do they build the team?
2. What does it suggest when we argue about things that are not really important?
3. What other things can hold us back from participating in the team?
4. What **IS** the purpose of the team God has put us in (the church)?
5. Do you feel like you are in the game? What is your role on the team?
6. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?
7. Spend some time praying for each other and for the mission of Jesus in Campbell River.