

Partners in the Gospel (1 Kings 19:19-21 & Philippians 2:19-30)

29-Apr-2018

G'Day everyone

There are Bibles in front of you and there's an outline in the bulletin for you to take down notes if that helps you concentrate

Let me pray for God's help and understanding first. Let's pray...

Intro/Partnership

A true story to begin with:

Summer 1904 an unlikely partnership was formed at the World's Fair in St. Louis.

The summer was unusually very hot and people were searching the fair for something to help cool them down

A vendor called Arnold had just what they were looking for... ice cream. People lined up for what seemed like miles to get some of his cool and satisfying ice cream but there was one problem.

Arnold was not prepared for the demand and ran out of paper bowls.

Next to Arnold's ice cream booth was a man named Ernest... a pastry chef ... who was making a Persian wafer dessert.

Ernest also had a problem, his pastry was not selling.

He noticed the problem Arnold was having and took some warm pastry and rolled it into a cone shape.

He then went over and showed Arnold how the cone could hold a scoop of the ice cream.

On that hot day during the World's Fair in St Louis... the wafer ice cream cone was born because a partnership was formed.

How important are partnerships to our lives?

How important are partnerships to God?

There's an example of a partnership - early on in the Bible

In Exodus chapter 17 - verses 10 to 13

[Please turn there now]

[PowerPoint 1-Exodus 17:10-13]

¹⁰ So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. ¹¹ As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. ¹² When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. ¹³ So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

So Aaron and Hur **upheld** Moses - when he was tired

They worked together in a partnership - as a team

Challenge - In the ministry partnerships we are involved in - here at St. David's - whose arms are we **upholding**? Is there someone in our ministry partnership - that is struggling temporarily - due to illness or personal circumstances - and needs to be upheld?

(pause)

[E.g. The Carters have helped out with supper at Café Church whilst Heather recovers from surgery. Lyn Magee has helped with the leadership of the

friendship group whilst Judy has been away and now whilst she is recovering from a fractured knee]

So let's dig a bit deeper into *partnerships* by looking at our 2 Bible readings today

We'll briefly look at 3 case studies...

Case Study 1 - Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21)

Case study 1 - is the prophet Elijah and Elisha

From our OT reading in 1 Kings 19:19-21

[Please turn there now]

[PowerPoint 2-Elijah & Elisha]

We pick up the story where the prophet Elijah comes across Elisha plowing in a field

Elijah threw his cloak around Elisha

The idea of a prophet throwing his cloak (mantle cloak made out of fur or fine material) around someone is to indicate that God is calling that person to come and serve God

Elisha is willing to follow Elijah and serve God - but first wants to attend to his personal affairs - before he does - and then he will follow Elijah

Elijah's reply of "Go back" and "What have I done for you" - shows that it wasn't Elijah who'd called Elisha but God himself - and it's kind of a rebuke for any delay in obeying God's calling

Nevertheless - Elijah burned all his farming equipment and cooked all his oxen
- and gave the meat to his family and friends to eat.

Then followed Elijah and became his servant

Elisha showed **total commitment** to God's calling - at great cost to himself - he destroyed all the tools of his trade and cooked his oxen

He willingly and joyfully forsook everything - to follow God's call

In our ministry partnerships at St. David's - I'm not suggesting we sell all our possessions for the sake of the Gospel partnerships we have-

But I am saying we need total commitment to the Gospel ministry we are involved in

Challenge for us - In the ministry partnerships we are involved in - are we **total committed** or half-hearted (modern term - flakey?)

(pause)

Case Study 2 - Paul and Timothy (Phil 2:19-24)

Partnership is a key theme for Paul in his letter to the Philippians

Please turn to Philippians 1 verses 3-6

[PowerPoint 3-Philippians 1:3-6]

³ I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your **partnership** in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Paul prays and thanks God for his Philippian church family - with joy
 They have a wonderful Gospel partnership (literally a joint participation, fellowship, association, community and communion) all in the Gospel
 And Paul is confident that God will complete the work in them that he has started

Gospel partnership gives Paul immense joy
 Even though Paul is in jail - he is still able to maintain that partnership
 With the help of 2 partners in the Gospel

Namely - Timothy and Epaphroditus

So Case Study 2 is Paul and Timothy

[Please turn to our NT reading from Philippians 2:19-24]

[PowerPoint 4-Case Study 2-Timothy]

Timothy's name means - *Honouring God*

Paul has no one else like Timothy (v20) - literally Paul has no-one as like-minded as Timothy

Timothy has genuine concern for others welfare (v20) - Timothy has a pastor's heart for the flock

He doesn't look out for his own interests but those of Jesus (v21)

He has proven himself in ministry - serving with Paul (v22)

They are like Father and Son working together for the Gospel = family (v22)

Timothy's one desire was to serve Paul and to serve Christ in Christ's church - and he is quite content with second place - so long as he can serve Timothy certainly - lived up to his name as *honouring God*

Challenge for us - in the ministry partnerships we are involved in here at St.

David's:

Would our ministry partners say we are like-minded - having the mind of Christ?

Would our ministry partners say we have genuine concern for the welfare of others?

Would our ministry partners say we look out for our own interests - or that we are people asking ourselves - what would Jesus say and do in this situation?

Would our ministry partners see our relationships as family - parent/child - brother/sister - or see us as operating alone?

Would our ministry partners see us as people content to serve, like Timothy?
(pause)

Case Study 3 - Paul and Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25-30)

Our 3rd case study is Paul and Epaphroditus

Which is in Philippians 2:25-30

[PowerPoint 5-Case Study 3]

Epaphroditus' name means - loving and charming in the sense of being devoted

In v25 - Paul describes Epaphroditus as - "my **brother, co-worker** and **fellow soldier**"

Brother - in the sense of relationship - as a brother or sister of Christ - part of Jesus' family

A **co-worker** - in the sense of a job to be done - they share the work of bringing the Good News - the Gospel of Jesus

The Good News - that Jesus came and died for sins to be forgiven - and rose again - so that all who believe in Jesus - can have the gift of eternal life. A co-worker in the sense of bringing the Gospel message to the Christian churches and surrounding communities

A **fellow soldier** - in the sense of a battle to be fought - as fellow Christian soldiers - they are in a spiritual battle against the powers of Satan and this dark and evil world

Paul also refers to Epaphroditus as a messenger in v25 - Epaphroditus was willing to be a messenger between the church in Philippi and Paul in jail

He's willing to risk his life and be a messenger - because he loves Jesus, he loves the Gospel and he loves his church family - loving his church family so much he longs to be back with them (v26)

And Epaphroditus is also distressed because he knew his church family were upset at him being ill (v26)

So ill in fact - that he almost died whilst doing the work of the Gospel of Jesus Epaphroditus even risked his life (v30) to make sure Paul got the help he needed - help that the Philippians as church family couldn't do - so they sent Epaphroditus on their behalf

He certainly lives up to the meaning of his name - as loving and charming in the sense of being devoted to the Gospel of Jesus and devoted to his partners in the Gospel

Challenge for us -

Would our ministry partners see us as fellow brothers and sisters in Christ - and co-workers - working together to proclaim the Good News of Jesus - and fellow soldiers battling against what this dark and evil world throws at us?

Do we get concerned and distressed when our ministry partners are sick or struggling? Yes/No/Maybe? Why? Why not?

(pause)

St. David's as Partners in the Gospel?

What about us at St. David's - as partners in the Gospel?

[PowerPoint 6-St. David's partners in the Gospel]

We have a great message to tell

The Love and mercy of God in sending Jesus

The Grace of Jesus - to die on a cross for forgiveness of sins - and being raised to give eternal life

We have the fellowship of the Holy Spirit we enjoy as part of God's family

We have the command of Jesus to love God and love each other

And the command of Jesus to show and tell that love of Jesus to others (our vision)

And the command of Jesus - to win people for Jesus - to be fisher of people - and to get people hooked on Jesus

And we have the promise of Jesus - that He will be with us in this Gospel work

So how can we be in Gospel partnerships here at St. David's?

Well by...

- Our commitment to Sunday worship including fellowship
- In our Growth Group - many to choose from and join or start a new one
- By praying - either at our prayer meeting, or part of our prayer chain or at home
- By serving in our Aged Care Team - caring for the aged
- In our children's ministries - SRE, Sunday School, Youth
- In our Communications Corner ministries- Art, Craft, Music, Movies and the Band- can lead to joining us in worship
- In our Friendship Group -
- In our Evangelism outreach
- Serving in St. David's Choir and our Music Ministry to Aged Care
- Helping in Pastoral Care Team - pastoral care support, home and hospital visitations
- Through Discipleship - Green Book - B2B
- At the Adult Day Care
- Through the supporting of our mission partners

- Through hospitality - morning tea, café church meals - sharing a meal together
- And as Office bearers - Session, COM and PWA

If you feel God is calling you into partnership into one of these ministries - I'd love to have a coffee and chat - and talk it through more...

So many ways we can be Gospel partners

From our case studies today - Gospel partnership requires:

- Upholding our Gospel partners - is there someone you can uphold right now?
- It requires total commitment to Jesus and to the ministry we serve in
- It requires being like-minded, being Jesus focused, being selfless and servant-like and with a genuine concern for those lost from God and a genuine concern for other people's well-being
- It requires a genuine partnership - as brothers and sisters (family), as co-workers (same job) and soldiers (same battle/fight)

Conclusion

Sooo - Can we join with the Apostle Paul and say? As he says in Philippians 1:3-5
³ I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your **partnership** in the gospel from the first day until now,

It's my prayer - we can...

Let's pray