



*Pastor Casey Wilkerson
January 15, 2017*

Partnership Practices with Professor Paul

1 Corinthians 3:4-9

1. Persistence

2. Patience

3. Pigpen

love.learn.live.

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Celebrating Partnerships **Partnership practices with Professor Paul**

Intro

We are starting a series for the month of January called “Celebrating Partnerships.” We want to discover how God wants to work in and through each of our lives and through our church in our community and even around the world. And we are going to celebrate that on January 29th with a banquet for everyone right after our morning worship.

There are also going to be some exciting additions to our time together: our team returning from Guyana will share their experiences with us, and we will get to meet and hear from Brother Westley and Sister Anne – two of the amazing leaders from our partner church in Victoria, Guyana. I can’t wait for you to meet them! And on the 29th Pastor Mike is going to share a very exciting announcement with you! Between now and then, we are asking you to pray and consider partnering together with the church toward greatness by making a promise to give support in some significant way toward the work of missions in the church in this coming year. That’s what these passports are for. Take it, begin praying about it, and we will ask you to turn this in at the end of the month; because giving is one way that we all partner together to partner with God to do great things here locally, regionally, and around the world.

Today, as we continue to celebrate partnerships, we are going to look at some of our church partnerships and how they compare to Paul and some of his partnerships. We will read Paul’s words and take a deeper look at an analogy he uses to describe a partnership he had with the church of Corinth, and another Christian leader in 1 Corinthians 3:4-9. Last week Pastor Mike talked about how we become great when we personally partner with God because then, God can do great things through us and our church. Hopefully before you leave you will be encouraged to trust God and partner with Him, or continue doing so if you are already, so God can use you maybe even in ways that you haven’t thought about before. Let’s see what Paul has to say about partnership in 1 Corinthians 3:4-9:

“When one of you says, “I am a follower of Paul,” and another says, “I follow Apollos,” aren’t you acting just like people of the world? After all, who is Apollos? Who is Paul? We are only God’s servants through whom you believed the Good News. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow. It’s not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What’s important is that God makes the seed grow. The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work. For we are both God’s workers. And you are God’s field. You are God’s building.”

Paul was the missionary who first preached to the Corinthians. He founded their church. Lives were changed through Paul’s preaching. Apollos was a fellow preacher who succeeded Paul as the pastor at Corinth. Apollos encouraged the Christians in their spiritual growth with the preaching of the gospel. Neither of them wanted credit, but Apollos and Paul each made a contribution to the process of the Corinthians spiritual development through planting and watering the message of Jesus in their hearts.

It's a perfect time of the year to talk about plants growing right? If you have forgotten what summer is like just imagine our Guyana team sitting in 80 degree heat. Some of you might be kicking yourself for not going this time. Despite the amount of snow we have outside, we can learn a lot of practices from Paul about partnership, through his gardening analogy.

Today's sermon is sponsored by the letter "P". Partnership practices w professor Paul- get it? All the Scripture we look at today was written from the Apostle Paul. The first practice we can learn from Paul in this passage is persistence.

1. Persistence

We need persistence when we garden and also when we enter into a partnership. We can't weed the garden just once, or water just once. Keep coming back to it and checking on it. Being persistent in following up to see how it is going. When we partner with someone or something, we have to start, then come back to it, more and more. Upward Soccer is one of our local mission fields and registration is going on right now, and this Saturday we have the opportunity to give the families their first impression. It is one of a few things we do earlier before the season actually begins. It is our Evaluation Day, where the kids try on uniforms, see how fast they are and do a few other drills. It's a great chance for us to get to know the parents and answer any questions they have, plus build the excitement for the kids as they wait till their first practice begins. If you'd like to help us next Saturday January 21, from 9:00-11:00am, and 1:00-3:00pm, you can sign up at the minister center. You can help us half day or the whole day, whatever you are able to do. Another thing that we do for our Upward Soccer league before practices begin is we get over 100 people in our church to commit to praying for our league throughout the season. We call them prayer partners, and if you are a prayer partner for upward soccer, you don't just pray once, but everyday for certain requests. Being persistent in prayer is something we do in Upward Soccer because it's important to us as a church. Paul's reminds us the importance of persistent prayer in his words to the Ephesians 6:18...

Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

Partnership needs persistence. Paul followed up and pursued those he had ministered to. He didn't just plant a church and run, he checked in on them later on. When we partner with God, we need to be persistent in spending time with Him. Persistent in prayer, and in worship.

We had a fairly large garden when we were living in Idaho. We had an automatic sprinkler system because during the summer we would be gone for a few weeks in a row because of camp and vacation. We always started the summer paying close attention to the garden for weeds and checking up on it to make sure everything was growing the way it was supposed to. By mid summer, we would go out and spend an entire day or two weeding. Had we been persistent in our weeding, it wouldn't have been as much work all at once. Persistence is important in gardening, and also in partnership. If you decide to partner in missions with us through giving, I'd encourage you to be persistent. There might be a month when you could use that money on something else. But if you made a commitment to partner with us, be persistent. Professor Paul can also teach us about the importance of patience in partnership.

2. Patience

We planted fruit trees at our two last houses- but we enjoyed little to no fruit. The first time was in Idaho; we had bought a house and wanted a peach and plum tree. So we bought two young trees and put them close enough so we could eventually hang a hammock in between. Two years later we move to Yakima, WA. So three years ago, we built a house and decided we wanted more fruit trees but this time we were going to buy older ones, so we could actually enjoy the fruit we grow before moving. Well three months ago we sold our house and now getting ready to build again. We got to enjoy one season of fruit on those trees before moving. If you didn't know, the first season is not typically very fruitful. So we planted, and watered, and pruned, and patiently waited for the fruit only to move before getting a chance to see it all pay off. In our next house we will buy and plant more fruit trees. We'll work on our patience some more as we wait for those trees to mature until we finally get to enjoy, hopefully, the fruit we grew. Paul told the Romans in his letter to them: 12:12

Rejoice in our confident hope. Be **patient** in trouble, and keep on praying.

Paul is telling the Romans, be patient and persistent! We must be patient when we plant or water or fertilize or anything else garden related. When we partner with God our patience is often tested. Have you ever prayed for patience? "God help me to be patient." God rarely just makes you patient over night. Instead, you are given opportunities to work on your patience. Now that we have three kids, I rarely have to ask God for opportunities to work on patience. Instead I ask God to help me make the most of my opportunities. When I went to Guyana last year, I had to work on my patience whenever I spoke with someone from Guyana. They speak English, but it's a little different. For example: Wha Gwon, is what they would say, for "what is going on?" it always surprised them if you started a conversation that way. But after that, especially at first, I had to really listen, plus ask "what?" a few times in order to understand their side of the conversation. Partnerships require patience because you don't get to decide everything yourself. If you have committed to partnering with Jesus, how many times have you prayed for something and the answer didn't come in your timing? If you have a spouse or business partner, have you ever disagreed on what should be done and how soon? Partnerships teach patience. Our last partnership practice from professor Paul, is...

3. Pignen

Gardening is dirty. Partnerships can be dirty too because when we working with people, everyone has dirt, even if it's just a little. Whatever the partnership, if people are involved, it can be dirty, because life is dirty. Even Paul had to deal with some partnership pain when he and Barnabas split and went separate ways. Love INC and the Union Gospel Mission are both great ministries in Yakima that our church partners with. They help people get back onto their feet in lots of different ways. But partnering with people can be a dirty job. God partners with us, because He loves us. We partner with God because we need Him. If we are going to partner with God we need to be ready for him to reveal to us the dirt in our life that needs to be cleansed. If you have dirt in your life or your life is messy, bring it to Jesus. The dirt you dealing with, the pain in your life, Jesus can handle it. Paul knew the importance of being clean, and in his letter to the Philippians he said...

Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. Hold firmly to the word of life; then, on the day of Christ's return, I will be proud that I did not run the race in vain and that my work was not useless.

Despite the dirt in our lives, we can be cleansed. We live in a dirt filled world, literally and figuratively, but God can clean the pigpen in our hearts.

Apollos and Paul like all Christians were servants of Jesus. Their lives were changed because of Jesus at work in them, and they were committed to seeing Jesus' message of hope change the lives of those they came in contact with. Paul and Apollos were partners in spreading the good news of Jesus.

Paul introduced the Corinthians to Jesus (as well as a lot of others), Apollos equipped the Corinthians with a faith that works and showed them how to live as people with purpose. Love, Learn, Live. When our church partners in missions, locally through Upward Soccer, Love INC, or UGM, or globally in Guyana or another mission trip or missionaries, it gives the people of our church an opportunity to Love, Learn, and Live. Some things that our church does is really good at planting seeds- like Sunday mornings, youth group, Upward Soccer. Some things our church does is really good at water and nurturing the seed that was planted- like small groups or Caravan. All these things work together just like Paul and Apollos. God used them, and God uses us along the way, but God is the one who makes the seed grow.

Closing- The last verse we read from Paul words might be a little confusing. We just spent the morning talking about plants and partnership, but Paul's last words, are, "You are God's building." Paul used two different analogies in chapter 3. Next week you'll hear more about God's building. It may not be the time to plant outdoors right now, but it is always the right time to partner with God.