

Church Partnership at The Gathering September 25, 2016

“I Will Be a Humble Partner”



In this series on church partnership, we have looked at what it means to be a functioning partner and a unifying church partner. Both of those require intentional action. Not sitting on the bench but getting into the game so to speak and contributing. A church won't function well without all of the parts doing their part. And a church won't be able to maintain unity unless all of the believers focus on pursuing unity together.

This morning we are going to look at what it means to be a *humble* church partner. Now before we get too far, what does it mean to be humble? We can't talk about being humble partners if we don't know what humility is.

Humility is not un-necessarily beating yourself up, diminishing your value as a human being. It's been said that humility isn't thinking less of yourself, it's thinking about yourself less.

CJ Mahaney has defined humility as, "*Honestly assessing ourselves in light of God's holiness & our sinfulness.*" It's gazing at God, seeing him for who he really is, and having him show us who we really are. When that happens we can't help but be humbled or brought low and say, "Who am I that you should care about me, love me, save me, adopt me, use me in your plans?"

Once we understand humility, we can begin to move forward as humble partners in our church.

We will see that in order to have a healthy, functioning, and unified church, each one of us must commit to be humble church partners.

Please turn with me to Philippians 2:1-8 – Paul wrote this letter to a church. A church he loved. A church that was doing well and bringing him joy. A church just like every other church, needed to keep growing. Let's read this together:

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus¹ ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

We are going to look at four keys to being a humble church partner. The first is that a humble church partner pursues unity.

A humble church partner pursues unity

Verse 1 & 2 *So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.*

Pastor Garth spoke about this last week but Paul mentions it in this passage as he writes to this church. Do you think church unity is important? Paul says that it will complete his joy to know that this church is unified – same love, same mind, one mind.

Now being of the same mind doesn't mean some sort of drab intellectual uniformity where we're all like programmed robots doing exactly the same thing. It is a church using their diverse gifts (being functioning members), in an agreeable, cooperative spirit that is focused on the glory of God. That all of us – many parts but one body, are driving the same direction committed to see lives changed by the gospel, to see God's Kingdom expand in the Windsor area.

This is on each of us. Unity doesn't just happen. We will all have to pursue unity if it's going to be accomplished. Now you might be thinking, "Phil, I thought you were supposed to preach about being humble, not about being unified."

Unity and humility are so closely linked. In fact, I would say that unity flows out of humility. If we don't have humility, we won't have unity. What we will have is pride, rivalry and conceit. The very things Paul urges us to fight against.

Let's look at verse 3: *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*

So our second key is that, a humble church partner fights against pride.

A humble church partner fights against pride

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit. Nothing. Don't give conceit, arrogance, rivalry an inch because they will take a mile. Pride is devastating in our lives and to the pursuit of a healthy church.

This idea of rivalry and conceit is this idea of looking to advance your personal agenda, to get your way. It is competing with other people out of jealousy. To selfishly elevate your idea, your position or your reputation. It is prideful, sinful, and evil and it is the complete opposite of humility.

God detests pride. Not only does he detest pride, he opposes it – James 4:6 says: *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.* He opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. Why does he oppose and detest pride so much? Because pride is, when we, sinful human beings aspire to the status and position of God and refuse to acknowledge our dependence on Him. We try to take His spot. We trust in our abilities or our sufficiency instead of in Him.

Pride will undermine unity and it can so easily divide a church. Pride also creates quarrelling, the opposite of unity. A church that has division and quarrelling is a church that has pride.

Pride is sneaky and it can show up in multiple ways we won't even suspect. Pride, rivalry, conceit may even seek to promote your ministry as the best in the church/most important – my small group is better than hers...youth ministry is more important than MOPS etc. A humble partner sees the value and the importance of every ministry and champions them all with gratitude and says, "Wow, look at how good God has been to us that can have so many different ministries having great impact across all ages! Thank you Lord!" Not thinking of me and how great I am, but thinking of others.

Pride makes things all about me, myself, and I. Don't you know who I am? It seeks to bring others down low while lifting myself up over them.

Paul says that's not how it's to be in the church. Don't walk in pride and conceit, fight against pride! How do we fight pride? Start with thinking about the cross. I think it's impossible to be proud when you think about the suffering Jesus endured because of your sin and my sin. What is there to be arrogant about when you realize you desperately need the grace and forgiveness of God like everyone else? The cross is the great equalizer because we realize that not only did Jesus die for my sins, He dies for everyone's sins. Therefore, I am not higher or lower than anyone else.

How else can we fight pride? Stop taking yourself so seriously and learn to laugh at yourself. Play a round of golf. Doesn't matter how good you are, you're bound to have some humbling shots. Golf, though expensive, is a great way to humble yourself.

Remind yourself that any skill or abilities or intelligence you have is all a gracious gift from God. He is the one who allows you to take a breath. We can't do anything apart from his life-sustaining power.

One other way comes right from the text: count others more significant than yourselves or better than yourselves. Selfishness and pride come from thinking that I am better or more important than you or my idea or way is better and that will breed rivalry and conflict. Humility as an antidote intentionally places others before me, above me. Imagine what it would look like if we all actually viewed others as more significant than me?

How do we actually do that? Verse 4: *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.* When I look to the interests of others, I start to realize that it's not all about me and my preferences. A humble church partner will consider the interests of others and give up personal preferences.

A humble church partner gives up personal preferences

Verse 4 again: *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.* . It takes humility to be interested in others' interests. It communicates that they're worth my time, they're

important and valuable. They have ideas, opinions, struggles and they matter. God made them & Christ died for them. This takes time. To ask about someone's interests and what's going on in their life.

It's time for us to stop thinking about just me and my little world and what I like and what I want and how blank will affect me. I didn't really like that song, we don't do enough hymns or, we don't do enough Hillsong. That sermon was too long for me or that sermon was too short, said no one ever! I would've chosen a different colour for those banners etc.

It's time to start thinking about how this affects others. Is this best for them? Is this good for the whole church? Is this going to help everyone? Does this bring glory to God and build up his church? These are the questions we need to ask.

How many of you have been watching the World Cup of Hockey?

Team Canada is loaded with all-stars who normally steal the show for their NHL teams and play lots of minutes in a game. Each of these all-stars has bought into a system that has all of them playing way less than normal. It is a humbling system that is for the good of the team. The coaches and managers told them that they wouldn't play as much as they're used to but, if they all buy-in and truly have a team-first mentality, they will win.

They have bought in. They have won each game they have played so far. Sidney Crosby, who is arguably, the best player in the world – 6 players played more than he did in the team's first game. But they dominated as a team. They're not seeking just their own interests. They're giving up personal preferences to seek the interests of others in order to hopefully win a championship. It has been remarkable to watch.

We're called to do the same thing as a church. Church isn't about me. It's about God being glorified as lives are changed through faith in Jesus Christ! It's about a body with many parts, working together, building one another up so that we can truly be salt and light in this community.

Thom Rainer has said, *"We will never find joy in church membership when we're constantly seeking for things to be our way. True joy means humbly giving up our rights & preferences & serving everyone else. And that's what membership means as well."*

See we all naturally look after our own interests. But the key is to take that same level of concern & apply it to the interests of others. As Jesus said in Mark 10:43-44: *"But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all."*

But I mean who really does that? Who gives up personal preferences and selfish interests to be the servant of all? Jesus did it. Mark 10:45: *"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* Our final key this morning is that a humble partner follows Christ's example and serves.

A humble church partner follows Christ's example and serves

Philippians 2:5-8: ⁵ *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

Have this mind, adopt this attitude, think and live this way. You want to talk about humility, look to Jesus. God's Son, the second member of the Trinity, emptied himself, lowered himself and made himself nothing and took the form of a servant. Not only that, he humbled himself even more by dying on the cross for you and me. The King of glory, the giver of life, laid down his life that we might live. Jesus is the ultimate example of humility and service and we have benefitted tremendously as a result of Him looking to our interests.

So Paul, writing to a church, urges believers to look to Jesus and do the same. We are to serve. We are to be put others first and do what it takes to keep unity in our church. See, if we approach partnership/membership from the angle of entitlement & country club perks, we have it upside down. You don't join the church for what you can get – what does this place have to offer me? No, you join the church to give and to serve with humility to the glory of God.

All of us are called to adopt this attitude of service. Not just serving where you like and how you like, but seeing a need and doing what you can to help. Grabbing a shovel and getting to work. Serving where the needs are. That's what a humble church partner does. They lay selfishness aside and serve one another for the glory of God and for the good of the church.

So we've talked about being a functioning partner, a unifying partner, and now a humble partner. We have one more message in this series and we're urging everyone to really consider church partnership at the Gathering. If you're interested in becoming a partner, we're asking you to listen to all four messages, read the articles and watch the videos on our website under the partnership tab, and attend one seminar. We have completed two seminars but there are still two options remaining: Wednesday Oct. 5 at 7pm and Saturday Oct. 8 at 9am. We hope to see you there!

And if we were going to summarize today's message into some kind of response or personal pledge card to hand out, which we're not doing. But if we were to have a tangible paragraph explaining what a humble church partner is, it might go something like this:

"As a humble church partner, I will do my best to pursue unity in my church. I will strive to fight against pride by the grace afforded to me in Christ. I will not let church be about my personal preferences and desires but will actively seek the interests of others. I will follow Christ's example to humble myself and minister to others with a servant's heart. By God's grace, I will seek to build up the church for the glory of God."

May the Holy Spirit work in each of us so that the Gathering becomes and remains a church that is marked by humility.