

[JOY] Gospel Fellowship: The Potency of Christian Community

Philippians 1:3-11

MPS Christian fellowship cultivates the gospel in community to champion the fullness of God's redeeming power.
OBJ Every person should understand the value and importance of Christian community by three aspects.

INTRO Do you remember the last time you received a note of encouragement? I received one not too long ago that was such an encouragement. It was both a salve and strength to my heart. There's something about a personal note, because of the relationship you share, that brings a strong lift to the heart. This is how one should approach Philippians.

READ Philippians 1:3-11

*³I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. **Philippians 1:3-11***

Philippians holds many commonalities to Paul's other letters but is unique in that it is much more personal. Immediately following his introduction in Galatians, Paul barks, "What is wrong with you people?!" Ephesians begins with a prayer of high exaltation laden with the weightiest of spiritual truths. In Colossians, he confronts the challenge of being deceived by worldly philosophies and ideologies with a prayer that stated the truths they had forgotten and forsaken. In Philippians, Paul's instruction flows from the relationship they enjoyed, defined completely by the gospel.

ILLUS I can't help but think that is why Philippians is so dense with verses of strong encouragement, verses ripe for memorization that give so much strength. At my count, I get 31 of 104 total verses. I would include the following: 1:6, 21, 27, 29, 2:5-11, 12-13, 3:7, 8-11, 12-14; 4:4, 6-7, 8-9, 11-13, 17, 19.

This distinction will prove critical because Paul's exhortation demands the deepest trust, to remain faithful in hard circumstances and suffering. And because of the gospel, his relationship with the Philippians multiplies his joy in these circumstances and supplies strength that always proves sufficient. **Philippians champions joy as the Christian's greatest strength and the only power sufficient to remain faithful in all circumstances so all of life glorifies Jesus Christ.**

TRANS What kind of relationship holds the kind of trust necessary to endure hard circumstances? Today we consider the potency of Christian fellowship, gospel partnership that shares life in Jesus Christ to reach others, what LifePoint refers to as "life...together". Christian fellowship is the heart of God's work by the power of the gospel to bring many from every nation, tribe, and tongue to salvation. **Christian fellowship IS the relational network that sources God's power to conform each person to Jesus' likeness, to unite us as His people, and lead us in serving His mission of gospel advancement.**

Christian fellowship cultivates the gospel in community to champion the fullness of God's redeeming power.

TRANS LifePoint has been championing the value of Christian community for your life through our "ReConnect" emphasis. It is only right to consider, "What is the value of Christian community for my life?" This is the question Paul addresses as he begins Philippians.

OBJ Three ASPECTS of Christian fellowship that make community essential for every Christ-follower.

Aspect #1: Gospel Partnership in serving God's Mission.



Paul begins with how he thanked God at every remembrance; “*always in every prayer of mine for you all...with joy*”. The reason for his joy in thanksgiving is their “*partnership in the gospel*”. The Greek word translated “partnership” is *koinonia*, also interpreted as fellowship, which means ‘sharing in’ or ‘close association with’. Paul’s relationship with the Philippian church grew out of their sharing with him in the work of the gospel, from when he first preached down by the river to every gift of support to further his work. He thanked God at every remembrance of their partnership which strengthened his joy.

Paul offers an important correlation between thanksgiving and joy that reveals their dependence on each other. The more we give thanks to God for all that He has done for us, the stronger our joy in Jesus grows. If we neglect giving thanks to God, acknowledging Him as the giver of every good and perfect gift, greed chokes out joy by disgruntlement and entitlement. [Fellowship in the gospel provides unlimited opportunity to grow our joy in Jesus by giving thanks to God.](#)

Paul makes clear that this gospel partnership is not contractual, but transformational. Their relationship was built on sharing God’s redeeming work by the gospel. The gospel was the foundation of their relationship. They were not connected because of a commonality of goals, affinity, personhood, interests, or otherwise. When the gospel is the unifying center of a relationship, every aspect of that relationship grows, matures, and multiplies gratitude and joy as the gospel works to deepen the love of God in relationship, and through that relationship to extend its reach and impact. [The more they “shared”, participated, in serving to share God’s love by the gospel with others, the stronger and more deeply God’s love was shared among them in every part of life.](#)

Participation WITH the Philippians in God’s redemptive mission strengthened Paul’s conviction of God’s faithfulness to complete His work IN them. His stated conviction forms one of the most potent promises for Christians today;

“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” Phil 1:6

APPL What are you “sure” of about God? Of all that you know about God, what are you absolutely confident, withOUT question about, not even a hint of speculation or doubt over, about God? The Bible states that every word of God proves true^{Prov30:5}, that His word is fully sufficient to accomplish His work^{2Tim3:16-17}, and that His word will accomplish His purposes^{Isa55:11}. And the One who writes these words says of Himself, “*for I am God and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me*”^{Isa46:9} To NOT trust it means that either you don’t believe what it says, or you don’t like or care about what it promises. So before you entertain that next lie, doubt, question, or speculation about God, ask yourself, “Who Says so? Because I KNOW what God has said.” There are things about which you not only need to believe but you need to stop entertaining question, speculation, and doubt over because asking the same old question about settled matters is not a matter of integrity but ignorance or rebellion, not a searching for the truth but a denial of it. Stop entertaining lies and half-truths about what God has already settled. Christian, We are commanded to hold absolute certainty and bedrock conviction about God’s Word says “by faith”, not because we fully agree, understand it or have used empirical method on it. And until you do, repent of unbelief, asking Holy Spirit to help your unbelief, and pray for the faith to believe. **So, I ask each of us today, is there anything about God of which you would say, “And I am sure of this...”?** Paul’s certain confidence about God completing His work that He started among the Philippians was not some pietistic vision he held about them but because he had been among them to experience God at work. [Paul’s faith in God was strengthened because of his participation WITH the Philippians in God’s redeeming work. Participation will produce the same strength of faith for you about God’s promises too!](#)

Joy is weak because faith falters. And faith falters because fellowship among the body of Christ is dormant or absent. If you want bedrock confidence in God for your life, from which the spring of joy flows, then share life with people who follow Jesus to strengthen your faith and labor for joy to flow. There is no doubt: One of the biggest reasons Christians have such little lasting hope, only faltering joy and faith in God is because of such little “participation”, personal sharing in serving His mission with other Christ-followers. [Gospel partnership is essential for every Christ-follower to know and grow in God’s love, both in sharing with others and understanding for oneself.](#)

APPL This first Aspect is critical in LPC Community Group. The gospel is not simply what we talk about, but the one message that defines our mission. **Do you know who gets the most out of this church?** Those who have the most invested in



its ministry. When you've got little invested, you always get little in return. Community Group exists for this gospel sharing, with each other, with others, and with the whole world. God cannot do more through us than we are willing to participate for Him to do IN and AMONG us. But the more Christ-followers serve God's mission together, the stronger the bond of relationship grows in sharing life with one another. [Life Together means we must share in serving God's mission for our love to grow or our relationship to matter for His glory.](#)

TRANS Paul's gratitude for their sharing of the gospel leads him to reflect, "*It is right for me to feel this way about you,*". Then he identifies the second aspect of Christian fellowship that makes community essential for every Christ-follower.

Aspect #2: Gospel Community cultivates a faithful witness to the gospel.

Paul states that he holds a deep affection for the Philippians because they have been "*partakers...of grace*" with him. Here is another element of "sharing" in life together, the essence of Christian fellowship. What we learn is that the reason they served the gospel together is because their 'being served by' the gospel was active together; the reason they partnered in sharing God's love with others was because they were committed to sharing God's love with each other. [The faithful witness of the Philippian church was only effective in going out because it was strong and firmly established within.](#)

Christian community is where "communion with God and unity with His people" come together as one. We are strengthened in what we learn of God by faithful, gospel doctrine among ourselves to "stand firm in the faith"^{2Cor1:24} in the midst of hard situations and harsh circumstances. When these times come, we stand together in our defense because we have grown together in our confirmation. And because of our unity, when one suffers, we all suffer.^{1Cor12:26} What Paul experienced was NOT in isolation or alone. [Paul and the Philippians were together in every circumstance because that is how God had grown them as they shared together in His grace.](#)

ILLUS ALONE is a reality series where they drop ten people off, alone, in the middle of the most remote parts of the world with limited tools and resources to see how long they can survive. The one who survives the longest alone wins the prize. The single greatest reason people "tap out" is that they become overwhelmed with being alone, or the isolation and remembrance of back home always gets them. [Alone may happen for a time, but it was never intended to be our reality.](#)

Grace, though individually applied in the justification of our salvation, is designed to be a shared experienced. The Philippians shared in God's grace through Paul's teaching, in powerful life conversion and in harsh sufferings. They shared God's grace in Paul's defense and confirmation of the gospel. They weren't "in it" in the good days and "silent" in the hard ones, but faithful to support him in every circumstance. When he was ridiculed, they were with him. When he was arrested, they supported him. When tried, they didn't abandon him. [Paul was strengthened by the Philippians in his work and suffering because he shared in the gospel work that had taken place among them.](#)

APPL "More Jesus" is captured above the doors as you enter our Worship Room. We, LifePoint, are partakers of God's grace together. We desire to see more Jesus in every Christian at LifePoint, more people come to saving faith in Jesus, and more Jesus in and through every part of our church as we share in the grace of God that comes through Him. The work of God that flows from the fellowship of His people always flows out of the work He is doing among His people. Every Christian needs community to share in God's grace; His work in you and His work flowing through you. [Gospel Community cultivates a faithful witness to the gospel.](#)

Aspect #3: Gospel love that abounds for transformation of each one into righteousness.

The strength of Paul's joy that fuels his gratitude and the depth of his love that anchors his encouragement now captures the essence of his desire to see more love abound among the Philippians. Paul knows that the way God works will be to pour out more love in greater measure among the Philippians for their lives to be transformed. And transformation will come as their knowledge increases to wise discernment, striving toward what is excellent, of greater worth, to live pure and blameless, filled with the fruit of His righteousness. Warren Wiersbe says that this is how the heart and mind work together;



“The heart and mind work together so that we have discerning love and loving discernment.”¹ Love from God always produces an increasing knowledge of His truth so to discern His way in this world, the fruit of purity and blamelessness, and righteousness. [This is the transforming work of the gospel; the more God’s love abounds the greater transformation takes hold as each one learns and discerns to walk in God’s truth and bears the fruit of His righteousness in life.](#)

APPL Sometimes we think living in love is somehow easier or should always feel right. But very often it is the exact opposite. Living in God’s true love is often far more difficult and challenging, both to you and others, and can feel very tensious and hard, until we can see it come to full fruition. After all, God’s love got Paul attacked by an angry mob of people who hated him, thrown in prison by people who falsely and wrongly accused and beat him, and run out of town by people who wanted nothing to do with him. I don’t think that felt like what we often think of when we talk about “love”, but it was all for the greatest love of all. [When growth and maturity in Christ’s righteousness comes, then we know the true value and power of love; the only true love that makes righteous the one who trust in Jesus.](#)

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¹ Warren Wiersbe, [BE Joyful: Even When Things Go Wrong, You Can Have Joy](#). (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1974), p34.

