

Partnership

("Just follow the leader")

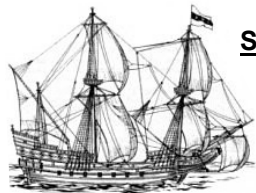
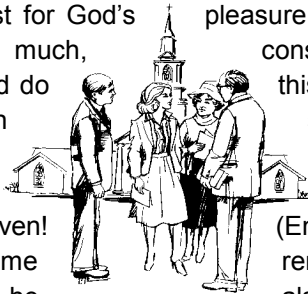


In our last two lessons we discussed spending time with Jesus through prayer and His word. Now let's talk about spending time with His people. Read Psalms 1. Here the psalmist David tells us that, for our lives to be 'fruitful' (like a tree planted near water - healthy and productive), we need to "delight" in God's Word (meaning that it becomes our source of pleasure) "meditating" on it regularly (letting scripture be on our minds and our lips!) How can we have enough 'time' to do that? Well, David already told us in verse one: by spending a lot less time with those who don't respect God's word and a lot more with those who do!

We need each other. Our role in this new Christian experience is described in a variety of ways in the Bible. We are said to be like 'sheep' and Jesus is our shepherd (Psa 100:3 & John 10:11) We are also called members of his 'family' with Christ as the 'head of the household' (John 1:12 & 2Cor 6:17,18). But another analogy is especially important because it stresses why we need each other: we are parts of one body - His body! (Eph 5:30 & Rom 12:5) And just like a foot without an ankle (or a hand without a wrist) would have a lot of trouble doing its 'job', so you and I cannot fulfill our 'purpose' without each other! (check out 1Cor 12:13-24 some time soon.)



What is our 'purpose'? Perhaps the most universal question ("Why am I here?") is answered by Revelations 4:11. In this passage we are told that we exist for God's pleasure, to fulfill His plans so that He might be glorified and honored. That's not asking too much, considering how much He loves us and has done for us (Psa 103:1-5). Of course we could do this alone, but how much better is it when we do it together!! David, who says that men should "Give unto the Lord the glory due His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness," also tells us we should do this publicly, in fellowship with those of kindred faith (Psa 107:31,32 & Psa 111:1) After all, that's how it's going to be in heaven! (Enjoy this scene of our future life - Rev 5:9-12) To make this point in one more way, let me remind you that, though Jesus promised to "never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb 13:5), he also said that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Mat 18:20) Jesus likes going to church - so should we!



Sailing the 'ships' of Worship, Workmanship, and Fellowship. When you put things this way, that you and your fellow believers are "all in this boat together", it is comforting to know that there'll be someone to help 'bail' or 'row' should things take a turn for the worst. This is at the heart of these words in Hebrews "And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near." (10:25 - New Living Translation)



We are a partnership with purpose!! As already mentioned, worshipping together certainly has its advantages. But so does working together. (Read Eph 2:8-10) After telling us that our salvation is entirely a 'gift' (God's grace and mercy at work), Paul then says that God is continuing to work on us while we should continue to work for Him! But this is best done when we all work together! (Eph 4:15,16) 'Just as two hands are better than one - two Christians can get a lot more done.' We all have our gift (ability) and without us some things just won't get done.

But not only is there strength in numbers, there is also safety in numbers. Look at verses 11-14!! Paul is warning of 'dangers' out there: 'false teachers' and 'fake believers' who would lead you astray if given the opportunity (Jesus spoke of "wolves in sheep's clothing" - Mat 7:15). When you have the time, consider what Peter had to say about these in 2Peter 2:1-3, 13-20. Not trying to raise an alarm, or make you suspicious of everyone out there, but you should practice caution with what you 'hear' and even more to what you 'adhere' to!!

This brings us to **the third 'ship' - Fellowship** - which should be with the people Jesus spends His time with. Paul wrote, "Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character." (1Cor 15:33 NIV) In his second letter to Corinth he spells it out (read 2Cor 6:14-18) Stop following the crowd and start following the cross! (Ex 23:2) When God's people draw together like a bundle of sticks (though each one may be fragile alone) in their unity is their strength and safety. Thus we like to sing this chorus: "Bind us together Lord - with cords that cannot be broken. Bind us together, Lord - bind us together with love."

