

# 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!)

<< Teacher: Ask students, “What kind of fruit should our lives be producing? (i.e. Good works, a God-like character, leading others to the Lord, etc.) How can God's word help us do that? >>

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!

<< Teacher: Tell students that this does not mean you would not know or spend time with unsaved people (after all, that is the best way to win some to the Lord) but it is a caution about 'how much time you spend'. Ask, “Who is your best friend?” (besides Jesus, of course) Should be a fellow believer! >>

**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 << Teacher: rather than read these verses you may just say the following “Psalms says ‘we are his people and the sheep of his pasture’ and Jesus said ‘I am the good shepherd - the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep’>>)



We are also called members of his 'family' with Christ as the 'head of the household' (John 1:12 & 2Cor 6:17,18). <<Teacher: Have a student read John 1:10-12 telling them that this is about Jesus. Discuss the word 'power' (in the KJV) as meaning “authority”, thus the 'right' to be God's 'children' - but only if we 'receive & believe'! Tell students that we will be covering this other verse, 2Cor 6:17-18, at the end of the lesson>>

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) <<Teacher: Rather than read the Ephesians passage just say, “This verse tells us we are the Lord's hands and feet in this world. What other important body part should we be?” (ans. 'his mouth') Have a student read Rom 12:5. Emphasize that this verse also says we are important to each other.>>

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.) << Teacher: assign these verses as 'homework'. Just summarize by saying, “This passage tells us that we all make up one body and that every part is important, even the small ones we don't think much about. In fact, some of our glands (as tiny as they are) are indispensable - we couldn't survive without them. And so is everyone in the Body of Christ - we are all important.”>>

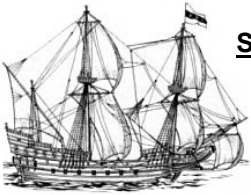
**What is our 'purpose'?** Perhaps the most universal question (“Why am I here?”) is answered by Revelations 4:11.<< Have a student read>> In this passage we are told that we exist for God's pleasure, to fulfill His plans so that He might be glorified and honored. That's not asking too much, considering how much He loves us and has done for us (Psa 103:1-5) << Teacher should read, highlighting the 6 “benefits” listed here: <sup>1</sup>Forgive sins, <sup>2</sup>heal diseases, <sup>3</sup>redeem us from destruction, <sup>4</sup>crown us with love and mercy, <sup>5</sup>give us good things, <sup>6</sup>renew us like an eagle>>

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 << Teacher read these>>)

After all, that's how it's going to be in Rev 5:9-12 <<Have a student read. Note: class>>) To make this point in one more promised to “never leave you nor forsake or three are gathered together in my name, Jesus likes going to church - so should we!



heaven! (Enjoy this scene of our future life - next two verses are not meant to be read in way, let me remind you that, though Jesus you” (Heb 13:5), he also said that “*where two there am I in the midst of them.*” (Mat 18:20)



**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 <<Have student read>>) 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 <<teacher read>>) '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.



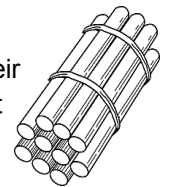
<<Teacher: This is a bit difficult to explain - why God, who could do everything for Himself, has instead given us the responsibility to do his work (i.e. spread the Gospel, help the needy, etc.) But he has certainly placed into his Body and his Church people with specialized 'gifts' (abilities) to get the job done. Everyone should feel important, necessary for the complete success of God's work.>>

But not only is there strength in numbers, there is also safety in numbers. Look at verses 11-14!! <<teacher read>> 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.<<Teacher: these verses are intended to be read at home. However, if time allows, it would be helpful to discuss them in class>> 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) <<Teacher: Read this passage if there is enough time. Comment on how these verses are sometimes misused. Though they could address a mixed marriage of a believer with an unbeliever, they certainly do not forbid inter-racial or cross-cultural ones. The emphasis is clearly on a 'close, inter-dependent' relationship with someone who is not 'in the faith'. This would be more than just mere acquaintances. If this may be an ongoing concern with any of your class members, try sharing also these verses: Eph5:5-8 & v.11 >>

Stop following the crowd and start following the cross! (Ex 23:2) <<Have a student read this final verse. Remind the class what Jesus said in Mat 7:13,14 about 'broad is way to destruction - narrow is way to life'>>

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."



<< Teacher: In closing, this lesson encourages believers to 'assemble' and 'interact' as a part of their experience in Christ. There is a trend away from that in this age of television and radio where preaching and singing can be 'piped' into our homes and work places. But there is no substitute for human contact! As well, we need to be guided (shepherded) by those mature in the Lord who also can know us and know our needs. In Mat 9:36 Jesus saw the multitude that was following him day after day like "sheep having no shepherd" to which he told his disciples to "pray" for more "laborers into his harvest" (v.37,38), The next thing recorded (chapter 10) is the Lord's selection and commissioning of his twelve disciples who would begin the task of 'rounding up' and 'caring for' the sheep. The new birth is only a beginning, with a long and interesting journey ahead for which we should want all the help we can get!! Stress reviewing these first four lessons, and making church life and Christian fellowship a high priority.>>