

**PARTNERSHIP IN THE GOSPEL**  
(FROM CHAPTER 6)

**REVIEW****Lesson 1 — Koinonia: A Word Study (chapter 1)**1. **Sharing Together**

- *Community relationship* (Acts 2:42)
- *Partnership*

2. **Sharing With**

- *Communion*
- *Sharing material possessions* (Acts 2:44-45)

**Lesson 2 — Fellowship with God: Union & Communion (chapters 2-3)**

1. **Union** — *objective fact* (Ephesians 5:30; John 15:1-11)
2. **Communion** — *subjective reality* (Psalm 27:4)

**Lesson 3 — Fellowship with Believers: Community & Communion (chapters 4-5)**

1. **Community** (Romans 12:5 — “Each member [of the body] belongs to all the others.”)
  - *Caring for one another*
  - *Honoring one another*
  - *Reproving one another*
  - *Praying for one another*
2. **Communion** (“spiritual fellowship”) [will finish next FG Night]

**INTRODUCTION**

Lesson 3 began to build upon the foundational word study of Lesson 1—it fleshed out 1a and 2a. This lesson expands upon 1b, and Lesson 6 will expand upon 2b.

- Lesson 5 — *Spiritual Gifts Within the Community*
- Lesson 6 — *Sharing Material Possessions*
- Lessons 7 & 8 — *The Fellowship of Suffering, Serving, & Socializing*

*Philippians 1:3-5* — “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.”

- Partnership = same word used in commercial business
- Whereas “fellowship” has an inward connotation, “partnership” has an outward perspective. This is community in action, fellowship in mission.

In this same letter (Philippians), Paul suggests two ways in which we can enjoy partnership in the gospel.

**PARTNERSHIP IN GIVING**

They never went with him to spread the gospel. How, then, had they partnered with him?

- *Philippians 4:14-15* — “Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only.”
- (1) They recognized their global missionary **responsibility** (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8), that it was commanded, not requested.
- (2) They recognized that most of them couldn’t do that physically.
- (3) They recognized that to be obedient, they would need to partner with those who did go physically.”
- “Giving to missionary causes often seems to be presented as simply an option to Christians....We tend to think we are being bighearted if we decide to give. In actuality, we are not so much bighearted as we are obedient. Christ commands us to go into all the world, and the only way most of us can do that is by participating in the ministries of those who physically go through financial support and prayer.” (JB)

**Discussion:** How do we train ourselves to think this way when we take a missionary offering, have a missions conference, vote to support a new missionary, etc.?

**Discussion:** If we are partners with gospel ministers, what responsibility do we owe them (cf. Acts 13:1-3)? Do they owe us (cf. Acts 14:26-28)?

Gospel partnership, even if demonstrated financially, is not only a responsibility, but also a **privilege**.

- *Philippians 4:17* – “Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.”
- Paul describes the physical gift of the Philippian believers as “fruit that increases to your credit” or “profit which increases to your account” (NASB). Paul uses an accounting metaphor here to illustrate that underlying this **physical** partnership was actually a **spiritual** investment. Paul recognized that when the Philippian believers sacrificially and generously met his physical needs, they were accruing spiritual **treasure**, just as Jesus promised throughout the gospels.
  - *Matthew 6:19-20* — “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”
  - *Matthew 19:21* — “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”
  - *Luke 16:9* — “And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by how you use worldly wealth [i.e., use your wealth for spiritual purposes], so that when it runs out you will be welcomed into the eternal homes [by those who have been benefitted by the spiritual use of your wealth].” (NET)
- Jesus taught that “the only money that we will see again is that which we **give away**. And that money will return with compounded **interest!**”<sup>1</sup> So, the Philippian church, in giving to the apostle, was enjoying a spiritual transaction. “The church gave materially to Paul, and received spiritually from the Lord. The Lord keeps the books and will never fail to pay one spiritual dividend! That church is poor that fails to share materially with others.”<sup>2</sup>

- “He was confident that just as he would receive a reward for his labors, so the Philippians would share with him in that reward. Just as they had invested in his missionary enterprise as partners, so they would participate in the rewards of that enterprise as partners.” (JB)

**Discussion:** What are ways in which Colonial/SF is applying this point of partnership? Or, what are others ways in which we could apply this point of partnership?

“Partnership in the gospel through our giving is both a privilege and a duty.” (JB)

### PARTNERSHIP IN PRAYER

Our gospel partnership in prayer should be **consistent**.

- *Philippians 1:19* – “I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance.” → Notice that “just as Paul expected results from their giving, so he also expected results from their prayers.” (JB)
- “On seven different occasions in his letters to the various churches, Paul either requested prayer for his ministry or acknowledged that his readers were praying for him.” (JB)
- “To Paul, their prayers were **more** important than their gifts. He could get along without their gifts (see Philippians 4:11-13), but he could not get along without their prayers.” (JB)
- “His succinct request ‘Brothers, pray for us’ (1 Thessalonians 5: 25) sums up his sense of urgency for believers to join him in his ministry [to partner with him in the gospel] by praying for him.” (JB)

**Application:** “But are we as faithful to praying as we are to giving? If we are truly to be partners in the gospel, we must **commit** ourselves to pray for missionaries—as well as for pastors and evangelists [and each other] in our own country—in a consistent, meaningful way.” (JB)

**Discussion:** What are ways in which Colonial/SF is applying this point of partnership? Or, what are others ways in which we could apply this point of partnership? *Missions Month, SF Prayer Nights, 5:00 Hour, etc.*

<sup>1</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 192.

<sup>2</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 98–99.

**Application:** Speaking more personally/individually, “in order to be true partners in prayer, we must structure our schedules and prayer lives in a way that fulfills our responsibility in the partnership.”

**Discussion:** What might this mean for you? What might this look like? *prayer meetings over lunch, daily/weekly missions prayer schedule, praying for each other’s missionary endeavors, praying for Jordan/Hadessa/Liz/Arnah/Marcus, etc.*

“And again, as in our responsibility to participate through giving, this responsibility is not an option. If we intend to be obedient to Christ’s command to go into all the world, the issue is not whether to pray but simply where our particular responsibility lies.” (JB)

Our gospel partnership in prayer should also be **specific**—“that is, our prayers should get beyond the general by addressing specific needs and opportunities that our missionary partners are facing.” (JB)

- *Romans 15:30-31* – “I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints.”
  - (1) personal protection
  - (2) success in a specific ministry
- *2 Thessalonians 3:1-2* — “Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored...and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men.”

**Application:** “A brief look at Paul’s appeals for prayer shows an approximately equal division between requests for his personal needs and requests for his ministry. This should give us a general sense of balance as we pray for missionaries today.” (JB)

**Discussion:** What might these personal needs be? *loneliness, cultural adjustment, protection from harm, health care, etc.*

**Discussion:** What might these ministry needs be? (cf. Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 4:3-4; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Matthew 9:38) *boldness in sharing Christ, wisdom for the right words to speak, open doors for proclaiming the gospel, and the rapid spread of the gospel, etc. In light of Matthew 9:38, we should pray both for the Lord to send workers from*

*amongst us into the harvest field [which happens at Colonial during every 5:00 Hour], and for God to raise up national workers from around the missionary.*

**Quote:** S. D. Gordon (speaker/writer, traveled in missions, died 1936) — “If we can go personally to some distant land, still we have gone to only one place. Prayer puts us into direct dynamic touch with a world. A man may go aside today, and shut the door, and as really spend a half-hour of his life in India for God as though he were there in person. Surely you and I must get more half hours for this secret service.” (JB)

## CONCLUSION

Jerry Bridges shares the following at the end of his chapter:

*William Carey of England, who has been called “the father of modern missions,” went to India in 1793. At that time, there were no organized missionary societies, but as Carey prayed over the needs of an unreached world, God laid India on his heart. At a “commissioning” service for Carey and his colleague in March 1793, one of Carey’s friends exclaimed, “There is a gold mine in India but it seems almost as deep as the centre of the earth!” to which Carey replied, “I will venture down but remember that you must hold the ropes.”*

*How did Carey expect his friends to “hold the ropes”? It was to be through a partnership in prayer and in giving. Those who hold the ropes are just as important in the partnership as those who go down into the mine. Holding the ropes for others is a significant part of biblical fellowship; it is essential for the spread of the gospel.*