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January 22, 2017*

1 Corinthians 3:9-17; Mark 12:41-44
Ephesians 4:11-12; Galatians 1:10

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Celebrating Partnerships – Part 3

We are continuing this month through our series called “Celebrating Partnerships.” Discovering how God wants to work in and through each of our lives and through our church in our community and even around the world. And next Sunday we are going to celebrate that on January 29th with a banquet for everyone right after our morning worship.

There are also going to be some exciting additions to our time together that day: our team returns this afternoon from Guyana and they’ll share their experiences with us, and we will get to meet and hear from Brother Westley and Sister Anne – two of the amazing leaders from our partner church in Victoria, Guyana. I can’t wait for you to meet them! Plus, next week Pastor Mike is going to share a very exciting announcement with you! We have also been asking you to pray and consider partnering together with our church by making a promise to give support in some significant way toward the work of missions in the church in this coming year. That is what the passport is for, and if you haven’t already, take one and begin praying about it, so you’ll be ready to turn it back in next week; because giving is one way that we all partner together to partner with God to do great things here locally, regionally, and around the world.

Last week we learned about partnership from a planting analogy the Apostle Paul used in his letter to the church of Corinth. The summary of last week in one sentence is: Partnership Practices from Professor Paul are persistence, patience, and pigpens. See westvalleychurch.com for details. When we plant, or when we partner with God we need to be persistence and patience. Planting means dealing with dirt, and partnering with God means asking Him to cleanse us from the dirt, the pigpen, in our hearts. In chapter 3 of 1st Corinthians Paul switches from a planting metaphor, to a building metaphor starting in verse 9. So today, we are going to continue learning from Paul’s words a few verses at a time. Hopefully getting a better understanding for this building analogy and what it can teach us about partnering with God, and each other.

Let’s begin reading:

1 Corinthians 3:9-11

For we are both God’s workers. And you are God’s field. You are God’s building. Because of God’s grace to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ.

Paul gave the people of Corinth the foundation for their church, the proclamation of Jesus, his life death and resurrection out of His love for them. With Christ as the foundation of our lives we can have forgiveness of past sins, strength for today, and hope for the future. Paul laid the foundation for the church, for the people, just as an expert builder lays the foundation of a building. Then Paul left Corinth and moved to preach the news of Jesus in new areas – to lay the foundation for other churches.

As Paul writes this, he acknowledges that others in the church community are building on the foundation. He warns them to be careful with what they build and to remember that Jesus is their foundation. Paul doesn't say don't build, but be careful with what you build. The Church, the people of God builds (or grows to use his planting analogy) as lives are changed and more people believe. The church is building; God is building His church, his body of believers, his family. As a church, our foundation is completed, Jesus Christ. When we partner with Jesus, we build. God uses us to reach others for the sake of His kingdom, His church. The overall theme for today is to use wisdom when building and when partnering. You don't have blanks to fill in this morning, so you decide what to remember or write down. But if you only write one thing, write down, "use wisdom when building and partnering."

Today our Guyana team returns from helping our partner church in Guyana with their building project. The Guyana church has great wisdom as they have planned what the building is going to be like and how they are expecting to use it – as you should if you are building. They designed the main level so they could use it during the week for kids after school, they put the sanctuary on the top floor so even though it is hot out, the breeze can come through to cool the place down, even the location of their land was a wise decision when they purchased it. It's at the center of the town. Everyone walks right by on their way to the city, the highway, the schools; it's a perfect place for a church. When we went last year, because everyone walks right by, we had people show up to help us build because they saw a bunch of white people helping the church. Some of them didn't even go to the church, but they know this building is going to be used for great things in the community; things that the Victoria church is doing intentionally to be Jesus in their community.

If we are wise, then everything we do as a church will be founded in Jesus Christ and what He has done and continues to do in our lives today. That is why we have a church mission statement. As a church, we believe that we can stay focused on Jesus if we remember to Love, Learn, and Live. And it's important to remember that our church mission statement is for all of us, we don't have a kid mission statement, or a teen one, or a 40 year old one, it's all of ours, if this is your church. Being a partner with WVC means you agree with our mission that we should be...

Introducing others to Jesus
Equipping people with a faith that works
Living as people with purpose

We do these things, because of our foundation, because of Jesus and what He has done in our lives. If Jesus is the foundation of your life, you will introduce others to Him, you'll learn more about Him and His call on your life, and you'll live in a way pleasing and glorying to God. If you are a partner with WVC, we believe that God is going to use us to build this church, this community of believers; if Jesus is our foundation, and we are committed to the mission He has given us. This is why we do the things we do in our church, including Upward Soccer. Our church gets to introduce kids to Jesus at practices and games, the kids learn about Jesus and memorize Bible verses throughout the season, and it gives all of us an opportunity to live out our faith through serving others in a wide range of ways. If Upward Soccer wasn't accomplishing those things, we wouldn't do it. If Caravan wasn't teaching kids about following Jesus, we wouldn't do it. If Small Groups didn't give people an opportunity to learn and live with a group of believers, we wouldn't do it. Paul cautions the church of Corinth to be wise as they build the church.

If we are going to build the church, build the kingdom of God, wisdom is needed in deciding what will be built that will best represent the foundation we have in Jesus. Let's continue

1 Corinthians 3:12-15

Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials—gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value. If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames.

If the snow ever melts, we are ready to build a house. We aren't using much if any gold or silver or jewels during construction, but you want to build with materials that last a long time. We are comforted in knowing the house siding has a 50 year warranty or a 30 year roof warranty, plus warranties on the inside stuff. As we build we want to be wise with what we do with what we have – in Guyana, they make their own concrete blocks because they don't want to get cheated by someone trying to rip them off and selling a block that wasn't made right. If you buy them, you could be buying blocks that have too much sand, or too much water, or something else mixed into the concrete in order for the seller to make a greater profit when they sell them. Our Guyana church partners are being wise builders, and wise with the money that they have raised for the building in addition to what we have sent to help. It takes longer to build their own blocks, but they are going for quality, not quantity. The message from Paul is similar. God is building his church and he's partnering with us to accomplish it. And the wise decision for us would be to give our best for the kingdom of God. Like the widow from...

Mark 12:41-44

Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins. Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on."

She didn't have much to give, but she gave the best of what she had. God would rather we use the best of what we have to do as much as possible – even if it's just a little, as oppose to doing a lot of things but not very well. As followers of God, we have been given gifts and abilities that God wants to use in building His church.

Ephesians 4:11-12 New Living Translation (NLT)

Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.

You may not be a pastor or teacher or evangelist, but they are the ones who equip God's people (all of us) to build up the church. God is going to look at the work we did and He is going to judge each of us based on what we built and He is the only judge that matters in the end. You might be a perfectionist and you might judge yourself, or your spouse might judge you, or friends or your parents. You can't keep others from judging you, and although it hurts to be judged, the end results are not like God's judgment. God is the perfect judge; he is the perfect

inspector of the building. Nobody else. Wisdom is needed to make sure we build the church in long lasting ways that will be pleasing to Him, even if it isn't to everyone else. We also need wisdom to not get concerned with what others think of us. My favorite words from Paul are from...

Galatians 1:10

Obviously, I'm not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ's servant.

I know this is easier said than done, but it's true. We spend too much time caring what other people think of ourselves. Keep in mind; this doesn't give us the right to say whatever we want or do whatever we want and not care about the outcome. Remember, our foundation as God's church – Jesus Christ. You have to read the whole verse; you can't just stop after it says "I'm not trying to win the approval of people." If we really are pleasing God, and living as a servant of Christ, with Jesus as our foundation, we will often please people. I hope. Partnering with God means we live out our love for Him through how we treat others, but it's because of our love for God and His approval first, not anyone else.

Let's finish our passage from...

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? God will destroy anyone who destroys this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

The Spirit of God lives in you and you are the temple of God. Paul's telling them, "You all better get along and build each other up". Upward Soccer partners with lots of other churches in Yakima. I'm thankful we have pastors and parents from other churches as coaches that volunteer their time. Some of the pastors are from churches that are not Nazarene. But you know what's important? That their foundation be Jesus, and it is, which is why they are really good leaders in our soccer league and also in their church. WVC is a partner of many other churches in Yakima because the foundation is the same – Jesus. There are lots of churches in Yakima that are doing incredible ministry in their neighborhood, in Yakima and around the world, just like we are. Just because we partner with other churches, it doesn't mean we agree on everything. If you are married do you agree with your partner on everything? There are lots of denominations because we disagree on some things – small or big. But it is okay to disagree, but it can be done in love, and should be if our foundation really is Jesus.

Paul's warning is that we will not destroy other followers of Jesus – which would include the ones we agree with and disagree with, or the ones in our church, and in other churches. If we are to be wise building this church? It won't be because we destroyed other people or churches. It won't be because we Nazarenes talk bad about another denomination, right? What good comes from talking bad about another church or another pastor or person? Maybe we'll feel better about ourselves? Or we think, "at least I'm not *that* bad". You think God's hope for you, is that you won't be *that* bad? Remember, God is going to judge what we build with, what we have – he is looking quality over quantity. If the Spirit of God is living in you, do you have any proof? We need to be wise as we partner with God to not tear others down to build ourselves up, because that approach to building won't survive the fire, it won't survive God's judgment.

Remember how I said lots of people in Guyana were stopping to help build the church even though they didn't actually attend it? Well one person saw what was happening and stopped to ask us where we were from and how long we would be there. He was a missionary from Georgia I think. We shared our details and he was so excited. He said he would be praying for us and the completion of the building and all that it will mean for the Victoria Village. He wasn't Nazarene, but he was a partner with us and the Victoria church in seeing their village grow closer to God. Obviously, his foundation was Jesus. Partnering with God means we partner with God's children – all God's children. When we partner with God, we need wisdom to keep our foundation of Jesus, wisdom to build the best we can with what we have been given, and wisdom to accept God's judgment on our work, and wisdom to work well with others. With Jesus as our foundation, we are the temple of God. As we Love, Learn, and Live, people are going to see, if they haven't already, there is something different about WVC, something different about those Nazarenes. The Spirit of God is living in us. Does what you are building in your life, prove it?

Prayer