

KING OF KINGS

# PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL

A sermon series on Philippians



## WHERE TO FROM HERE?

### Introduction

Can you believe it... we are passed the half way point this year! It feels a little bit like we are on a family road trip, and we've got the kids in the back yelling; "Are we nearly there yet?!"

Recently there was an advert that came out with an Afrikaans family going on vacation... This picture might help you recall it...

#### (Picture of family in car)

Along the road, the father keeps making these terrible dad jokes; 'langpadgrappe,' as they pass various towns - Like; "Waar woon die fikste mense in the land?" Fiksburg! And "What's up Upington!"

Eventually, after an eternity of bad dad jokes, the son asks, "Are we nearly there yet?" And the mom answers him with despair; "I've got no idea where your father is going or when we will get there!"

Perhaps the analogy captures how some of us feel. Are we nearly there yet? Are we still on track? What is going on in our world? What is God doing in our church? What is he calling us to do? Where is he leading us?

We've been on a journey, but are we still on the right road? Although the journey has been long, is the destination still worth it?

Today, I want you to imagine that we have pulled the church family car over on the side of the road, and it's time to check the map. It's time to pause and check that we are still on the right track, and to make sure that everyone knows the plan, and knows way forward. I've called today's message;

## Where to from here?

It's always important to know where you have come from, and where you are going. So far this year, we started out, looking at the life of Joshua & Caleb - and God we were challenged to 'Dream Again!' We then went through 'The Beautiful Life' series, as we explored the beautiful attitudes in the beatitudes!

In May we dived into a 'Find your Fit' series going through the letter the Ephesians. Which all brings us to the the past few weeks, where we have been going through the letter to the church at Philippi – this letter that Paul wrote in prison.

During this time, we have gone through Philippians chapter by chapter, exploring the theme of partnership, but today I want to wrap things up by touching on some thoughts throughout the book, that capture Paul's heart and vision, to draw this church together, and help them work out the way forward, despite the challenges they were facing.

I believe they were also having a where-to-from-here moment, and I am trusting that God is going to speak to us today, and direct our way forward.

So, let's get right in. We've pulled over. Stopped the car. Where to from here? What's the vision? What's the direction? Point 1.

### 1. TOWARD CHRIST (Phil 1:21; 3:8-9)

One of our dearest values as a church is to love Jesus above everything. We aim to build this into the culture and fabric of our church community, and so without trying to be overly simplistic, if you want to know where we are going, we are moving toward Christ. Our purpose and aim is to become more Christlike in every way. This was the Apostle Paul's heart, he said it like this in Philippians 1;

#### **For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21)**

Living is all about Jesus. Life is all about Jesus. His Church, should be all about moving us all closer toward him. Churches can have many grand strategies, trying to copy the world with great marketing tactics, with great branding, but at the end of the day, for the Lord's church, it is all about becoming more like Christ.

So where are we headed? Where are we going? Towards Christ. Becoming Christlike is the destination. To live is Christ.

I think Paul's heart, in all of the books he wrote, in all of the ministry he was a part of, in all of the churches that he led apostolically, his heart and vision could be summed up in this one verse – to live is Christ and to die is gain. Whether he lived or died, it was all about Jesus.

If you think about the journey that Paul had been on it was quite amazing. Long gone were the days of his previous life of being a Christian hater, to where he could now say with his whole heart - that his life was all about Jesus.

Meeting Jesus, being changed by Jesus, led to his whole life being turned upside down, and his life purpose and priorities changed to drastically, so much so, that in Philippians chapter 3, he could say this;

**What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. (Phil 3:8)**

**I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. (Philippians 3:8-9)**

In his Saul-life, before he met Jesus, Paul had been a well-educated Jew, he was successful and very proud of his status. But once he met Jesus, this all changed. Life was no longer all about Saul, but all about Jesus. His attitude towards Jesus did a total 180, and so did his whole life.

So as we stop and work out where-to-from-here, I want you to know that as a church we are, and always will be about Jesus. We believe that life is all about Jesus. We believe that church is all about Jesus. We believe that everything else is rubbish compared to the huge value of knowing him as our Lord.

Where are we going? We are going toward Christ. Closer to him. Always.

Secondly;

## **2. TOWARD THE HOLY SPIRIT (Phil 2:1-2)**

As believers in the Holy Trinity - Father, Son & Holy Spirit, we desire to be a Spirit-Filled Church.

In Paul's letter to the Philippian church in chapter 2, he reminds them of the importance of the Spirit, and of being in unity;

**Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. (Philippians 2:1-2)**

Throughout the book of Philippians we see the work and ministry of the Spirit. The word "joy" appears 18 times, the words "love" and "peace" are also repeatedly mentioned. All three – love, joy and peace – are marks of "the fruit of the Spirit" experienced only by the Spirit-filled believer.

**(For) the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22)**

So we are reminded today, that one of our core values as a church, is to remain in step with the Spirit. If you love Jesus, if you love being united with Christ, then there must be a 'common sharing in the Spirit' by his people.

So where are we going King of Kings? We are going deeper into the Holy Spirit. We're not just about goosebump moments, but we desire to be mature believers who are fruitful in the Spirit - filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

I have a vision of a church, that loves Jesus, and that is filled with the Spirit.

Toward Christ, Toward the Holy Spirit. Next point;

### **3. TOWARD PRAYER (Phil 4:4-6)**

In last weeks message, I touched on this, but I want to go back there because it is so important. Prayer is seriously important.

**Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:4-6)**

Prayer is seriously important.

We have a few different gatherings where prayer happens in our church, in our small groups, before our Sunday Services, various other gatherings and ministries, and that is all wonderful and good, but we always need more prayer!

So from this coming Tuesday, I feel led to launch an early morning in-person prayer meeting. I will be leading it, and I invite you to join me, for a time of prayer every week, at 06:30am at the church. No one is under any pressure to be there, because I know that the time will not and cannot suit everybody, that's just not possible. We understand that. But every Tuesday mornings at 06:30, I will be here and I will be praying. Whether it's just me, or there are one or two others who have joined me, prayer will be poured out to the Lord.

**Tuesday mornings, 06:30am, prayer.**

Where are we going? What's the vision. More prayer.

Toward Christ. Toward the Holy Spirit. Toward Prayer. Next one;

### **3. TOWARD OTHERS (Phil 2:3-4)**

Toward others. Others-first. I know that our tendency is naturally focus on our own family and close friends, this is normal, but God's Kingdom is always pushing us to see others, and to value others. What is your attitude toward others?

Paul says it in such a helpful way in Philippians chapter 2;

**Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. (Philippians 2:3-4)**

Me-first will always bring with it negativity, but humility and looking to the interests of others will bring joy and meaning to our lives that we cannot find in self-serving.

So what does this actually look like? What's the strategy?

Well, if you've not done so yet, consider joining a small group - make the decision to do life with others! Sometimes all you need is proximity to others, the rest will come. But it starts with being with others. Doing life with one another.

With this in mind, along with our small groups, we have aimed to create social events that enable us just to be with one another, to create spaces where we can build new friendships and strengthen relationships.

Earlier this year we held our first Potjie Showdown - and it was awesome! Trust me, there will be another one next year! But we are considering our next big social event, and I have this crazy idea of the church gathering on Heritage Day, for a big Church Community Lamb Spit Braai. I think a big one can feed 60 people. So who knows, we may need a few sheep! I don't know if its even possible yet! But watch this space.

Men, we are currently planning a combined mens breakfast for this term. Will let you know as soon as the details are worked out.

Towards Christ. Towards the Holy Spirit. Towards Prayer. Towards Others - and a huge spit braai! Amen. Two more. Number 4:

#### **4. TOWARD ADVANCING THE GOSPEL (Phil 1:4-12)**

Advancing the gospel. In the book of Philippians, Paul's deep passion is to see the church working together in partnership in the gospel, he says it like this;

**In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>6</sup> being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus... (Philippians 1:4-6)**

Paul prays that they would be partners in the gospel, and that the gospel would be transformative in their lives until the day of Christ's return. He goes on in verse 7;

**<sup>7</sup> It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me... (Philippians 1:7)**

Paul's great mission - was to defend and confirm the gospel! He was always looking to advance the gospel. In verse 12 he says;

**<sup>12</sup> Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel....**

Paul felt so strongly about the need to share the Gospel with other people, that this is what got him into prison. Are we still as passionate about the gospel, that we too would be willing to land in prison because of it?

The message of God's love and salvation was so important to Paul, that it cost him his freedom, and even then, even in prison, it never deterred him from sharing the gospel further! Paul saw his prison stay as an opportunity to preach the gospel right in the heart of Rome, from the prison to the palace, and judging from his greetings at the end of the letter, he won many followers for Jesus.

Paul's life purpose was to share the Gospel and to make Jesus known. Paul didn't complain about his chains; he asked God to use them to advance the gospel in three different ways.

First, his chains gave Paul contact with the unsaved. He was chained to a different Roman soldier every six hours, which meant he could witness to four unsaved men each day.

Second, his chains gave Paul contact with the officials in Caesar's court who were forced to study the doctrines of Christianity to determine whether Paul was guilty or not.

Third, Paul's chains gave courage to the believers. Despite the circumstances he was in, Paul could see God's hand and purpose. He was not in denial of what was happening, he knew he could be facing a death sentence, yet He could see God's bigger picture and purpose. His suffering was not for nothing – it meant something.

Friends, I don't know what circumstances you are facing this week, but look for the God opportunities, not just the problems. How might God have uniquely positioned you to advance the gospel and share it with people around you.

A church that has lost its heart for the gospel, has lost its heart. We always want to make sure that the road we are on is the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

So what is the gospel? It is the message of God's love, and plan to save mankind;

Not long ago we spent weeks going through the book of Romans. In this book Paul clearly and simply describes the gospel. Here are some verses to help you get a good picture of the gospel from Romans;

**For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Rom 3:23)**

**But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom 5:8)**

**For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom 6:23)**

**Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Rom 8:1)**

**If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Rom 10:9)**

**For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. (Rom 10:10)**

**Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. (Rom 10:13)**

We want to always make sure that we are continually moving towards advancing the gospel.

While it is good and right that the church engages in community projects, and helps in social needs, our heart is always to proclaim the message of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So where are we headed King of Kings? Toward the Gospel. Toward the Gospel. Always toward the Gospel and the message of the cross.

We are currently planning a new Alpha Marriage Course to be run in the Noordhoek area. We really want to reach couples for the Lord. Maybe you want to help. One of the needs is to look at how we can sponsor some couples who may not be able to afford the meal. If you have a heart to help with that - let us know!

As a church leadership, we have also felt a desire to target the Sunnyside, Milkwood Park area - by doing all we can to share the gospel and to reach this area for Christ. If any of you have any ideas, or you are willing to engage in a prayer-walk, or prayer-drive, let us know!

Toward Christ. Toward the Holy Spirit. Toward Prayer. Toward Others. Toward advancing the Gospel. Finally today;



## **6. TOWARD GREATER INFLUENCE FOR GOD!**

In our foyer as you enter the church, there is a big banner that covers the whole wall behind the coffee bar, which says;

**Greater Influence - Influencing our community, building family & reaching the next generation!**

You might feel like I just keep going on about this, that's because I am being intentional about doing that. On the other hand, I am still constantly surprised by how many people are confused about our vision, and don't understand it.

So let me re-clarify, re-focus, and re-set for wherever it is needed.

What is our vision?

We believe that God is calling us to have a greater influence, by influencing our community, building family, and reaching the next generation.

What is our strategy to do that?

**Pray more!**

**Create thriving mid-week Small Groups, and Ministries that reach people relationally.**

**Sunday Services that engage different people in worship, teach the word of God, and open people to spirit led ministry.**

**Projects like the Community Hub.**

Here is an exciting update from this past week. After my appeal about the deficit, and phase one of the community hub, to fence in the church property. A church member who wants to remain anonymous gave R50 000 towards the deficit, and a further R50 000 towards the fence project for the start of the hub! Isn't that amazing! God is so good, and I am so blessed by the generosity of people in this church. Perhaps that inspires you. To actually buy the fence materials, just that part of the quote is R80 000. We would love to get that before prices go up in a few weeks. So please chat to us if you would like to give toward that. Or just feel free to make a deposit with the right reference!

**Another Project we have been dreaming about is a New Children's Venue.**

As a church we really want to reach families, and one of the main ways you do that is by having an incredible children's ministry team and space. We would love to transform the back hall that leads into the play area into an incredible children's venue. Maybe some of you are passionate about that and have a heart to give or help us make that happen!

**Then at the end of the year we are re-launching our Carols on the Common Event!**

But far more than just programme's, events and projects, it's about people. It's about pointing people toward Christ, it's about ministry, it's about creating opportunities toward sharing and advancing the gospel, it's about making connections between people and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, so that they they are moving toward the Holy Spirits work.

It is about building a community that lives on its knees, and is constantly moving toward prayer. It is about breaking out of our little comfortable huddles and moving toward others! Doing life together. It's about dreaming big, and stepping out in faith to move toward greater influence for God here at the crossroads of this valley - and to stop hiding behind our solemn and serious face brick walls!

What will our church look like one year from now? How about 10 years from now? What will the world look like by then? I heard someone say this recently; Change is inevitable. But irrelevance is a choice. And if you're not choosing to adapt and respond to change, then you're choosing irrelevance - whether you realise it or not.

I know it sounds daunting. I also don't claim to have it all worked out, or figured out. I think Paul felt exactly the same way. Listen to his words in Philippians 3;

**Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14)**

Paul has many things he could boast about, not just before he knew Jesus, but even after he followed Jesus, he could have boasted in how much he suffered for the gospel. But instead, his focus was always on what lay ahead.

Paul did not know what the future held for Him, but his focus was on Jesus – not on the past, which contained successes and failures.

How do you feel today about your past and your future? I think many of us are stuck in the past, either reliving glory days when everything was great, or rehashing regrets or wounds.

But let us remember that God is on the move, and he is wanting to use us for his purposes today. It's time to shake off the past. It's time to let go of the old wine skins.

**Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us... (Hebrews 12:1)**

**<sup>2</sup> fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)**

Toward Christ. Toward the Holy Spirit. Toward Prayer. Toward Others. Toward advancing the Gospel. Toward Greater Influence for God! Amen.