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## Living Life Together by Experiencing the Power of God

- Have you ever thought about everything that goes into having a typical Sunday at a church like ours...especially from the perspective of all the people who are serving in a myriad of ways and why they choose to sacrifice in all the ways they do?...
- there's no way I could be exhaustive in this discussion because we don't have time to list all the ways that statement is true...and even if we did, I'm sure there are all sorts of people and activities that I know nothing about...
- but for example, someone wakes up very early in the morning and opens up the building...
  - we have a campus wide security system here so that has to be deactivated and then all the lights have to be turned on, the temperature checked in the rooms, and then a final walk-through to be sure that everything is in place and ready to go...
  - and much of that is done by volunteers, on their day off---long before the sun is up...and given the amount of activity that goes on in this building in the average week, it's amazing how well prepared things are for Sunday – so it's not just a matter of people doing things, but doing them well...
- then there's the issue of the sound room staff and the worship team...
  - they're generally the next group of people who hit the campus on a typical Sunday morning...usually here around 6:30 or so...and most of those men and women are volunteers who also practiced throughout the week and we would all say they serve God at a very high level of excellence...
- then there's the nursery workers...who in their right mind would watch someone else's babies and children all morning while the parents are then free to go to worship services and ABF's?...
  - and all sorts of laundry has to be done by volunteers and specialty cleaning...and it has to be done with excellence or we wouldn't have so many young families...but why do people serve like that?...
- then we could look at the folks who teach in our children's ministries, and our youth program...the number of people serving in those departments is astounding...yet so many have prayerfully spent hours thinking and preparing to not just serve our children this morning, but serve with excellence...
- then just extrapolate it out to our adult ministries this morning...or everything taking place throughout the week which would take us forever to describe – whether it's our school, our counseling center, the community ministries...
  - and do you realize – the vast majority of the persons participating are volunteers...yet they serve with excellence...
- my question for you this morning is – why is that?...and how does that affect our ability to **Living Life Together** as a church family?...
- with that question in mind, please open your Bible to Acts chapter 16...page 106 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...
- we're about to land the plane on this series in the book of Acts...
  - it was never our intent to cover every last verse of this book and you'll see that even in the way we handle this chapter today...
  - just so you know, 2 weeks from today we're beginning a brand new series entitled **6 Words Every Relationship Needs.**

- we're trying to provide a natural opportunity for you to invite your friends and loved ones to attend church with you...we'll have more to say about that in the next couple of weeks...
- the passage we have before us is absolutely fascinating for a variety of reasons...but one of the primary ones is – it truly answers the question of why men and women are willing to invest so much of their time and resources into ministering for Christ...
- let's pick the story up in Acts 15:36...
  - **read v. 36**
  - remember the first missionary journey was launched by the church at Antioch...and many Gentiles placed their faith and trust in Christ...
  - that resulted in a group of people saying that these non-Jews could not be brought into the church unless they were first circumcised and then willing to keep all facets of the OT law...
  - the church decided to handle that disagreement by calling a church council...we refer to those verses as the famous Jerusalem Council...where it was determined once and for all that salvation was by grace alone through faith alone – and that people did not have to be circumcised, and they did not have to keep every facet of the OT law...
  - then the church at Jerusalem prepared a letter to be sent back to the followers of Christ at Antioch, and when they read it, they rejoiced because they were viewed as being full-fledged members of Christ's church simply on the basis of their faith in the gospel--the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ...
  - now the verse we just read explains that Paul and Barnabus decide to begin what we refer to as the second missionary journey...
    - however, the start becomes a bit rocky and here's why...
  - **read 15:37-41** – we'll have more to say about this in a minute – but the fact that people are willing to serve even though disagreements like this can happen at any moment in any volunteer army (and that's exactly what we are) is a testimony to the attractiveness of the mission...
  - now let's see what happens...**read 16:1-5**...
  - now I'm going to skip these next verses for sake of time – they're about a lot of geography along with the Macedonian Call – we've been saying all along that before the Bible was completed, special revelation was being given all the time...that died out as the Scripture was completed...but let's pick the story up at verse 11...**read 11-21**...
    - now if you say at this point, PV, if you were trying to convince me that serving God is great...I'm not sure I'm seeing it quite yet...well then I guess we have to finish the story...
    - **read 22-34**...
- here's what we're talking about this morning – **Living Life Together by Experiencing the Power of God**
- see, why are people willing to serve the way they are around here?...because you never know when you might meet the next Lydia...you never know when you might meet the next Philippian jailer...you never know when you might be able to have a positive spiritual impact on one of their family members...
  - and what's so important to note is – that's a positive impact that last forever...there are eternal issues at stake here...
- it's like Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount... **Matthew 6:19-21 - Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves**

**break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

- that's the big take-away from Acts 16 – the thrill and satisfaction of experiencing the power of God while you joyfully serve Him...now let's dig into this text and find **4 principles to help our church family serve our Lord well.**

### **I. Recognize that Keeping the Team Together is an Incredible Challenge.**

- there's no question that this passage starts off on a negative note...on the one hand...

#### **A. They had a great goal.**

- **Acts 15:36 - Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, *and* see how they are.**

- what a great idea...but...there's always one of those. Isn't there?...

#### **B. They had a difference of opinion over the makeup of the team.**

- **Acts 15:37-38 - Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.**

- you may remember that story from a couple of weeks ago...they had taken John Mark with them on the first journey...and then he quit in the middle and went back home...

- and apparently now he wants to go again – and Barnabus the great encourager wants to give him another chance and Paul says no...

- and the disagreement was so sharp that they actually parted company over it...

- let me ask you this – who was right?...

- you know, Scripture is silent on that point...

- some people Paul was right because it is interesting to note that you never hear about Barnabus again...this is his last mention in Scripture...

- on the other hand, later Paul would ask that Mark be brought to him because he was useful to him in ministry (2 Timothy 4:11), and this is the same man who eventually wrote the gospel of...Mark.

- so some people point to that as evidence that Paul was wrong...then others counter that well, that's because John Mark matured over the years...

- the bottom line is – we don't know – and please keep in mind that just because the Bible records that a particular person like Paul did something---our view of inspiration isn't that what the person said/did was right – just that what the person said/did was properly recorded...

- the larger lesson here is...

#### **C. Be sure you work hard to preserve unity whenever possible.**

- it goes back to a passage we mentioned last week...

- **Ephesians 4:1-3 - Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

- but another important lesson is...the people I mentioned at the beginning...facility people, sound folks, worship team, nursery workers...on and on...

- do you think they're aware of this dynamic?...that people problems come up frequently when serving the Lord?

- sure---so apparently they think that the potential spiritual impact on another human being and the resultant opportunity to please and glorify our great Savior is more than worth the risk of being involved in a personal problem along the way that has to be solved...
- and by the way – if you've allowed yourself to be put on the shelf because you were disappointed in some way (i.e. you allowed your nose to get put out of joint), I would encourage you to think about whether God would want to use what we're about to study as a means of bringing you out of retirement...

- now, this next part of the story is astounding...perhaps we should summarize it like this...

## II. Often You Serve Christ Best When You Sacrifice, Not because You Have to, But Because You Want To.

- a great thing about Acts 16 is...

### A. The introduction of one of Paul's closest associates.

- putting the issue with Barnabus aside...this part of the story is delightful not just for what we read here, but for where we know all of this is going...
- it starts with a simple description...
- **Acts 16:2 - and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.**
- but this begins a ministry relationship that is very helpful to Paul...so much so that he refers to Timothy as...
  - **1 Timothy 1:2 - To Timothy, *my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.***
  - he'll also make this comment later to the church at Philippi... **Philippians 2:19-23 - But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one *else* of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child *serv*ing his father. Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things *go* with me;**
  - these are the kinds of ministry relationships that make experiencing the power of God worth it...no, this side of heaven there are going to be some bumps in the road relationally...but some of the people serving here today would say – I do it in part because I love meeting new people and making friends as we serve together...
- now, we have to deal with the fact that...

### B. Paul had Timothy circumcised at the very time they were delivering a letter saying that people did not have to be circumcised in order to be saved.

- and one of the things that is very important to us as a pastoral staff is to never be involved in course jesting from the pulpit...so I'm trying to be very careful here...
- but obviously Timothy was willing to do something not because he had to...but because that might remove a hindrance to the ministry that God was giving them...
- and I would just ask you this morning...

### C. Is that your spirit?

- it doesn't have to be fair, it doesn't have to be right, it doesn't have to be just the way you want it...
  - if there's an opportunity to serve God there – you'll do what needs to be done...
  - it's interesting how the sovereignty of God works...

- I have a feature on my computer—maybe you do too...where when I'm working on a document in Word...if I get an e-mail...I'm notified with a little box appearing in the bottom corner of my screen with the person's name who sent it and a few words of the text...
  - and the one I received while I was putting this together Monday afternoon was from someone saying – It's really heavy on my heart right now to have some kind of direct involvement in Faith West – not just in my sacrificial financial involvement, but in other ways I could possibly serve to help make that a reality...
  - do you have any idea how much that fires up a pastor?...
  - not because I have to...because I want to...
  - and I know we have a lot of men and women around here like that and I just want to praise the Lord for you...whatever it takes...whatever it takes...
- by the way, if you are already joyfully serving, I would encourage you to...

**D. Ask God to give you a Timothy to train.** (or whatever the feminine form of Timothy is...)

- see, this is part of the delight...
- I mentioned that Josh Knipp, one of our seminary grads, is planting a church in Bloomington, along with Aaron Prelock one of our other seminary grads...
- it was interesting to be involved in e-mails back and forth between them and some of our other seminary grads who were encouraging them...and having fun with one another...
- so Brad Franklin is weighing in from England...Sacha from Brazil...Dustin from here...
- and you have to know that encourages Pastor Aucoin and Pastor Green's heart after all the work they've done to launch the seminary to see Timothy's in action...
- and many in our church family poured your hearts and lives into them while they were here...that's pure fun...
  - and who cares what the stock market did last week if you've been investing your treasure in things that cannot be touched by thieves, moths, or rust?...
- But that could be true for you if you're serving in a particular way...who are you training?...to work with you...or take your place...or be deployed into another area of ministry?...
- 2 Timothy 2:2 - The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

- and what happened?...Timothy was willing to do whatever was necessary and...

**III. God Rewards Sacrificial Service with Fruitful Ministry.**

- apparently there weren't ten Jewish men in Philippi who were heads of households which is what was required to have a synagogue...so places of prayer were established generally near a riverside...
- So Paul, and Timothy and Luke found such a meeting on the Sabbath Day and Scripture says that...

**A. The Lord opened Lydia's heart.**

- **Acts 16:14 - A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.**
- can you imagine how thrilling that must have been to this missionary team?...

- this is their first convert to Christ in Europe and the Lord worked in such a dramatic fashion that they also had the opportunity to present the gospel to everyone else in her household and they trusted Christ as well...
- this is the kind of experience that makes worth it...this is why people do whatever is necessary to get the job done...
- I've had people say to me – I can't wait until we have FaithWest opened and we start seeing students, staff, faculty, and neighbors coming to Christ as a result of the ministries we're able to launch there...
- that's exactly what motivated Paul and his team in this chapter...
- can I just ask you – is that your heart?...
  - I hope so – because over the years I've had the privilege of watching many men and women organize their lives around accomplishing the mission God has given us...and find great joy in that...
  - but there's certainly others who seem to believe...well, it doesn't matter what I do...the thought of being involved when the Lydia's of the world come to Christ doesn't really move me...
    - so I'm not going to be involved in this kind of sacrificial service like we're seeing on the part of Timothy...
- I've had a lot of conversations with people over the years...and some of them have been memorable for how positive they were...some of them just left me scratching my head...
- like the woman who had committed to do something and went back on her commitment...
  - and her explanation was – it won't negatively affect the church...it's like taking your hand out of a bucket of water...the water just collapses in around it and you'll never know the difference...
  - that was one of those – did you really just say that moments for me...
    - do we all understand, just so no one will say that to me again...that if you take your hand out of a bucket of water, yes the water collapses in around it, but now at a lower level?...
- and that's why this has always been about Living Life Together by everyone having their shoulder on the plow...
  - that's why I hope you've already made a generous commitment to our capital campaign to Faith West, or you're going to do so right away...
  - when the first Lydia walks through the door and comes to Christ...I hope everyone in our church family will be able to share in the celebration...
    - by the way – that word everyone is crucial to this discussion...
      - we're talking to a lot of people right now about this project – the city of West Lafayette, neighbors, banks...and something that will have a dramatic impact on them is not only how much was raised...but from how many different people, and how quickly to commitment were made...
- now, what happened after Lydia came to Christ?
  - B. After being baptized, she became a great blessing and encouragement to them.**
  - **Acts 16:15 - And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.**
  - so now they have a place to hold their worship services...

- and I want to be careful how I say this, because we never view people through the lens of...what can they do for us...
- but it has been fascinating to me over the years to watch the Lord bring men and women with particular skills sets or time or other resources that were exactly what this family needed at the time to take our next step forward in ministry...
- and that too makes the sacrifice worth it...to see God orchestrate matters in that way...

- well, just like we've seen over and over...

**C. Positive ministry results are seldom universally applauded.**

- this little slave girl brought her masters a lot of financial profit because of her ability to tell the future...
- and she kept pestering Paul and he determined she was able to do what she was doing through satanic power – so he cast the demon out of her...
- that ticked the masters off because... **Acts 16:19 - But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities,**
- nice masters, huh?...

- and you might say – but there's another reason why I wonder if the sacrifice is worth it...don't miss the lesson...

IV. Don't Shy Away from Confrontation because Often There is Greater Fruit on the Other Side of the Challenge.

**Acts 16:22-24 - The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order *them* to be beaten with rods. When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.**

- did that deter them?

**A. Their imprisonment became a new source of ministry opportunity.**

**- Acts 16:25 - But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;**

- and you have to wonder what they were focusing on...Maybe they were talking about the joy of seeing Lydia come to Christ...or some of the other members of her household...about the great baptismal service they had had...

- and now they have a new prison ministry...what could be better...and before this story is over...

**B. The Philippian jailer and his family come to Christ.**

**Acts 16:33-34 - And he took them that *very* hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his *household*. And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.**