

Our Partnership in the Gospel

Philippians 1:1-6

Getting Excited About Church

KSBC 11/1/09

Intro What is it that excites you about Kossuth Street Baptist Church? What is it that in any culture or time gives a local church that recognizable sense of life and energy? The discussions and debates on this question have produced much heat and little light in our day of church marketing, seeker driven efforts and an intensely privatized approach to church and God. Are we left with only being excited about worship styles, diversity, dress standards, times of meeting, availability of child care, quality of the coffee, helpful topics, friendly people and above all your personal comfort? Arguably most of these have some significance at some level, but they do not clearly communicate the most exciting thing about being a part of a church.

The most exciting, life promoting and energy producing part of a local church is the gospel. While people, methods, meetings and leadership have important roles, it is the gospel that is responsible for the joy profoundly evident in the assembly of Christians committed to it. It is only as the gospel is marginalized – moved to the periphery – that church naturally morphs into something that reflects us more than Jesus Christ.

The gospel is simply the good news that God forgives and gives new life to people through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Pointing others to and exalting Jesus Christ is the unique and remarkable component of a Christian church. The heart of distinctive and God honoring fellowship is a self sacrificing conformity to a shared vision . . . that vision being the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The early verses of Philippians chapter one record the Apostle Paul's prayerful concern, grateful praise and joyful affection regarding the local assembly of believers at Philippi. The key thought or foundation of these loving reflections is the partnership that Paul and the Philippian Christians shared in the gospel. This church had its roots in visit by Paul and his missionary team about 10 years earlier (Acts 16). Paul, now in prison, writes this epistle to thank the church for their support in prayer and finances, to refer 2 other men to them for leadership and teaching and to correct some internal disturbances that he had become aware of in the assembly. A major theme throughout the appeal of the letter is the centrality of the gospel . . . our partnership and fellowship is in the gospel, not in any other concern.

So what is it that excites you about church? It should be the same as what excited Paul about the Philippian church . . . their partnership in the gospel. The greatest concern of our church should be our partnership in the gospel, not the latest fads, concerns and research generated by the human heart. Let's learn and appreciate in a fresh way what a partnership in the gospel looks like.

Read Philippians 1:1-6

Get excited about our partnership in the gospel at KSBC . . .

1. Transformed people – the gospel changes our direction. 1-3
2. Sacrificial activity – the gospel calls forth our commitment. 4-5
3. God centered confidence – the gospel gives hope for completed new life. 6

Get excited about our partnership in the gospel at KSBC . . .

1. Transformed people – the gospel changes our direction. 1-3; Acts 16:12-40

Note the direct references to the people who made up the Philippian church. When Paul expresses grateful joy for this church, he is thinking about people impacted by the gospel. The references to ‘the saints’, the comprehensive ‘all’ (1, 4, 7, 8) and the frequent remembering all point to a personal attachment to specific people. These people are now referred to accurately as saints – set apart people of and for God. It is appropriate to be excited about people who have been transformed by the gospel. Meet three of the transformed people that caused Paul to express his gratitude to God. Transformed people are exciting!

- Lydia – a converted religious person. Acts 16:12-15
Hears gospel heart opened by God believes/baptized active in gospel ministry
- Slave girl – a delivered oppressed person. Acts 16:16-21
Hears gospel delivered by power of Christ changed life
- Jailer – a saved scared person. Acts 16:22-34
Hears gospel life/world rocked by God believed/baptized active in gospel ministry

illus. There were men, more than likely, now in leadership positions (1) who 10 years ago were not even Christians. Imagine the joy that the life changing power of the gospel produces in a church that prizes and cherishes it.

2. Sacrificial activity – the gospel calls forth our commitment. 4-5

Note the cause for the Apostle’s excitement and joy is the partnership in the gospel from the very beginning of their relationship. His expression of frequent joyful prayer for all of them is a response to the memories of common sacrificial commitment to the cause of Christ. The stories that the Apostle would be able to share about the sacrifice, commitment, generosity and faith of this isolated group of Christians at Philippi were significant. What are the sacrificial commitments that Paul had in mind . . . what are the kinds of sacrifice and commitment that the gospel still coaxes out of God’s people today? Sacrificial commitment is exciting!

- Prayer 1:19
- Suffering 1:30; 2:30
- Witnessing 1:27-28

Study Questions

1. What concerns, questions or observations do you have from this study?
2. Read and review Phil. 1:1-11.
3. What are some typical ways churches advertise/market themselves? Share ways you sometimes feel pressure to distinguish your church from others by appealing characteristics.
4. Discuss the following statement from the introduction. Agree, disagree? Strengths, weaknesses?

The heart of distinctive and God honoring fellowship is a self sacrificing conformity to a shared vision . . . that vision being the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

5. Develop a working definition of the gospel. What are the essential components to the gospel? What is gospel ministry? Do a quick search for places in Philippians where terms *gospel* or *work of Christ* is found. How do these verses inform your understanding of 'gospel ministry'?
6. What impresses you most about the stories describing the beginning of the church in Philippi in Acts 16:12-40? Why?
7. Why is it rather common or simple to lose sight of the joy and excitement of transformed people in our congregation? What are some ways we can encourage concern, praise and affection for transformed lives through the gospel?
8. Why is sacrificial commitment attractive to you? How often do you feel the joy of being something far bigger than yourself at church? Why or why not? How can sacrificial commitment to the gospel be provoked/grown in our church?
9. Share an example from your recent past when the confidence in God expressed in 1:6 was a significant help for you.
10. Spend time as a group sharing observations and thanking God for transformed people, sacrificial commitment and God centered confidence that you notice around Kossuth Street.
11. What do you want to do, use or remember from this study this week?