

The Value of a Yokefellow Ministry **Philippians 4:3**

Opening Illustration:

The story is told of two men riding a tandem bicycle up a steep hill. After much effort, they finally made it to the top of the hill. The front rider said, “That was a tough ride.” To which the second rider replied, “Sure was, and if I hadn’t kept the brake on we might have slipped backwards.”¹

They tell us, Within thirty minutes after President Reagan was shot March 30, 1981, he was in the operating room at George Washington University Hospital. The speed and efficiency of the rescue mission was phenomenal. However, that which impressed me was the teamwork of five physicians. George Morales, fifty-four, an anesthesiologist formerly of Mexico, kept the President alive while Joseph Giordano, thirty-nine, a vascular surgeon from Union City, New Jersey, explored the abdomen for bleeding. Benjamin Aaron, from Kansas City, Missouri, and Kathleen Cheyney, thirty-two, from Washington, New Jersey, both thoracic surgeons, probed for the flattened twenty-two-caliber bullet in the President’s lung. Sol Edelstein, thirty-four, from Detroit, chief of the emergency room, made sure all went smoothly. Five persons, highly skilled and committed to saving life, disregarding individual differences, functioned as a well-calibrated unit.

Just as the hospital was equipped with highly skilled and committed leaders who were prepared to help save a life so also the church has been equipped with highly skilled and committed leaders who are to serve in a similar capacity. The leadership of the church is of vital importance and value. In the passage before us, Paul identifies what we are going to call a Yokefellow Ministry.

Everyone is called to serve with this kind of mindset but additionally Paul identifies a specific person that fulfills this Yokefellow Ministry.

I watched a video this week about oxen in a yoke. It was incredible to watch the teamwork between these two animals yoked together. The oxen had to be in step with each other...if the one oxen pulled even a step or second out of sync it could twist the yoke and cause the other oxen to stumble and hurt himself. The heavy load would not be moved and the task would remain undone.

So when we see the apostle Paul refer to the yokefellow we can see what a value this person was to Paul's ministry.

TT - We want to look at three valuable characteristics of a yokefellow ministry.

This week at VBS was a great example of everyone getting under the yoke of ministry and serving together.

1. The Value of Your Willingness:

“I entreat thee -”

Entreat - to ask a question, to request -

ILL - ladies, have you ever asked your husband something while he was preoccupied with watching tv? I can see that the yokefellow was willingly bending his ear to the apostle Paul.

Christians that use the excuse, no one has asked me is an empty excuse.

ILL - That works about as good as my wife asking me why I haven't taken out the trash yet and my response is, “well, you didn't ask me to!”

There's no greater calling than the one God has already placed on your life.

To receive willingly -

Illustrated when the disciples were [John 6:21](#) on the sea in a storm Jesus came to them walking on the water and the Bible says they “**willingly received Him into the ship**”. This was a valuable characteristic for them. We need to willingly let Jesus into our lives and not be resistant to His working through us.

ILL - If you've ever been in the hot sun ready for a drink and you go to the vending machine for a drink but you quickly realize its not accepting cash or cards at this time. How disappointing when you have it right there but its not available. Have you ever wondered what God thinks when He calls us to do something and we aren't willing?

We need to pray for God to give us this kind of willingness.

[John 12:26](#) - the kind of man that the Father will honour is one that is willing to serve Him.

If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father **honour. - means value**

[2 Cor. 8:3](#) - the willingness to give more than they had
3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;

This week I spent some time praying through various verses dealing with the mental aspect of spiritual warfare and the call to put on the whole armour of God. I prayed for a ready mind - [1 Peter 5:2](#) , [2 Cor. 8:19](#) , [Titus 3:1](#)

[Titus 3:1](#) (KJV 1900)

¹ Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,

[2 Corinthians 8:19](#) (KJV 1900)

¹⁹ And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind:

[1 Peter 5:2](#) (KJV 1900)

² Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

Every person who has been saved by God has some work to do for the Lord.

We've been in a series Calling Out the Called. Here Paul is calling out the call of the yokefellow.

Referring back to the greek word picture used here, The oxen want to have a purpose, they want to work....if you don't use them they can be a little temperamental but when they get going they are good.

Imagine what it would be like to work with a temperamental ox?

A firefighter is always on the ready, uncertain when the alarm will sound. It is necessary to be able to be of a ready and willing mind when it goes off. The same is true for the yokefellow, you don't know when you a family in the body of Christ will need you. There may be an emergency that comes up and you just sat down with your family but when there is a call you are ready.

2. The Value of Your Witness:

“True yokefellow”

Can you think of anything greater than being a witness for Jesus? Think about the privilege a person has to serve the church as a witness for Jesus Christ. The witness of your life is that you are representing the uplifted Christ in this fallen world!

Character of your witness - One who strives to be a true yokefellow:

True, genuine, sincere, proven, pure in heart, he wasn't in this for a position or power.

True - this is an emphasis on the kind of person he was. He was proven, pure, sincere, genuine. [1 Cor. 5:8](#) describes this metaphorically as unleavened bread. Can be understood as godly.

1 Corinthians 5:8

8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Yokefellow - this tells us something about his character. The Greek word pictures two oxen in a yoke, pulling the same load. A companion is a partner or an equal in a specific endeavor - in this case a spiritual one.

The Bible cautions us about being unequally yoked together - Same Mindedness - [2 Corinthians 6:14](#) - we are not to be unequally yoked;

No man was like minded as much as Timothy - [Philippians 2:20](#)

2 Corinthians 6:14

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

Philippians 2:20

20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

Witness of the light - [John 1:8](#) -

John 1:8

8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

ye shall be my witnesses

[Acts 1:8](#)

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

[Acts 22:15](#) - though shalt be his witness unto all men

[Acts 22:15](#)

15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

3. The Value of Your Work:

“help”

1 Cor. 15:58 -

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Help - [1 Cor. 12:28](#) the ministry of helps; [Luke 5:7](#) - when the nets brake they came and helped their PARTNERS

1 Corinthians 12:28

28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

Luke 5:7

7 And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

Help “those women” could be refer to Euodias and Syntyche. If that is the case this role carries a responsibility of that of a peacemaker. Desires to be a peace maker ([Matthew 5:8](#))

Matthew 5:8

8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

You are a caretaker of the unity of fellowship in the body.

“which laboured with me in the gospel” - A Gospel-Driven ministry - this helps ministry is not about having a title or an office. It is not about politics or having a plaque with your name on it. This helps ministry is about the furtherance of the Gospel.

A ministry of service

ILL - Go back to the word picture of the ox - oxen - with a good team they can carry a heavy load

Willing to pull his load -

Willing to be in the same mind

Follows the commands of the farmer

The ox never yokes himself, but he does submit to the master of the yoke...some are kicking against the yoke that God is placing on them.

Value of working with his teammate - the two people under the same yoke...they are operating at the same stride. Not worried about who will be first. When one wins you both win. It's not about who will get the credit.

ILL - To football fans the heroes are the ball carriers. But to the coach and ball carriers the real heroes are the linemen who open holes in the opponent's line through which the ball carriers can run. They also protect the quarterback in pass plays and block for the ball carriers to clear out opposing tacklers. No matter how talented the quarterback and ball carriers may be, without these linemen they are dead insofar as performance is concerned.²

In the work of the church, if you cannot carry the ball, at least you can help others do it through your prayers.¹

The greatest example of a true yokefellow is Jesus who took up the cross and carried it to Calvary.

Conclusion:

Just as it was with President Reagan whose life was in the hands a team of physicians working in unity so it is with men and women and boys and girls whose lives are fixed in a straight between heaven and hell.

So it is with the church that without unity there could be death

Or the home where there is disunity between the husband and wife could end in a divorce.

¹ <https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/working-against-each-other>

² Herschel H. Hobbs, *My Favorite Illustrations* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1990), 200.