

**Biblical Principles for Living Series**

**THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP**

**BY**

**DR. J.L. WILLIAMS**

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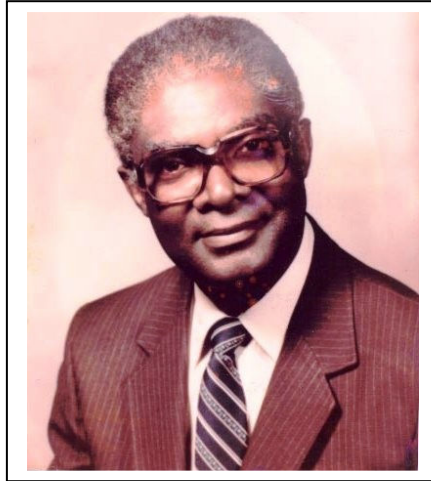
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## DEDICATION



**Dr. Claude Noel  
Port-au-Prince, Haiti**

*It is with great joy that I dedicate this book on Power of Partnership to my dear friend and "Haitian Father," Dr. Claude Noel. He is one of the spiritual patriarchs of the evangelical church in Haiti. He was also the founding pastor of several of the largest and most influential churches in Port-au-Prince. Because of his desire to nurture and network churches all over that country, he founded the Council of Evangelical Churches of Haiti (CEEH). His late wife, Lydie, founded the Association of Christian Women in Action (AFCA) to minister to poor street women there.*

***NDI has been privileged to be in partnership with both of these organizations.***

***In 1968, after hearing the New Directions' singing group minister in Barrington, Rhode Island, Dr. Claude invited me to bring our team to Haiti for a musical ministry tour throughout the island. It was our interdenominational and interracial profile that especially attracted us to him and Lydie.***

***This historic trip to Haiti, in the very earliest days of our existence as a ministry, confirmed cross-cultural missions as an essential part of our DNA. After that evangelistic trip, New Directions was even more committed to ministry and missions locally and globally. Because of that mission trip, Dr. Claude became a close personal friend, advisor and "mentor in missions."***

***Since Dr. Claude was our very first national partner, it is fitting that I dedicate this book to him. What I learned from him about the priority of ministry relationships and national partnerships became the very foundation of NDI. My friendship and partnership with Dr. Claude led to many, many other relationships with key national leaders in scores of other countries around the world.***

***Thank you, Dr. Claude, for being my "Haitian Father" and for mentoring me in the strategic Biblical concept of partnering with nationals. Through NDI, you now have untold numbers of other spiritual children and grandchildren all over the globe! I will be eternally grateful for all you taught me about the Power of***

***Partnership cross-culturally for God's Kingdom and  
glory - and it all started in Haiti!***

***Your American-Haitian son,***

***J.L.***

***Founder/Mission Entrepreneur of NDI***





## INTRODUCTION

The Bible is a book of *partnership* from Genesis to Revelation! One of the great uniquenesses of the Christian faith is its emphasis upon *relationships*. While most other world religions are *ritual based*, Christianity is *relational based*. *Every picture of the church in the Bible is a relational picture* (Please see my book, *Biblical Pictures of the Church*, on my website: [www.jlwilliams.net](http://www.jlwilliams.net)). But, unfortunately, most of our contemporary church models are *organizational* rather than *relational*. This Biblical emphasis on the *priority of relationships* is why the word *koinonia*, or “*together*,” is one of the defining words of the book of Acts.

Principle:  
Christianity is based on *relationships*;  
while religion is based upon *rituals, rules and regulations*.

For 35 years, *relationships* and *partnerships* have been the very heart and soul of what NDI has stood for. For 4 decades, we have sought to build partnerships *interdenominationally...interracially...interculturaly...internationally*. Our ministry has sought to be an incarnation of those Kingdom-building relationships and partnerships. Whatever success we have experienced, for the Lord and His Kingdom around the world, is primarily because of these strategic partnerships that God has sovereignly given us. Therefore, we always go into a country looking for *partnerships* first – not *projects*. If a ministry or mission relationship is primarily built upon *projects* rather than *partnership*, it will ultimately fail.

Principle:

*“Partnerships must always precede projects. Whenever projects become more important than partnerships, God is not glorified and people are not edified. Therefore, all projects must flow out of partnerships.”*

The ministry principle, then, is this: *Kingdom projects must flow out of Kingdom partnerships* – not vice versa. The *partnership is the root* and the *project is the fruit*. One is a by-product of the other. It is sad, however, that *projects* often over-shadow relationships and partnerships. Soon they begin to motivate, drive and control *partnerships* – rather than the *partnerships* controlling the *projects*. Then, the partners are only “using each other” to accomplish their own agenda. When that distortion takes place, it is “the tail wagging the dog” rather than “the dog wagging the tail,” getting “the cart before the horse,” rather than “the horse before the cart.”

When Kingdom relationships degenerate to this low level, God is not glorified. That’s because *the partnership becomes a means to an end* – i.e., the accomplishment of a *project* alone. It shows that we value the *project* more than the *partnership*. And, in God’s eyes *no project is more valuable than a partnership!* As we will often see in this study, Jesus said to His disciples: **“By this will all men know that you are My disciples, that you love one another”** – not by how you *do projects together!* So there must be *agape partnerships* before there can be *anointed projects*. While people may be helped and needs may be

met by *projects* apart from *partnerships*, God will not be *glorified* and people will not be *edified*. So, if we want to build ministries that will truly glorify God and edify others, we must first *be centered on people and partnerships – not just on projects and programs*.

Principle:

*Partnerships* are an end in themselves – not a means to an end. *Kingdom projects* must always flow out of *covenant partnerships*.

REMEMBER: *The only thing that is eternal is our relationships*. Therefore, building *covenant relationships* and *Kingdom partnerships* are our highest calling and greatest priority in ministry. When we die we will not take a single *project* with us to heaven. Not one. But we will take every *relationship* and *partnership* that is based in the Lord Jesus. If our ministry is truly Biblical, it will be centered on *partnerships* – not on *projects*. Our lives and ministries will be clearly focused on *people* rather than on *programs* if we are authentic servant leaders.

First and foremost, then, *we grow through partnerships* and then *our ministry will grow through projects*. It is God's design to *grow us through covenant partnerships* so that we can magnify His glory through *Kingdom projects*.

Principle:  
God grows us through *partnerships*,  
and He grows our ministry through *projects*.  
The *partnership* is the *root* that nourishes the *project*  
which is the fruit.

Bible quotations are made from the New International Version, unless otherwise noted. All italics, bold print, etc., in the quotations are for my own emphasis. With those thoughts in mind, let's look together at a number of "Partnership Principles" clearly revealed in the Bible.

## 1. THE *PERSON* OF PARTNERSHIP

It is stating the obvious when we say that *Jesus* is the central *Person* of every authentic spiritual partnership. Without Him, there are no truly lasting Kingdom relationships. Jesus Christ is the *raison d'être*, or “*reason for being*,” for every spiritual relationship. Therefore, Christ alone is both the *person* and *purpose* of every partnership. Without Him there would be no eternal relationships that begin in time and continue throughout all eternity.

Jesus, then, is the commonality for any and all authentic Christian *community*, or *koinonia*, here on earth. It is only our *new life* in Him that makes possible our *new relationships* with others in the body of Christ. Therefore, every authentic Kingdom partnership begins through our *spiritual relationship* with the Lord Jesus. While we can have “worldly friendships” and “temporal relationships” with unbelievers here on earth, just as Jesus did, we can only have authentic *covenantal partnerships* with other born again believers – whether in *marriage* or in *ministry*. To enter into partnerships with unbelievers in either *marriage* or *ministry* is to violate the Biblical command not to be “...**yoked together with unbelievers**” (II Cor. 6:14).

When you study the first disciples that Jesus called to Himself, you quickly see that He alone was the “relational glue” that held them together. Without His mentoring and mediating presence with them, they often argued among themselves... competing with each other...vying for power and prominence... seeking to up-stage one another! Because of their carnality and immaturity, they were constantly playing the game of “one-up-man-ship” with

each other! As a result of their on-going ego conflicts, their relationships kept pulling apart at the seams!

Before His death, it was only the mentoring and magnetism of His presence that held those fractured and fragmented disciples together. And after His resurrection and ascension, it was only the Holy Spirit that held them together after the day of Pentecost. Nothing short of the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit could create the kind of unity that Luke described when he wrote, “**All the believers were one in heart and mind**” (Acts 4:32). When you consider their earlier dissensions and divisions, those words of unity were nothing short of miraculous!

What Paul later wrote about the cosmic unifying power of Christ was also true of His relationship with His disciples: “**...in Him all things hold together**” (Col. 1:17). Only the presence and power of the Lord Jesus “**hold together**” human relationships, whether in marriage or in ministry. Without His mediating presence, relationships begin to fragment and fall apart. When Christians ignore or are disobedient to His presence, marriages pull apart...ministry partnerships pull apart...churches pull apart...mission organizations pull apart...para-church ministries pull apart...people pull apart. Only in Christ can partnerships *pull together* rather than *pull apart*.

It is also crucial to remember that our *relationship with Christ* determines our *relationship with God* and our *relationship with the Holy Spirit*. When we have a living relationship with Christ, we automatically have a relationship with the Father and the Spirit. But if we do not have a relationship with Christ, it is impossible to have a

relationship or partnership with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures are very clear about this. Consider...

- **“Jesus said: ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you really knew Me, you would know My Father as well. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him...Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father...Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in Me?...The words I say to you are not just My own. Rather, it is the Father living in Me, who is doing His work. Believe Me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me’ ” (Jn. 14:6-11).**
- To the unbelieving Jewish leaders who asked Jesus: **“Where is Your Father?”** He succinctly replied: **“You do not know Me or My Father...If you knew Me, you would know My Father also”** (Jn. 8:19).
- **“Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist – he denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also”** (1 Jn. 2:23).
- **“Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not**

- **have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son”**  
(II Jn. 9).

These verses are crucial for our understanding because of cultic groups like the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who deny the doctrine of the Trinity. In doing so, they make the deadly error of dividing the full deity of the triune Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. While they vociferously proclaim their relationship with Jehovah God, they deny the deity of Jesus Christ. But these verses clearly declare that belief to be a theological error and spiritual illusion. The New Testament is crystal clear in its teaching that *it is absolutely impossible to have a living relationship with God the Father without a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus – and without His indwelling Holy Spirit!*

Therefore, the foundational truth of this entire study is that Jesus Christ must be the *Person* at the center of every authentic spiritual partnership. So, my question to you is this: *“Is Jesus Christ the center of your human relationships and ministry partnerships?”* Unless He is the very heart of your partnerships, they will neither glorify God...satisfy you...nor benefit mankind.

Principle:

Jesus Christ must be the very heart and soul of every authentic human relationship and ministry partnership.



## 2. THE *PRINCIPLE OF PARTNERSHIP*

The Biblical call is one from *self* to the *Savior*...from *isolation* to *community*...from *independence* to *dependence*. Christianity is a call to total *dependence upon God*, followed by a call to a growing *dependence upon others*. While all other religions emphasize *independence* and *isolation*, Christianity emphasizes *intimacy* and *interdependence*. Therefore, authentic Christianity is a life-long “celebration of community.”

In Mark, we read about Christ’s resurrection partnership with the early Christians:

**“Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and *the Lord worked with them* and confirmed His word by the signs that accompanied it”**  
(Mk. 16:20).

The Apostle Paul emphasized this divine-human partnership when he said that we are “...**God’s fellow workers**” (I Cor. 3:9; II Cor. 6:1, I Thess. 3:2). But Paul did not preach one thing and practice another. He “walked his talk” when it came to *partnerships* in ministry. Throughout his life, he personally demonstrated the “principle of partnership” in his ministry. And he succinctly summarized this principle when he wrote:

**“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow”** (I Cor. 3:6)

Paul also wrote about our *fellowship* and *partnership with the Holy Spirit* in one of his benedictions where the ministry of the Triune Godhead was spoken of:

**“May the *grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all*” (II Cor. 13:14).**

So, *partnership is the prevailing principle of the New Testament!* It is the authenticating mark of Christian *koinonia*. The question, then, for each of us today as Christian leaders is this: *Is the principle of partnerships the basis of my life and ministry?* If not, I pray that this study will help you refocus your life on building *people* and *partnerships* rather than on promoting *projects*. Then you will emphasize *organism* over *organization... people* over *projects... partnership* over *prosperity*.

### 3. THE *PATTERN* OF PARTNERSHIP

The *paradigm*, or *pattern* of partnership, runs throughout the Bible. It is a principle that we see clearly demonstrated by God's leaders from Genesis to Revelation. Rather than holding on to all of the leadership authority, *authentic servant-leaders constantly seek to raise up other leaders around them*. Look at a few examples...

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, exhorted him to train other leaders – rather than shoulder all of the leadership responsibilities himself (Ex. 18:1-27). So he chose and mentored *70 elders* to help with the leadership responsibility of the Children of Israel.

**“Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people and they stood around him from morning till evening. When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, ‘What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?’**

**“Moses answered him, ‘Because the people come to me to seek God’s will. Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God’s decrees and laws.’**

**“Moses’ father-in-law replied, ‘What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourself out. The work is too heavy for**

***you; you cannot handle it alone. Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to Him. Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. But select capable men from all the people – men who hate fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain – and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain and all these people will go home satisfied.'*** “Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. He chose *capable men* from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. They served as judges for the people at all times. The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves.” (Ex. 18:13-26).

When God's Spirit descended upon the seventy elders whom Moses had chosen, they each prophesied. But there

were two leaders, Eldad and Medad, who had not assembled with the others, but had remained in their tents. Even though they did not go through the prescribed anointing process with the others, the Spirit still fell on them. Others leaders, like Joshua, were jealous, and wanted Moses to stop them – but Moses still affirmed their leadership. Here are the verses:

**“However, two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad, had remained in the camp. They were listed among the elders, but did not go out to the Tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on them, and they prophesied in the camp. “Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses aid since youth, spoke up and said, ‘Moses, my lord, stop them!’ But Moses replied, ‘Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord’s people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit on them!”**  
(Num. 11:25-29).

That’s the heart of a real Biblical leader! Moses was eager to see God raise up many leaders – even if they did not all go through the traditional program!

In the New Testament Jesus modeled the same style of *shared leadership* by choosing and appointing 12 Apostles:

**“Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to Him those He wanted, and they came to Him. He appointed twelve – designating them apostles – that they**

**might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons” (Mark 3:13-15).**

Likewise the Apostle Paul laid down the pattern of “mentoring for ministry” by quickly raising up local indigenous church leaders who were then to “...**equip the saints for the work of ministry**” (Eph. 4:11-12).

**“It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph. 4:11-12).**

We can see a great written testimony of Paul’s commitment to the principle of partnership in Romans 16. He concludes this great Epistle by listing or greeting some *26 people* who were his close friends and ministry partners: Priscilla, Aquila, Epenetus, Mary, Andronicus, Junias, Ampliatus, Urbanus, Stachys, Apelles, Aristobulus, Herodion, Narcissus, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus, Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, Philologus, Julia, Nereus and Olympas). Paul left behind a legacy of *many* great leaders!

Therefore, effective Biblical leaders always raise up other effective leaders. Rather than holding onto all of the leadership authority, they share it with others around them – thereby multiplying their leadership influence. In other words, *they multiply through mentoring*.

Principle:

Authentic Biblical leaders always raise up other leaders – and increasingly share their authority with them. They multiply their leadership by mentoring other leaders.

During His earthly ministry, and even after His resurrection, Christ's model was one of partnership. As we saw in our first point, Christ did not abandon His apostles after He ascended into heaven. He continued His partnership with them through the Holy Spirit:

**“Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and *the Lord worked with them*, and confirmed His word by the signs that accompanied it.”**

And you and I have the incredible privilege of continuing that same spiritual partnership with the Lord Jesus and with others through His indwelling Holy Spirit!





#### 4. THE PREREQUISITE OF PARTNERSHIP

The single most important *prerequisite* for partnership is that you MUST have – or develop – a *relational orientation*. Some people do this more *naturally* than others because of their personality and temperament. By nature they are just “people-persons.” They are naturally socially gregarious. They just love being with people! As a result, they are naturally drawn to people and people are naturally drawn to them.

Others of us, however, only learn to become people-focused through time, training, effort and discipline. It is not something we do *naturally* – only *supernaturally*. While many Christian leaders and missionaries are good at developing *functional relationships*, they are often poor at building *covenant relationships*. *Good people skills are the single greatest asset to effective leadership and partnership – whether in marriage or ministry!* If you cannot *lovingly lead* in the *physical family*, you will not be able to do so in the *family of God*.

There is no such thing as an effective leader who does not work well with people. Therefore, good “people skills” are the single most important prerequisite for authentic Biblical leadership. *If you cannot work well with people, then you cannot lead.* Period. If you want to become a good *leader of men*, then you must first become an authentic *lover of men!* Biblical servant leaders always *lead through love*.

Principle:  
Good *relational skills* are the single biggest prerequisite for effective leadership and partnership in marriage or ministry. And the greatest relational skill is *love*.

In all probability, Saul of Tarsus was not a very relational individual before his conversion on the Damascus Road! In his B.C. days, his relationships were characterized by *racial pride, cultural prejudice, religious legalism, anger, hostility, and aggression* – not attributes that endear you to people! But something, or rather *Someone*, radically changed his life to the degree that his temperament was transformed from *legalism* to *love*.

I believe a good case can be made for the positive relational impact that “Uncle Barnabas” had on Paul’s life and ministry. In the early Church, Barnabas had gained the nickname of “*son of encouragement*.” So, from the precept and example of Barnabas, Paul learned how to be an *encourager* – which is one of the greatest mentoring motivators.

Conversely, many parents and Christian leaders act as though *discouragement* is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit! Every time they open their mouths they spew out *discouragement*. They constantly *discourage* people through *criticism... negativity... fault-finding*. They are always “*talking down*” and “*putting-down*” those around them – whether it is their physical children or spiritual

children. Praise and affirmation seldom come from their lips... their countenance... or their body language. *Encouragement* is not in their emotional DNA!

But “Uncle Barnabas” was different. Everywhere he went, he spread *encouragement* through word and deed. And soon after his conversion on the Damascus Road, Saul became one of the recipients of his gift of encouragement. So, while God’s sovereign grace saved Paul on the Damascus Road, it was the encouragement of Barnabas that helped transform Saul *emotionally* and *relationally*. Humanly speaking, then, it was nothing short of the patient mentoring of Barnabas that God used to help transform “Saul of Tarsus” into the “Apostle Paul.” It was being saturated with *encouragement* from Barnabas that matured Paul from the inflexibility of legalism to the fragrance of agape love!

Therefore, since some of his earliest “mentoring in ministry” took place under Barnabas, Paul learned the importance of . . .

- *Love over legalism*
- *Tolerance over tradition*
- *Motivation over intimidation*
- *Relationships over rules*
- *Praise over criticism*
- *Affirmation over condemnation*

As Christians, we are in the “people business.” So, to state it again: *the better our people skills, the more effective our ministry will be*. Without people skills, we may be *efficient* – but we will not be *effective!* That’s because

*efficiency* is focused on “*things*” – while *effectiveness* is focused on “*people*.”

Principle:  
Relational skills determine our success or failure in partnerships. The better our people skills, the better our marriage and ministry will be.

Studies have shown that *relational skills* are the single BIGGEST determining factor for success in life – whether in marriage... ministry... business... education – or any other “people focused pursuit.”

As we have already seen, Jesus made this point crystal clear when He said this to His disciples: “**By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another**” (Jn. 13:35).

So, if you can't *love people*, you can't *lead people* – because *leading is based upon loving!*

Principle:  
*Leading* is based upon *loving*. If you can't *love*, you can't *lead*.

## 5. THE PRAYER OF PARTNERSHIP

*The choice of your closest ministry partners is one of the single most important and defining decisions you will make in life.* That's because the people around you will largely determine your level of success. Your closest associates will either help you "go up" or they will "hold you down." As leadership guru, John Maxwell says, "*You can't soar like an eagle if you run with turkeys!*" Show me your closest friends and partners, and I will show you what kind of leader you will ultimately become.

Principle:

The people closest to you will largely determine the level of your leadership. Your partnerships will either 'take you up' or 'take you down.'

Therefore, chose your closest and most intimate companions *carefully* and *prayerfully*. The Bible tells us that Jesus prayed all night before choosing His ministry partners:

**"...Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God, When morning came, He called His disciples to Him, and chose twelve of them whom He also designated apostles..."** (Lk. 6:12-13);

In addition to praying before choosing, we know that Jesus also prayed for His disciples during their time with Him. We can especially see this with Peter, who was the acknowledged leader of the Twelve:

**“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But *I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail*” (Lk. 22:31).**

Notice, too, how Paul constantly prayed for his converts and ministry partners:

- (For Ephesians): **“...ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, *I have not stopped giving you thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers*” (Eph. 1:15-16);**
- (For Philippians): **“I thank my God every time I remember you. In *all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now...*” (Phil. 1:3);**
- (For Colossians): **“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when *we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints...*” (Col. 1:3-4);**
- (For Thessalonians): **“We always thank God for all of you, *mentioning***

***you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ*** (I Thess. 1:2-3; II Thess. 1:3);

One of Paul's Partners, Epaphras, was also characterized by a special ministry of prayer:

**“Epaphras...a servant of Christ Jesus...is always *wrestling in prayer for you*, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. I vouch for him that he is working hard for you...”** (Col. 4:12-14).

One of the great reasons why you must *pick your partners prayerfully* is so that you will not become “unequally yoked.” Since you will be *walking, worshiping, working* and *witnessing* together, there must be compatibility. As Amos 3:3 says: **“Can two walk together unless there is agreement?”** Although a Christian leader can and should have *friendships* with non-Christians, he can only have *partnerships* with believers:

**“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a**

**believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God” (II Cor. 6:14-16).**

Therefore, *pray in your partners!* Don't just pick them quickly, capriciously or presumptuously. If you bathe this decision in *prayer*, God will give you partners who will *enhance* and *enlarge* your leadership and help you “...soar on wings like eagles” (Isa. 40:31)!

Principle:  
Prayerfully chosen partners will *enhance* and *enlarge* your life and leadership.



## 6. THE *PRICE* OF PARTNERSHIP

*Partnership is neither cheap nor easy.* There is always an expensive “price tag” that comes with partnership. There are no “bargain basement” partnerships that you can build quickly, easily or cheaply. Authentic covenant partnerships are costly in terms of *time... effort...availability...emotions...resources* – in virtually every area of life. Authentic relationships and partnerships are the product of “blood, sweat and tears” – for *years!* Whether in *marriage* or *ministry... parenting* or *pastoring* – *partnership is expensive!*

Principle:

There are no cheap, quick or easy partnerships. Whether in *marriage* or in *ministry*, whether in *parenting* or *pastoring* – *partnership is expensive.*

How much did it cost God to bring us into partnership with Himself? It cost Him the life of His beloved Son on the cross! That’s why the Bible reminds us that we “...**are not our own, we were bought with a price**” (I Cor. 6:19-20; 7:23) – the blood of the Lord Jesus!

Jesus reminds us that the *cost* is the *cross*:

**“If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me”** (Lk. 9:23).

The older we get in leadership and partnership, the less we are in control of our own lives and destinies. Jesus reminded Peter of this “price of the cross” after His resurrection:

**“I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go. Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God” (Jn. 21:18-19).**

The Apostle Paul was willing to go to any length and pay any price in order to build transformational, cross-cultural relationships and partnerships. Note these poignant words describing what he had gone through for the sake of the advancement of the Gospel in the lives of others:

**“For it seems to me that God has put us Apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. We are fools for Christ...We are weak...we are dishonored. To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands...Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world” (I Cor. 4:9-13).**

In his second letter to his partners in Corinth, he further described the *price of partnership* in the Gospel:

**“We put no stumbling block in anyone’s path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything”** (II Cor. 6:3-10).

So, authentic partnership comes at great cost – a cost that most are not willing to pay to lead in the home and outside the home. That’s why there are so many divorces and abandoned children in our world today! Millions pursue *possessions* instead of *partnerships*. They mistakenly think that wealth is determined by *riches* when God defines it in terms of *relationships*.

Principle:

*Pain* is the *price* of partnership.  
But if we are willing to pay the price,  
we will be rich in relationships and partnerships.

## 7. THE PATIENCE OF PARTNERSHIP

Along with *prayer* and *sacrifice (pain)*, much *patience* is required in raising up mature leaders and partners. That's because *partnership*, just like *parenting* and *pastoring*, require a life-style of *patience*. It takes years of *patience* and *perseverance* to become a good partner – whether in *marriage* or in *ministry*. This is even more the case when you add the diverse dimensions of different races, tribes, castes and cultures. There is nothing more challenging than building mature *indigenous leaders* and authentic *autonomous partners!*

Principle:

*Partnership*, like *parenting* and *pastoring*, require a life-style of *patience* and *perseverance*. There are no short-cuts to building mature partnerships.

*Immaturity* and *impatience* are the twin destroyers of mature and lasting partnerships. So let me emphasize again the principle: “Whether in *marriage* or in *ministry* – authentic partnership development takes a lot of *patience!*” There are just no short-cuts to mature partnerships! They are the product of a life of *patience* and *persistence*.

It took great patience on the part of the Lord Jesus – along with the baptism of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost – to mature the Twelve into effective partners! He spent three intense years in intimate relationship with them. During that time their partnership was tried and tested under the most diverse of circumstances. Together they went through good times and hard times...times of popularity and times of rejection...times in the market place and times of

solitude...times of worship and wonder, and moments of doubt and despair. And ultimately their partnership was tested by death. But through it all, Jesus poured Himself into the lives of these men and the women who followed them, to the degree that He built partnerships that turned that world upside-down – in just one generation. Those were the greatest *transformational partnerships* the world has ever seen!

As we have already seen, it also took great *patience* for “Uncle Barnabas” to mentor and encourage *Saul of Tarsus* into *Paul the Apostle*. It required both *patience* and *perseverance* to see Saul gradually transformed from the *blasphemer* to the *believer*...from the *persecutor* to the *preacher*...from the *apostate* to the *Apostle*. It took great *patience* to help Paul grow from *tradition* to *truth*...from *legalism* to *love*!

Later Paul exhorted the elders at Ephesus to exemplify that same kind of *patience*:

**“...live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle, be *patient*, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace”** (Eph. 4:1-3);

Paul went on to mentor scores of other young leaders by building a transformational partnership with them. In his mentoring of his understudy, Timothy, we can also hear this exhortation about *pastoral patience*:

**“You ... know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, *patience*, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings ...” (II Tim. 3:10).**

Paul further exhorted Timothy about the need of *patience in partnership* when he wrote him his own “Last Will and Testament” – after which he was martyred for his faith and fidelity to Christ:

**“I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – *with patience* and careful instruction...” (II Tim. 4:2);**

So, without *patience*, partnership in either *ministry* or *marriage* will not blossom! God designed them to go hand-in-hand through life. One builds upon the other. Therefore, if you cannot build a good *partnership in marriage*, you will not be able to build a good *partnership in ministry*. The integrity of your *public life* is dependant upon the integrity of your *private life*. When we become *impatient* and *immature* in marriage, it soon spills over into our ministry. The greatest way to build strong *ministry partnerships* is to first build a strong *marital partnership!* And both require a lifetime of *patience!*

Principle:

If you cannot built a good *partnership in marriage*, you will not be able to build good *partnerships in ministry*. The integrity of your *public life* is based upon the integrity of your *private life*.





## 8. THE *PURPOSE* OF PARTNERSHIP

As we have already intimated, the purpose of partnership is to *bring you to maturity in Christ*. You cannot become a mature Christian spiritually or emotionally in isolation. One of the reasons God created marriage was to give us the relational context through which we can live with an “*other-orientation*” rather than a “*self-orientation*.” No other human relationship brings us face to face with our own sin, selfishness, pride, insecurity and immaturity – as marriage does! That’s why marriage gives the opportunity to “**...die daily**” (I Cor. 15:31) – sometimes hourly! A healthy and fulfilling marriage partnership is built upon a *dying to self*.

Principle:

The purpose of partnership in marriage and ministry is to bring you to *spiritual, emotional and relational maturity*.

Tragically, most couples “bail out” of marriage through divorce or desertion – rather than “stick it out” and “tough it out” so they can mature emotionally and relationally. When they run away from their marriage partnership, they become *emotionally retarded* and *relationally stunted* in their lives.

Because they never endure the *pain of partnership*, they never enjoy the *pleasure of partnership*!

So, let me emphasize the principle again: *Marriage is an invitation to die!* That’s the *purpose* of partnership. *Dying to self is the very heart and soul of a healthy marital*

*partnership*. It is only as both members of the partnership *die to self* that they can then *live unto each other*. Nothing short of total *self-surrender* to God of all of my “rights” will make it possible for my marriage to blossom and mature. Note again these ancient words of wisdom about marriage from the Apostle Paul.

**“Submit to one another out of your reverence for Christ. Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.**

***Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies...This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband”*** (Eph. 5:21-33).

Effective parenting is built upon the same principle of *dying to self*. Every mother personally knows how costly

parenting is to self! For the child to *survive* and *thrive*, there must be a constant *dying to self* at the *determent of her own gratification*. But the end results of maturity in partnership and parenting is worth it all!

Principle:

Partnership in marriage or ministry is an invitation to die to self so that you can live for the glory of God and the good of others.



## 9. THE PRACTICALITY OF PARTNERSHIP

In His life and ministry, Jesus demonstrated the *practicality* of choosing *local indigenous “sons of the soil”* as His ministry partners. Through His incarnation from heaven to earth, Jesus did not bring angels or arch angels with Him to be His followers and helpers. He prayerfully chose local *“sons of the soil”* from Israel to be His disciples. And after three short years of personally *“mentoring them into ministry,”* He turned over the full enterprise of the church to them – and He ascended back to heaven.

Jesus incarnated and demonstrated the *“rabbinical model”* rather than the *“organizational model”* of leadership development. Unlike the accepted *“institutional model”* of His day and ours, Jesus did not establish any Christian colleges, Bible schools or seminaries to train His disciples. He prayerfully hand-picked His partners, and then personally mentored them by living and ministering with them at His side, day-in and day-out for 3 years. His Bible school, where He trained His disciples, was not an academic classroom – but the marketplace.

The seminary where Jesus taught His disciples practical theology was the *“Seminary of Life”*, as He ministered with them to the crowds and multitudes in towns like Capernaum, Nazareth, Jericho and Jerusalem. He gave them their *Master of Divinity* and *Doctor of Ministry* degrees as He *“walked and talked”* with them about the things of God and man on the dusty roads, hillsides and seashores of Galilee. And in every context, He showed them how to minister to people and meet their *“felt needs”* through *prayer, preaching, teaching, touching, healing and exorcism.*

Therefore, Jesus' ministry was totally "people focused" and not "project focused" or "program focused." His only "program" was Holy Spirit-led *partnership!* Christ, then, was intensely *practical* in His approach to leadership development!

Likewise, the Apostle Paul appointed local leaders for the churches he established – rather than sending in "foreign missionaries" which has become the accepted model today. At the end of his first missionary journey, he and Barnabas headed back to Antioch where they had first been commissioned for their work. On the way back home, we read this highly instructive account of how they empowered local leaders for the churches they had established:

**"They returned...strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith...Paul and Barnabas *appointed elders* (\*) *for them in each church* and, with prayers and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust" (Acts. 14:21-23).**

It is important to note here that a miss-translation of this word in the early *King James Version* (KJV) led to a tragic division within Christendom – which is largely still perpetuated in the church today around the world. The earlier translations of the KJV render this word "**...ordained them elders,**" rather than "**...appointed elders,**" which virtually every newer translation of the Bible now uses – including the *New King James Version*. The Greek word is *cheirotoneo*, and comes from the two words:

*cheir*, meaning “hand”; and *teino*, meaning “to stretch.” So the word literally means: “*to stretch forth the hand.*” We can conclude then that Paul and Barnabas set these men aside as local elders by the public “**...laying on of hands,**” following the common Jewish practice (Num. 27:18-23; Deut. 34:9; Acts 6:6; 13:13; 18:18; I Tim. 4:14; Heb. 6:2). The miss-translation into English of this Greek word has led to the tragic division between those who are “*ordained*” and those who are “*un-ordained*” in church leadership. Now in most church traditions, only those who are “*ordained*” can carry out the sacraments of marriage, baptism and communion. This is an unfortunate division and distinction that the New Testament does not make.

When Paul and Barnabas recognized the hand of God upon local leaders, they then affirmed that calling and anointing by “**...appointing them as elders...in each church.**” In doing so, they were just repeating, replicating and reproducing what the church at Antioch had done when they laid hands on them and sent them out on their missionary journey (Acts 13:2).

In a relative short period of time, Paul and Barnabas *evangelized* the lost and *edified* the believers in the towns and cities they visited. Then they *empowered* them to become the local leaders of the churches they had birthed through the leading and power of the Holy Spirit. They did not send a message back to Antioch: “*Please send us some missionaries to lead these new baby churches – and have them bring lots of money to support these new Christians!*” No, they “**...appointed elders...in each church, and with prayer and fasting committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.**” Then, after

fully empowering them as local elders, Paul and Barnabas were free to move on to other areas of ministry.

In his farewell discourse to the Ephesian elders, he fully endorsed their leadership over the churches he had established – regardless of the internal and external problems that he knew they would face:

**“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which *the Holy Spirit has made you overseers*. Be *shepherds* of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on guard!”**  
(Acts. 20:23-31).

In spite of the “cultural weakness” of the people in Crete, Paul still instructed Titus to appoint local elders – and put them fully in charge of the churches there:

**“The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and *appoint elders* in every town, as I directed you”** [Followed by the character qualifications for a local elder]  
(Titus 1:5).



So, “*appointing elders*” in each locality where a church is planted is a *practical way* to more quickly raise up local elders – and demonstrate our belief in the *headship of Christ* over His church (Eph. 1:22).

<p>Principle: Effective partners, pastors and parents are committed to ‘working themselves out of a job’ through mentoring and empowering others.</p>
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However, one of the biggest obstacles to building national leadership is that we are not willing to step out of first place...give up control...hand over the reigns of power...give others the freedom to succeed – as well as the freedom to fail! Even though we are committed to it theoretically, many of us practically are afraid of “working ourselves out of a job!”

One of the most practical pieces of leadership advice that one of my spiritual mentors, Dr. David Seamands, gave to me early in ministry was this: “*J.L., one of the hardest things you will have to sometimes make yourself do is to ‘sit back and watch the job done second best.’ But if you always take control, then you will never really build up others in leadership.*”

So, I challenge you with the same exhortation. Are you able to sit back and sometimes watch things be done at a lower level than you could do them due to your experience and maturity? Unless you can, you will never be a good

leader and mentor of your physical children or your spiritual children. It's only that kind of parenting and pastoral practicality that raises up the next generation of Biblical servant leaders.

## 10. THE PRACTICE OF PARTNERSHIP

None of us build partnerships effortlessly, whether in marriage or ministry. Partnership building is *intentional* – not *accidental*. You only build good partnerships as a parent or pastor if you *intentionally focus your life toward that goal*. Like any other worthwhile relational skill, partnership and mentoring takes constant *practice*. The more you do it, the better you become at it. Each partnership becomes a training ground for the next one. That's why the learning principle is true: "*Practice makes perfect.*"

Principle:

Partnership building is *intentional*, not *accidental*.  
Mentoring in ministry is a *focused mind-set*, not a capricious happening.

Through the years as I have sought to grow in this area of partnership building, I have found that it requires *planned neglect*. That means you have to *neglect some things in order to give attention to other things*. If partnership is not a *priority* in your marriage and ministry, it will not take place on its own.

Tragically, most parents and pastors focus on *programs* rather than on *people*. Their lives and ministries revolve around *routine* rather than around *relationships*. But no program can be a substitute for personal partnership. That's why, as we saw earlier, partnership requires *people-skills* – which few of us have naturally.

Principle:

Building partnerships require *planned neglect*.  
You must focus on *people* rather than *programs*,  
*relationships* rather than *routine*.

The more you *prioritize* and *practice partnership*, the more *fruitful* and *fulfilling* they become!

QUESTION: “*What programs or projects do you need to neglect in order to re-focus your life and ministry around partnership development and mentoring?*”

Since I am now in the sixth decade of my life, I am *intentionally* spending more and more time in mentoring relationships. I am increasingly focusing more of my time, energy and effort on fewer and fewer people. That’s because I want to increase the depth of my impact on the strategic leaders in America and around the world with whom God has sovereignly networked my life. That means, I have to *intentionally* cut some other *good people* and *good activities* out of my schedule. That’s because most of the time in the life of a Christian, the *good* is the enemy of the *best*. So in order to focus on the *best* – strategic proactive Christian leaders – I have to intentionally neglect other things.

Because of this intentional commitment, if a person has no serious desire to grow as a Kingdom leader, then I have no desire to spend time with him. That may sound hard and

uncaring – but it is reality. All of us have a finite amount of time and energy to invest as we go through life. Wisdom says that we should strategically invest it in the people who are serious about growing as Christians and as Christian leaders. Sadly, the world, as well as the church, is filled with people who are “going nowhere fast!” They are “hurrying big for little reasons!” They are living their lives in the *passionate pursuit of mediocrity!* They are giving their time, talent and treasure to things that have little or no eternal value. And while they certainly have that freedom of choice, I also have the same freedom of choice not to be detracted and detoured by their worldly priorities. So if you will let them, these kinds of carnal Christians will eat up all of your time and energy and, at the end of the day, you will have little of eternal value to show for it. At least nothing that you will want to lay at Christ’s feet on Judgment Day!

So for me, or for any leader, to intentionally give ourselves to the *practice of partnership*, means we have to live a life of *planned neglect*, so that we can focus on the key people who are increasingly having a great impact for the Kingdom of God. That alone is *strategic living* and *strategic leading!*

Principle:  
*Strategic living and strategic leading is based upon the practice of partnership.*



## 11. THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

Both the Bible and personal experience remind us that there is *strength and safety in numbers*. As we have already seen in this study, there is a *power in partnership* that we do not have individually or in isolation. This is the “people power” that is demonstrated by any successful partnership – whether in the military, in ministry, in marriage, in business, in politics or in sports. There is a collective power in a good partnership that cannot be experienced by yourself. That’s why the Bible calls us into *koinonia...relationship...fellowship... partnership*. Whether in *worship, work or warfare* – there is *power in partnership!* But the leader who is trying to “lead alone” is vulnerable and weak.

Principle:

In *worship, work and warfare*, there is *power in partnership*. Conversely, there is weakness and vulnerability in isolation.

The Biblical principle is absolutely clear about this *power of partnership*. *Two are stronger than one*. As the wise man of Ecclesiastes reminded us: “**Two are better than one**” and “**a cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart**” (Ecc. 4:9-12).

Jesus underscored both the *power* and *protection* of partnership by sending out the disciples “**...two by two**” (Lk. 10:1). We find no Biblical accounts where Jesus sent

out any of His disciples by themselves. He knew they needed the *strength of companionship* to keep them from doubt and defeat.

It is because of this *power in partnership* that the Bible exhorts us to stay in *worship* and *fellowship* with other believers on a regular basis.

**“Let us not give up *meeting together* as some are in the habit of doing, but let us *encourage one another* – and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:25).**

So, let me say it once again: “*There is strength and safety in numbers*. Satan, as the “...**prowling lion**” (1 Pet. 5:8), is always looking for the *isolated sheep* – or for the *isolated shepherd* – to attack and destroy! Remember, it was only when the disciples were isolated from each other that they failed and denied the Lord.

Also, I have found that the more *intense* the partnership is, the more *powerful* it becomes. That’s why you have to sometimes *neglect some relationships and partnerships* in order to focus on more productive ones. Jesus demonstrated that with the Twelve...the three (Peter, James and John)...and the one (John the beloved).

When it comes to ministry and mentoring, I have often summarized my philosophy of partnership this way:

*“Win the winnable...teach the teachable... commission the responsible – and spend as little time as possible with the rest!”*



And as was stated earlier, it is “the rest”, those non-responsive people and partnerships that will “eat your time up” with little or no results. There is *power in partnership* – but ONLY *if you chose the right partners!*

But the *power* of partnership is not in our *uniformity* or *conformity* – but in our *diversity!* In both marriage and ministry, I do not need a partner or partners who are *just like me*. I need someone who is *different than I am* – someone with a different temperament, a different personality, with different strengths and different spiritual gifts than I have. I don’t need a *clone* of me or a *copy* of me. I need someone who is a *compliment* to me – someone who *completes me* and helps make me into the *whole person* God created me to be.

Principle:

The power of Christian partnership is in our *diversity*,  
not in our *uniformity* or *conformity*.

In the body of Christ, it is not “*unity through uniformity*” that gets the attention of the world – but rather “*unity in the midst of diversity*.” Even though the church began *homogeneously* in Jerusalem – it ultimately became *heterogeneous* through the dispersion brought about by persecution and obedience to the Great Commission.

The controversy between the *Grecian Jews* and *Hebraic Jews* over the “...**daily distribution of food**” to the widows and orphans is a case in point. It was the *Grecian Jews* of the diaspora who felt their widows and orphans

were being neglected. The case was presented to the Apostles to solve. They said this to the body of believers:

**“...chose seven men from among you ...full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the world. This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen,...Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas...They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.”**

It is instructive to note that all 7 men chosen had *Greek names!* By entrusting the leadership into the hands of the very ones who were complaining, they quickly solved the problem! That was a great step of faith in partnership! As a result we read of a renewed church growth.

**“...the word of God spread. The *number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith*” (Acts. 6:1-7).**

Another example of this “*unity in diversity*” was the leadership at Antioch. We read:

**“In the church at Antioch there were *prophets and teachers; Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.*” (Acts. 13:1).**

Here is a spiritual partnership composed of the following diverse men: Barnabas, a *Jew from Cyprus*; Simeon, a *Jew with at Latin nickname – ‘Niger’ (‘the black’)* – who moved in Roman circles; Lucius, from *Cyrene in North Africa*; Manen, reared in the *court of Herod –‘high society’*; and Saul, a *radical rabbinical Jew from Tarsus!* Talk about diversity! When the Spirit of God can call into partnership that kind of diversity, the world will stand up and take notice! That’s the kind of partnership that has *power* that will impact the watching world!

However, as long as the church only congregates along racial, ethnic, tribal or caste lines, we have lost or minimized our witness to the world – which is also divided along those same lines! The principle is clear: *A racially divided church has little or nothing to say to a racially divided world.* But when we build covenant relationships and partnerships across racial and cultural lines, the world stops and takes notice! That’s why Jesus told His disciples: **“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another”** (Jn. 13:35).

Therefore, the *greater our love for each other, the more powerful our partnership is for the Kingdom of God!*

Principle:

The *power of partnership* flows out of our *love* for each other and demonstrated in the midst of our diversity.



## 12. THE *PURITY* OF PARTNERSHIP

If there is *power in partnership*, that partnership gains its power through *purity*. Whether in marriage or ministry, the greatest single destroyer of partnerships is *impurity*. It matters not whether the impurity is in *motive, morals* or *money* – it will always bring the seeds of destruction into any relationship. Once a partner becomes impure in *any area*, the partnership begins to decay. That's because *character* is the very heart of a partnership – and *character* is based upon *truth, transparency* and *trust*. It is impossible, then, to separate *purity* and *power*. The moment you compromise your *purity*, you also compromise your *power*.

Principle:

There is *power in partnership* when there is *purity in partnership*. When we *compromise our purity*, we also *compromise our power*.

The Bible exhorts us to a life of *purity* – which is often called *holiness*. First of all, there is the general *collective call to purity*. As you read these following verses, I remind you that they are addressed to *Christians*, not to pagans.

- **“Come near to God and He will come near to you, wash your hands you sinners and *purify* your hearts, you double-minded”** (Ja. 4:8).
- **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins**

**and *purify us* from all unrighteousness”**  
(1 Jn. 1:9)

- **“...Jesus Christ...gave Himself for us to *redeem us*...and to *purify* for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good”** (Titus 2:13-14).

Secondly, there are many verses about *purity* that specifically have to do with our partnerships in marriage and ministry. And I am beginning with the words of the Apostle Paul where he describes his own ministry motivation. It is one of the most incredible ministry resumes in the New Testament – and I am personally challenged and convicted every time I read it! Note how Paul emphasizes the key partnership virtues that we have already seen: *love, purity* and *power*.

**“We put no stumbling block in anyone’s path, so that *our ministry will not be discredited*. Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance, in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in *purity*, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere *love*; in truthful speech and in the *power* of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet**

**regarded as imposters; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying and yet we live on; beaten and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich, having nothing, and yet possessing everything” (II Cor. 6:3-10).**

Paul makes this same emphasis on *pastoral purity* in one of his mentoring letters to young Timothy:

**“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in *purity*” (I Tim. 4:12).**

Later in that same letter he exhorts this young pastor to walk circumspectly and purely in his relationship with women:

**“Treat...older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with *absolute purity*” (I Tim. 5:2).**

And, in his final mentoring letter to his young son in the faith, Paul again exhorts Timothy to a life of *private* and *public purity*.

**“Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace...out of a *pure heart*” (II Tim. 2:22).**

Tragically, the marriages and ministries of many promising pastors and Christian leaders, young and old, have been destroyed by *impurity* in either *motive, message, morals* or *money!* Down through the centuries they have proven to be the BIGGEST destroyers of ministers and ministries. And it all started when the leader began to compromise in some small way his or her *purity* before God, spouse, congregation, and the world.

Principle:

Impurity in *motive, message, morals* or *money* will destroy your partnerships in both *marriage* and *ministry*.

There is *power in partnership* – but only if there is *purity of partnership!* Since *possessions (money and material things)* usually become the first place where *impurity* takes place, let's turn to that area of partnership.



### 13. THE POSSESSIONS OF PARTNERSHIP

The Bible often reminds us that *we own nothing*. The earth and everything in it belong to God by virtue of creation (Ps. 24:1). Therefore, at best we are just *stewards* of some of God's possessions during the time of our brief sojourn here. Job rightly summarized our situation when he lamented: "**Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart**" (Job 1:21). Job reminds us that we brought *nothing* into this world, and we will take *nothing* out of it. Between our *birth date* and our *death date*, we are just entrusted with the stewardship of God's possessions. So, a crucial principle of partnership is *stewardship over ownership*.

Principle:  
Authentic Biblical partnership  
is based upon *stewardship* rather than *ownership*.

Therefore, since we are the *stewards* rather than the *owners*, Paul exhorts us to always "**...boast in the Lord**" (I Cor. 1:31). Nothing originates with us. Everything comes to us from God's gracious and sovereign hand: life, family, time, talent, health, spiritual gifts, opportunities. Also, all of our relationships, friendships and partnerships are orchestrated by Him. In reality, we cannot point to anything and use the possessive pronoun – "mine." If we are honest, we have to say of everything – "His." For the Christian, it is never "my life...my house...my car...my money...my church...my ministry." *Everything belongs to Him.*

The early church demonstrated this *principle of stewardship* in a very practical and loving way by holding everything in common.

**“All the believers were *one in heart and mind*. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had...There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands and houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need” (Acts 4:32).**

Often this passage is interpreted as a primitive form of *communism* – when it is really *koinonia*! We try to explain away this practice by the early church as impractical *socialism* – when in reality it is practical *stewardship*!

Paul reflected this spirit of *stewardship over ownership* when he wrote to the saints at Corinth: **“I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well”** (II Cor. 12:15). That kind of total *self-giving* is the very essence of servant leadership!

What Paul described in that statement is exactly what Jesus did on the cross for each of us – He totally **“expended Himself”** for us! And this again reminds us the *price of partnership*. That’s why there is no such thing as “cheap leadership.”

I am also confident that the primary reason God has blessed and prospered the western Church is so that we

could *prosper others with our possessions* – not hoard them for ourselves! Often times however, there is far too wide a gap between the “standard of living” and “standard of giving” of the western Christian and that of the Lord’s national brethren in the Third World. There is also a big gap between the possessions of the missionary and the possessions of the national partner. I don’t believe this kind of materialistic gap is pleasing to the Lord. How can we western

Christians justify living in the lap of luxury when our brothers and sisters in Christ live in the lap of misery?!

- While we live in big houses – they live in mud huts
- While we drive luxury SUV’s – most of them don’t even have a bicycle
- While we are in cyber-space – they do not have a telephone

Many of us western Christians need to again think and pray through our understanding of the “*oneness of the body of Christ*” and our *abundance* in the face of their *poverty*!

**“For who makes you different from anyone else? *What do you have that you did not receive?* And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?” (1 Cor. 4:7).**

So, *possessions* become one of the greatest places that a partnership is *tested*. How you view “your possessions”

will quickly reveal the true nature of your partnerships in the body of Christ. Your partnerships will reveal whether you see your possessions as a *tool* or a *treasure*. Your *use* or *abuse* of them will reveal whether you have the heart and mind-set of a *steward* or that of an *owner*.

Principle:

*Possessions* usually become the first place that partnerships are tried and tested – whether in parenting or pastoring.

#### 14. THE PROSPERITY OF PARTNERSHIP

The Bible is clear here – *God bless us so that we will be a blessing to others. He prospers us with possessions so that we will use them to prosper others.* God does indeed want to prosper His children. But He wants to prosper us spiritually first. If we gain *material prosperity* without *spiritual prosperity*, it will destroy us and others around us. That's why in God's partnership economy, *righteousness* must precede *riches*. Over and over again, we have seen the principle demonstrated that *"Riches without righteousness produce ruin."* But once we gain a *stewardship mentality*, we will see our possessions as a source of blessings for the benefit of others – not a personal treasure to be hoarded.

Principle:

*Riches without righteousness produces ruin.*  
That's why *spiritual prosperity* must precede *material prosperity*.

God said to Abraham: **"I will bless you, and make you a blessing"** (Gen 12:1-3). We are *"blessed to be a blessing."* We are simply to be a *clean conduit* through which God can flow His blessings to others. When we begin to hoard the blessings for ourselves, we become like the Dead Sea. There is a great concentration of mineral and material wealth – but nothing can live in it! That's what concentrated riches usually do to people.

Jesus underscored this principle when He said: **"It is more blessed to give than to receive"** (Acts 20:35). And yet, when you listen to many Christians who are always

“begging” and “asking for money,” you would get the idea that “...**it is more blessed to receive than to give!**”

Jesus also taught that God will give back to us in proportion to what we give to others.

**“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you”** (Lk. 6:38).

Likewise, Paul reminds us of the “Law of the Farm” that says: **“If we sow sparingly, we reap sparingly,”** and **“if we sow bountifully we will reap bountifully”** (II Cor. 9:6).

Principle:

The ‘Law of the Farm’ assures us that we will *reap what we sow* – whether positively or negatively.

Peter demonstrated this same spirit when he called his **“...partners in the other boat”** to *cash in on the prosperity of his abundant catch of fish* (Lk. 5:7). He did not hoard the catch to himself. He shared his prosperity with his partners. When God blesses us with prosperity and abundance, it is not just for ourselves. It is *always* so that we can be His *channel of blessing* to others in need. Note these timely words of Paul:

**“At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be**

**equality, as it is written: ‘He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little’ (II Cor. 8:14-15).**

Whenever, wherever and however God prospers us, it is for the benefit of others. Therefore, our...

- *Prosperity* is for their *poverty*
- *Plenty* is for their *privation*
- *Riches* is for their *relief*
- *Abundance* is for their *adversity*
- *Luxury* is for their *lack*
- *Blessings* are for their *barrenness*



That's the prosperity of partnership!





## 15. THE *PRAISE* OF PARTNERSHIP

When our spiritual and financial partnership blesses others, it produces *praise* and *thanksgiving* to God. Whenever you have been helped and blessed by someone else's generosity, you are naturally filled with thanksgiving toward them. You have an "attitude of gratitude" toward the person who has blessed you. As someone demonstrates the *spirit of a steward*, and uses the resources God has entrusted to them to bless someone else, *praise* and *thanksgiving* arise to God. Their generosity becomes like "**...an aroma pleasing to the Lord**" from the sacrifice on an altar (Lev. 1:9; II Cor. 2:14-16). It is just as pleasing to God as Christ's sacrifice on the cross (Eph. 5:2)!

Principle: Possessions shared with people and partners results in <i>praise</i> .
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The Apostle Paul wrote about the relationship between our *giving* and the resulting *gratitude* of others this way:

**"Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increased your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be *generous* on every occasion, and *through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God*. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of**

***thanks to God.* Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will *praise God* for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else” (II Cor. 9:11-15).**

Paul clearly understood the relationship between the giving of *possessions* and the offering of *praise*. As a result, he praised God for the financial partnership of the Philippian Church:

**“I thank my God every time I remember you...I always pray with joy because of your *partnership in the Gospel* from the first day until now...Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the Gospel...not one church shared with me in the matter of *giving and receiving* except you only...*you sent me aid again and again* when I was in need...the gifts you sent...are a *fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God*” (Phil. 1:3; 1:14-19).**

The Westminster Confession reminds us that the chief end of man is to “...**glorify God and enjoy Him forever.**” That means that we were created to live for the “...**praise of His glory**” (Eph. 1:12).

Principle:

Giving to man brings *glory* to God. Therefore, a right use of our *possessions* results in *praise* to the Lord.

Partnership in marriage and ministry then, is one of the greatest means to the end for which each of us was created! Our relationships were designed by God to generate *praise*. So if we live our lives with the *priority of partnership* – we will one day hear Him say: “*Well done, good and faithful servant!*”



## 16. THE PAIN OF PARTNERSHIP

Every relationship and partnership in life will either result in *pain* or *pleasure*. There are no *emotionally neutral partnerships* – whether in marriage or ministry. It is sobering to remember that in a fallen and rebellious world, *there are no perfect partnerships!* That's because *there are no perfect people!* Because all of us are *sinners by birth* and *sinners by choice*, we will always cause some *pain* in every relationship and partnership in which we enter! All partnerships in marriage and ministry are characterized by a mixture of *pain* and *pleasure*.

Principle:

There are no *perfect partnerships* on earth.  
Therefore, every partnership in marriage or ministry will  
result in both *pain* and *pleasure*.

Jesus' partnerships with the disciples often pained His heart due to their immaturity, carnality, argumentative spirit, hardness of heart – and general slowness to learn! They were not an easy bunch of men to mentor! And that realization gives me encouragement and patience in my own mentoring ministry.

No doubt Jesus was especially heartbroken by the defection and betrayal of Judas – one of the trusted “inner circle” of disciples. After all, you do not entrust your ministry money to someone you do not trust. Judas was originally a trusted member of the “inner circle” of Christ's earthly partnerships. But as we saw in the previous chapter, Judas failed the “money test” in his partnership

with Christ and the other disciples. Possessions possessed him – and ultimately led to his betrayal of Jesus, as well as his own death by suicide. How often, then, do our possessions provoke pain in our partnerships!

In similar fashion, Paul was often disappointed and pained by the immaturity and carnality of some of his new converts and young partners. Note carefully the following examples...

- Concerning some of the Galatians Christians he wrote: **“My children, for whom I am again in the *pains of childbirth* until Christ is formed in you”** (Gal. 4:19).
- He warned Timothy of the dangers of the “Prosperity Preachers” who were distorting the Gospel for gain: **“...he is conceited and understands nothing. He has been...robbed of the truth and...thinks that godliness is a means to financial gain”** (I Tim. 6:5).
- He was pained by the division between two of his women partners who had broken fellowship with each other: **“I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord...”** (Phil. 4:2).
- He was heartbroken by those who denied the faith and deserted him: **“You know that everyone in the province of Asia has**

***deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes***” (II Tim. 1:15).

- And Paul was especially grieved over the defection of his friend and partner, Demas, of whom he sadly wrote: “...**Demas, because he loved this world, had *deserted me*...**” (II Tim. 4:10).

There is no such thing as *partnership without pain* – whether in marriage or in ministry! Sometimes it is our fault and sometimes it’s our partners. Because we are sinners saved by grace, we all err at some time or other. Hopefully, as both sides mature in Christ, there is more joy than sorrow in our relationships.

When we seek to build covenant partnerships, the *pleasures are always greater than the pains!* Let’s conclude this study of partnership with a wonderfully positive principle.

Principle:

In a fallen world, there are no *painless partnerships*.  
But *agape partnerships* will always result in more  
*pleasure than pain*.





## 17. THE *PLEASURE* OF PARTNERSHIP

As we have already seen a number of times in this study, *God created us for relationships*. Therefore, all of our relationships and partnerships in life will either be characterized by *pain* or *pleasure*. They will either impact us positively or negatively. Every primary relationship will indelibly inscript our lives. They will impact our emotionally DNA for the rest of our lives.

Through personal experience every married couple or parent knows this principle well! There has never been a marriage east of Eden that did not experience some serious pain! There has never been a family that has not experienced some intense pain in their inter-personal relationships. Adolescence is often a time when there is the most pain in the parent-child relationship! And because the emotional immaturities and insecurities of adolescence are not often dealt with, they are dragged into future marriage relationships – creating more pain than pleasure! However, when we face our immaturities and insecurities by the wisdom of God's Word and the power of His Spirit, *our relationships and partnerships can increasingly grow from pain to pleasure*.

The Apostle Paul delighted in his beloved “**sons in the faith**” – like Timothy (I Tim. 1:2; I Cor. 4:17). Just listen to his pleasure and joy as he writes to his partners – and note how affectionately he speaks of them:

Principle:  
*Immaturities and insecurities create pain in partnerships.  
But healing and holiness produce pleasure in  
partnerships.*

- **“Tychicus...dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord”** (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7).
- **“Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier”** (Phil. 2:25).
- **“Euodia and Syntyche...these women contended at my side in the cause of the Gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life”** (Phil 4:2-3).
- **“Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother...”** (Col. 4:9).
- **“My fellow prisoner, Aristarchus...”** (Col. 4:10).
- **“Mark, the cousin of Barnabas... Jesus, who is called Justus...the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God; and they have proved a comfort to me”** (Col. 4:10-11).

- **“Epaphras...my fellow prisoner, a servant of Christ Jesus...”** (Col. 4:12-13; Philm. 23).
- **“Our dear friend, Luke the Doctor...”** (Col. 4:14).
- **“Epaphras...Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers...”** (Philm. 23-24).
- **“Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me”** (Rom. 16:3).
- **“Andronicus and Junias...who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the Apostles, and they were in Christ before I was”** (Rom. 16:7).

The phrases that characterize his partnerships are:  
**“Fellow workers...chosen in the Lord...by the Lord...my dear friends...sons of faith...whom I love.”**

QUESTION: *“Are your family relationships and ministry partnerships characterized by that kind of love and affection?”*

If not, we need to ask God for fresh faith – and obedience – to build those kinds of Kingdom partnerships!

The people Paul had won to the Lord and mentored in faith were his “...**joy and crown**” before the Lord on Judgment Day (Phil. 4:1; I Thess. 2:19).

Principle:  
Partnerships are the *crowning touch* of your life and ministry.

In my own case, my *physical children* and *spiritual children* bring the greatest joy and satisfaction to my life. And now the joy of mentoring has extended to our grandchildren – 10 at this present time! *There are no pleasures in life to compare with birthing and discipling physical and spiritual children for the glory of God and the good of humanity!* Those relationships and partnerships give you the assurance that you have not lived in vain.

When you *invest your life in people*, there will be a LOT of pain and disappointments. But in the long run, the *pleasure of partnership* far outweighs the *pain of partnership!*

May you take these “Principles of Partnership” and apply them to your life, marriage and ministry in such a way that *God will be glorified... people will be edified... the church will be unified... and the world will be evangelized!*

## PART II PRINCIPLES OF PARTNERSHIP

In Part 2 of this study, we will see that authentic Biblical partnership is build upon the following characteristics...

1. Truth
2. Time
3. Teaching
4. Talking
5. Touching
6. Thoughtfulness
7. Thanksgiving
8. Talents
9. Testing
10. Tears
11. Toil
12. Trust

As we have seen throughout this study, *partnership* is one of the defining words of the Christian life. It is the reality of *partnership* that distinguishes Christianity from the other religions of the world. Because our faith is a *relational faith*, the only things in life that are eternal are our *relationships*. That's why authentic Christianity has a *people priority* rather than a *program priority*. While religion is based on *ritual, rules, and regulations*, Christianity is based on *relationships* – from start to finish.

Also, Christian relationships are both *vertical* and *horizontal*. We first of all **“Love the Lord our God with all our heart...soul...and mind,”** and then we **“Love our**

***neighbor as ourselves***” (Matt. 22:37-38). So, the Christian faith avoids the two extremes of an exclusive *God focus* or *man focus*. Our faith is a balance of both – and one is demonstrated by the other.

The Bible assures us that the way we know we have ***“...passed from death unto life”*** is by this two-fold *love of God* and *love of the brethren* (Jn. 5:24; I Jn. 3:14). Christianity begins, continues and ends with this dual relationship. Our *divine* and *human relationships* are the very heart of Christianity – and our *relationship with God* is validated by our *partnership with our brethren*. That’s why John said:

**“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And He has given us this command: *Whoever loves God must also love his brother*”** (I Jn. 4:20-21).

The Bible makes it clear, then, that our *love for our brothers* is the greatest visible proof that we indeed *love God!* Just as Jesus was the Incarnation in the flesh of God’s love, our love for our brothers is the demonstration and validation of our love and obedience to God. The Apostle John reminds us that it is just not spiritually or emotionally possible to love one without loving the other. He was even stronger in his exhortation about the necessity of our loving our brethren. He said we are a **“liar”** if we claim that we love God and yet do not love our brothers! That’s pretty strong stuff. John does not leave us with any options here for broken spiritual relationships!

Since hate and love are opposite willful and emotional attitudes – John leaves us no room for “...**hating our brothers.**” If we say we “**love God**” then we *must* love our brothers. End of discussion!

Principle:

Our *love for God* is demonstrated by our *love for man*. Therefore, the quality of our *relationship with God* is *demonstrated* and validated by the quality of our *partnership with our brethren*.

Through His free grace, God has called us into a *triune relationship, friendship, and partnership with Himself* (I Cor. 3:9). That’s why the Bible says we have a:

- *Partnership with God* (I Cor. 13:9)
- *Partnership with Christ* (Mk. 16:20)
- *Partnership with His Holy Spirit* (II Cor. 13:14)

Those *triune partnerships* are to be demonstrated through our *partnership with His brethren* (I Cor. 3:6). Since God loves all of His children, we must love them also.

I am stating the obvious when I emphasize the point that the very word *partnership* denotes two or more *people, partners, or parties*. One cannot be in partnership with one’s self. Partnership can only take place within the context of *community, communion, and koinonia*. That’s why *isolation, individualism* and *independence* all destroy relationship, friendship and partnership. The *maturity of our Christian lives is determined by the maturity of our relationships and partnerships!*

Principle:

*Koinonia* is a prerequisite for *communion*.  
*Isolation, individualism and independence* destroy  
community. Our level of maturity is demonstrated by the  
maturity of our relationships

*Partnership in ministry* is like *partnership in marriage*. The same relational principles that make for a good *marriage partnership* also make for a good *ministry partnership*. In fact, the Bible assures us that our *ministry partnerships* can be no better than our *marriage partnership*. One strengthens the other – or one negates the other. That's why a person cannot simultaneously have a *weak marriage* and a *strong ministry*. *A strong marriage relationship is the foundation for strong ministry partnerships*. Therefore, strong and mature ministry partnerships flow out of a strong and maturing marriage partnership. If you strengthen one, you will also strengthen the other. Conversely, to weaken one is to weaken the other. If you want to *grow your ministry*, you must first of all *grow your marriage*.



Principle:

Our *ministry partnerships* can be no better than our *marriage partnership*. A *strong marriage* is the foundation for a *strong ministry*.

Let me give a brief testimony about how partnerships have impacted my life and ministry. First of all, my wife and I have just celebrated our “43<sup>rd</sup> Wedding Anniversary.” That means we have been married a LONG TIME! But we are still learning more about God...more about ourselves...more about each other – every day of marriage. Over the years, we have done a lot of marriage counseling with dozens and dozens of couples. We’ve also taught marriage seminars in America and around the world. But we are still learning about marriage and growing in our relationship with each other! Remember: marriage is never *static*. It is always *dynamic*. That’s because it is a *relationship* – and *all relationships either get better or get worse*. They *never* remain the same. They either result in more and more *pleasure* – or in more and more *pain*. And since Jesus used marriage as the highest and most holy picture of His relationship with His Bride, the church, we have to keep working on our marriage for His glory and for our good! And you have to do likewise if you are married.

So God has used our *marriage partnership* as the *testing* and *training ground* for our *ministry partnerships*. Therefore, one of the greatest joys and privileges of my last 3 decades of ministry through NDI has been my partnership with my beloved national partners around the world! These friendships and partnerships have been one

of the most enriching and rewarding ministry experiences of my life. Even though they have been *mutual mentoring relationships*, I know that I have gained far more from these partnerships than they have. I have grown spiritually, emotionally and relationally through these interracial and cross-cultural partnerships. That's why I entitled this book: "*Growth Through Partnership*." It has been through these local and global partnerships that I have grown as a person and as a Christian leader – and the ministry of NDI has grown in the process. This book was birthed and developed as a result of what I learned, and continue to learn, through the many cross-cultural partnerships the Lord has given me. And I have sought to summarize what I have learned in the previous 15 chapters.

Now, having laid that foundation, I want to conclude with a briefer study of "*12 Principles of Partnership*." I believe that they are the practical *attitudes* and *actions* that nurture healthy and holy partnerships. These 12 principles are built upon the following 4 foundational spiritual virtues:

**1. GRACE:**

**"Surely you have heard about the administration of God's *grace* that was given to me *for you*" (Eph. 3:2).**

**2. GIFTS:**

**"Now to each one the *manifestation (gift)* of the Spirit is given *for the common good*" (I Cor. 12:7).**

### 3. GENEROSITY:

**“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows *generously* will also reap *generously*” (II Cor. 9:6).**

### 4. GRATITUDE:

**“This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God’s people but is also overflowing in *many expressions of thanks to God*” (II Cor. 9:12).**

**“I *thank my God every time I remember you*” (Phil. 1:3).**

Now, let’s build “*12 Practical Principles of Partnership*” on those 4 Biblical cornerstones. I will only take time to outline some of these *relational truths* that make for a good partnership – whether in *marriage* or in *ministry*. Each of these *relational truths* could be expanded into whole chapters or books, but I will leave that to your own study.

1. **TRUTH:** Authentic relationships and partnerships can only grow and flourish within the context of truth. Lies rot and decay any relationship. Truth and lies cannot coexist together – theologically or relationally. They are going in opposite directions. One must dispel and displace the other. Light and darkness do not mix – just like oil and water (II Cor. 6:14-15). Deceit, deception and dishonesty in any form destroy

relationships and partnerships. It is only the “...**truth that sets us free**” (Jn. 8:32). In marriage and in ministry, partners must “...**walk in love**” (II Jn. 6), “...**walk in the light**” (I Jn. 1:7), and “**walk in the truth**” (II Jn. 4).

Principle:

*Truth* is the soil in which healthy relationships grow.

2. **TIME:** It takes *time* – and plenty of it – to build healthy relationships and lasting partnerships. It is impossible to build meaningful relationships quickly. “Hurry” spells the death of loving relationships. Time is the essential building block of all relationships – whether with God, our spouse, our children, our grandchildren, our congregation, our Christian brethren, our ministry partners. There are no time short-cuts to building mature relationships in marriage or ministry. The greater the input of time, the more mature the relationship will be. That’s why Jesus largely spent His public ministry of 3 years building relationships and partnerships with His 12 disciples (Mk. 3:13-14). You can have superficial encounters with multitudes and masses of people – but you can only build partnerships with specific individuals. Each one of them will take *time*.

Principle:

*Time* is the currency that must be invested in building strong partnerships.

3. **TEACHING:** Growing relationships and partnerships require *teaching*. Rich and meaningful relationships do not grow in the soil of ignorance. A good marriage relationship requires a life of learning by both the husband and wife (1 Pet. 3:7). Likewise, meaningful ministry partnerships require constant learning. The more different and diverse the partnership, the greater the need for teaching and learning. This is especially true in *interracial relationships* and *cross-cultural partnerships*. Because there is such a diversity of personality, temperament, natural talents, and spiritual gifts in the body of Christ, relationships and partnerships require life-long teaching and learning.

Principle:

Fruitful relationships do not grow in the soil of ignorance. There must be *live-long teaching* and *life-long learning* for mature and fruitful relationships to blossom.

4. **TALKING:** Teaching necessitates talking. Relationships and partnerships cannot flourish in either *ignorance* or *silence!* Human language and the ability to communicate are what separate man from the animals. Therefore, good *communication* is the very heart of healthy relationships. When communication breaks down, relationships break down! Some societies are more oriented toward *oral communication* while others revolve more around *written communication*. But whether through words, letters, phone calls, faxes, emails – *communication is*

*vital to relationships and partnerships.* The true and living God is a God who *talks* to His people. Likewise, His Spirit motivates us to communicate with each other (Eph. 5:19). Also, in relation to point number one, our *talking must be truthful!* We must say what we mean, and mean what we say.

Principle:

*Talking* is the air that relationship breathes.  
When communication breaks down, relationships  
break down.

**5. TOUCHING:** We should probably begin this with a word of warning. But first, let it be said that we know relationships and partnerships grow through the right kind of positive *touching*. Studies show that effective leaders' interpersonal relationships are characterized by *touching... eye contact... hand-shaking... patting on the shoulder... embracing... hugging* – and in some cultures and contexts, *kissing* (Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 16:20; I Thess. 5:26; I Pet. 5:14). Leaders do not draw-away and pull-back from people. They move in for “close contact.” It is this kind of touching that often keeps relationships from being impersonal, aloof, shallow and superficial. It takes *truth, time, teaching* and *talk* to deeply *touch* another person. Jesus not only *taught*, He constantly *touched* people (Lk. 18:15; Mk. 1:41; I Jn. 1:1). So must we if we want to build deep relationships and partnerships.

HOWEVER, in a time when adultery is rampant among church leaders and their church members, physical, spiritual and emotional touching must be approached

with *wisdom and caution*. Yes, these are powerful ways of *affirming* and *motivating* people. But, as imperfect people in a fallen world, they are also potential ways of opening ourselves to sexual temptations. Physical touching should be limited when it occurs among members of the opposite sex. Even prayer should not be done in private when counseling a person of the opposite sex, because prayer binds our hearts together. Then, before we know it, our bodies have become involved too. Plan wisely in advance: invite your wife to be there, keep the door open, only counsel during office hours, or defer the counseling to another pastor if you sense you might be tempted. Again, be wise! Get wisdom! (Prov. 4:5-7; 23)

Principle:

*When done with caution, safeguards and purity, touching keeps relationships from being shallow and superficial. Effective leaders and partners learn how to deeply touch people – spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally.*

6. **THOUGHTFULNESS:** Rich relationships and fruitful partnerships grow through *relational thoughtfulness*. It is *thoughtlessness* that hurts and harms human relationships – whether in marriage or ministry. Thoughtfulness means that you are *thinking about the other person*. That means that you become *empathetic* rather than *apathetic*. You always seek to put yourself in the other person's shoes. You try to think, feel, and experience what they think, feel, and experience. A selfish person only thinks about himself and acts for his own benefit. A mature person thinks of what will build up his or her partner (Rom. 12:3; 14:1-21; 15:1-2). So relationships in marriage and partnerships in ministry grow through *thoughtfulness*. *Words and acts of thoughtfulness* cost little or nothing to communicate – other than some time and attention. But, they produce great relational results!

Principle:

*Thoughtfulness* enriches relationships and matures partnerships.

7. **THANKSGIVING:** Just as *thoughtfulness* and *thankfulness* build up relationships, *thoughtlessness* and *thanklessness* destroy relationships and partnerships. An *ungrateful spirit* characterizes a sinful and selfish person (Rom. 2:21). Marriage relationships and ministry partnerships break down when either partner begins to take the other for granted. While a grateful attitude nourishes a marriage or ministry, a *thankless spirit* and an *ungrateful attitude* hurt both marriages and ministries. A loss of a sense of *appreciation* always results in a lack of *affirmation*. We no longer say “thank you” to



others because we have come to *expect* things from them. True *thanksgiving* always results in *thanks-living*! Therefore, the Christian life is a call to a life of *thanksgiving to God* and *thanksgiving to others* (Ps. 30:12; Phil. 1:3; Col. 3:15; I Thess. 5:18; Col. 3:15, Rev. 4:9). *Praise to God* and *thanksgiving to others* is the verbal water that causes relationships and partnerships to grow and flourish!

Principle:

*Thanksgiving* is the verbal water that causes relationships to grow and flourish. Therefore, *thanksgiving* and *thanks-living* are characteristics of mature relationships.

8. **TALENTS:** A good marriage and a good ministry are based upon the *appreciation, affirmation* and *appropriation* of the natural talents and spiritual gifts of your partner. God gives different talents to His different children (Matt. 25:14-30). No two people on earth, or no two people in the body of Christ, have the exact same *natural talents* or *spiritual gifts*. God does not need a duplicate of any of us! So, *good relationships and partnerships are built from differences and diversity*. In marriage and in ministry, I need people around me who are different than I am. I do not need another person who is exactly like me. I need someone who is strong where I am weak...talented where I am not...gifted with gifts I do not have. The body of Christ is to have *unity in the midst of diversity* – while the world is only able to have *unity in uniformity* and *conformity*. In the world, our *differences distance us from each other*. But in the church, our *differences are to draw us to each other* (I

Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:1-3). Therefore, a wise church leader draws people and partners around him who compliment him through their God-given differences.

Principle:

Diversity of *talents* enrich relationships and strengthen partnerships. They add both *depth* and *breadth* to marriage and ministry.

9. **TESTING:** Every marriage relationship and every ministry partnership face *times of testing*. God always puts His people through times of testing – oftentimes in the wilderness (Gen. 22:1; I Chron. 29:17; Job 23:10; Ps. 26:2; 66:10; Isa. 48:10; Jer. 11:20; I Cor. 3:13; Heb. 11:17; Ja. 1:12). One of the greatest places He tests the maturity of our agape love is through interpersonal relationships – with people who are different from us! Many times that *relational testing* arises from our differences of nature, race, sexuality, talents, gifts, personality, temperament, and perspective. It is the great differences between *male* and *female* that create so much conflict in marriage. Likewise, it is the great differences within the body of Christ that causes so much conflict and division. When you add to these natural human differences the other elements of *class, culture, caste, education, language* – it is a miracle that any marriage relationship or ministry partnership survives! Then add the further differences of *theology* and *doctrine*, it is little wonder that we have so many tragic *divisions* and *denominations* within the body of Christ! All of our differences in *personality, polemics, polity, position, purpose, practice, and piety* make for great *times of*

*testing* in ministry and mission partnerships! But the *greater the relational test, the greater the testimony* to the watching world!

Principles:

One of the greatest areas of spiritual *testing* is through our relationships and partnerships. But the greater the *test*, the greater the *testimony*.

10. **TEARS:** In a fallen world, where all of our relationships are with other sinners like ourselves, there are no *tearless partnerships*. And whether in marriage or in ministry, it is usually the *testing* that produces the *tears!* When a marriage relationship or ministry partnership fails in a time of testing, the tears always flow – internally or externally. The tears either roll down our cheeks, or roll down our hearts! When we do not meet each other's expectations, tears of disappointment are shed. When immaturity or carnality wins the day, the heart is broken – and tears fall from the eyes of the mature partner, parent, or pastor. Where there are *no tears*, there is usually a *tearing apart* of relationships and partnerships. But, where there are more tears of love, humility, repentance, brokenness, there are fewer *tares* in the Body of Christ. Jesus wept (Jn. 11:35; Heb. 5:7). Paul wept (Acts 20:19; II Cor. 2:4; Phil. 3:18). Every parent and pastor will experience times of weeping (Ps. 126:5). *Weeping* and *winning* go hand-in-hand in parenting, pastoring, and partnership. Tears are the rain from the heart that waters the soil for Christian growth.

Principle:

*Tears* are a result of testing in our relationships.  
*Tears* are the rain from the heart that waters partnerships.

11. **TOIL:** Relationships, friendships and partnerships require *toil* – a lot of *hard work!* Meaningful relationships and fruitful partnerships do not happen accidentally or haphazardly. They are only built *intentionally*. They are always the result of *painful toil*. Good relationships and partnerships are developed and matured by “*blood, sweat and tears!*” All great things in life are the result of *10% inspiration* and *90% perspiration!* The Apostle Paul often pointed to both his *tears* and *toil* in ministry (Acts 20:34-35; II Cor. 11:27; I Thess. 2:7-9; II Thess. 3:8). So, effective ministry is a combination of the “sweat of the brow” and the “tears in the eyes!” The *greater the love, the more the tears* – and the *greater the ministry, the greater the toil!* No great marriage relationship, or no great ministry partnership, is built without toil!

Principle:

Ministry is always a combination of *toil* and *tears*. *Toil* is the sweat of a growing relationship and *tears* are the manifestation of a maturing partnership.

12. **TRUST:** If relationships *begin with truth*, then they are *sustained through trust*. When trust is broken, relationships and partnerships are broken. When trust is betrayed, a person cannot live long enough to totally rebuild and restore that broken trust. Betrayed trust can be *forgiven* – but it will never be *forgotten!* A betrayed or broken trust leaves a lingering doubt in the mind and spirit that will never be fully erased this side of eternity. Trust is always a *character issue*. Our *integrity* stands

Principle:  
Relationships are built on *truth* and matured by *trust*.  
Broken trust can be *forgiven* – but never *forgotten*.  
Our character and integrity are built upon our  
*trustworthiness*.

or falls with our *trustworthiness*. That's why absolute trust is a minimum characteristic for Christian leadership and partnership (Lk. 16:10; I Cor. 4:2; 9:17; Titus 2:10). Paul knew that his personal trustworthiness and faithfulness was a reflection on God's character (II Cor. 1:17-20). If he did not keep his word as God's representative, people would not put their trust in the God he represented. *Fickleness* and *faithlessness* should never characterize a marriage relationship or a ministry partnership. Because God is faithful, we must also be faithful. Since God is trustworthy, we too must be trustworthy, in our *marriage, morals, money, and ministry!*



## CONCLUSIONS

Through these *12 relational principles*, a good partnership in *marriage* or in *ministry* will grow and mature to God's glory. Each *partnership principle* strengthens the others. Weaken one, and you weaken all; strengthen one and you strengthen all.

Think of these *12 relational principles* like a "string of pearls" that you are constantly adding to each day through the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. And as you "string these pearls," remember these words by Peter:

**"His divine power has given us *everything we need for life and godliness* through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.**

**For this very reason, make every effort to *add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.* For if you possess these qualities in *increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ...***

**Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to *make your calling and election sure*. For if you do these things *you will never fall*, and you will receive a *rich welcome* into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Pet. 1:3-11).**

As the church in any country or culture emphasizes these spiritual virtues and relational principles of partnership, the watching skeptical world will take notice. As Jesus said to His 1<sup>st</sup> century disciples: **“*By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another*”** (Jn. 13:35). As the skeptical world of the 1st century watched the early church, they exclaimed: **“*Behold how they love one another!*”** May that be said of church relationships and ministry partnerships in this 21<sup>st</sup> century – *beginning with you and me!* AMEN!