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Four. This is the number of people that made up the team that first took the good news of the Grace Administration to European soil. An amount of people that could fit in a standard four-door vehicle won entire households to the Word in the Roman colony of Philippi. While the team was few in number, Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke made a reverberating impact in this uncharted territory as they stood united and moved the Word. They became an example to the Philippian believers they witnessed to as they moved together as one. Paul later wrote an epistle to these believers which can help us today to stand united as we move the Word. We'll consider two principles detailed in Philippians and practiced by this team to empower us to do the same: having the same standard and striving together in the spiritual competition.

To have the desired unity of heart, we must have the same rule, or standard. Picture your favorite sports team. What helps this team be successful is that each member on this team abides by the rules of the game. Imagine this same team if each player were playing by a different rule book. One player might be playing by the American football rule book, another by the soccer rule book, another by the rugby rule book, and another by the basketball rule book. These players would experience frustration and failure. They would be out of the game until they could get unified on the standard. This principle translates to the competition of life. Without the same standard, how can we have unity?

Philippians 3:16:

Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

The believers in Philippi would have seen Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke walking by the same rule and minding the same thing. These men were unified in thought and in action and provided an excellent example to pattern after. The standard that they held common was the gospel pertaining to Christ, the truths pertinent to the Grace Administration, and this standard has not changed for us today.

Another helpful principle to empower us to stand united and move the Word is to strive together in the spiritual competition.

Philippians 1:27 tells us “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.” The English words “striving together for” are one Greek word, *sunathleō*, which can be understood, “to strive at the same time with another; to render mutual help in contesting.” In team sports and in the spiritual competition, it takes work and a purposeful joint effort to accomplish the goal. With the same standard, it’s possible to conduct our lives harmoniously. But *effectiveness* together does not happen overnight. Bonds of trust grow and strengthen as we serve and move forward together, supporting one another in the spiritual competition. We hold the same standard; however, striving together to move the Word can look different for each group of disciples. It will look different according to who’s on the team, number of people on the team, the environment, culture, etc. Striving together requires communication and flexibility. Let’s take a look at our first-century team and learn from aspects of how they moved the Word together.

They were unified on their goal of moving the Word in Philippi; however, the details were not explicitly laid out. They had to think things through. They would need to chart a course to their destination. Perhaps they worked together gathering supplies, communicating with each other, making sure their needs were met to successfully voyage from city to city by ship. Once in Philippi, they were not haphazard in their approach to move the Word; they continued to move with unity as a team.

Acts 16:13:

And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

This united team was aware of the culture. Philippi was a military colony with a sparse Judean population, and consequently there were no synagogues (where they might typically go to speak the Word). So, they adapted and they determined to go to where there would be a receptive audience, this place of prayer by the riverside. And this Word-moving team didn’t stop there. They continued to believe for more spiritual victories as they actively spoke words of life and deliverance. The unified determination and commitment of Paul and his three companions led to the start of the Philippian household.

By practicing principles recorded in God's Word and learning from the early Church, we can stand united and move the Word today. With the same rule, we have a standard outside of ourselves to refer to, which makes standing unified possible. Then, with all that we are, we strive together as a team to move the Word. We are exponentially more effective at moving the Word as we stand united!

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