

Where Two or Three are Gathered – Numbers Matter.



All quotations are from the New King James Version of the Bible.

Psalms 68:5 A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, *Is* God in His holy habitation. God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound into prosperity; But the rebellious dwell in a dry *land*. God is the God of families. He made us this way on purpose.

Ecc 4:9 Two are better than one, seeing they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falls, and there is not a second to lift him up. Also if two should lie together, they also get heat: but how shall one be warmed alone? And if one should prevail against him, the two shall

withstand him; and a threefold cord shall not be quickly broken.

This is generally sound advice. Both practically and spiritually. God Himself believes this.

Genesis 2:18 And the LORD God said, “*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.*”

Matthew 18:15 “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. “But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘*by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.*’ “And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church (assembly). But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. “For where two or three are gathered together in My name (Yah’ishua = God the Saviour = Jesus), I am there in the midst of them.”

For my brother to sin against me, I need to be seeing him quite a lot. Brothers I never see or hear from, don’t generally sin against me, not that I am aware of anyway. Jesus was telling the disciples these things because they were called to be in close relationship and contact with one another. While this kind of necessary fellowship is wonderful and generally positive in effect it is not without challenges. But worth the challenges!

Note how Jesus starts with advising ‘privately between the two parties’ and then ‘one or two more’. This is the best option! In human thinking this may not generally be what occurs to us. We may have been conditioned to believe that the more the better. Well, it was a crowd that called for Jesus to be crucified. It was a mob that stoned Stephen and beat Paul and others. We have a better chance to be rational and less hasty in twos or threes. We have a better chance to hear the voice of the Spirit and our own consciences.

Mark 6:7 And He called the twelve to *Himself*, and began to send them out two *by two*, and gave them power over unclean spirits.

Luke 10:1 After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.

Jesus here demonstrates the importance of not being alone in His work. Also that two will do.

Luke 9:12 When the day began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, “Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here.” But He said to them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people.” For there were about five thousand men. Then He said to His disciples, “Make them sit down in groups of fifty.” And they did so, and made them all sit down. Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke *them*, and gave *them* to

the disciples to set before the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them.

Here we have a huge crowd. Five thousand men plus women and children as only the men were numbered. Too many to feed efficiently as a single group. So the disciples made them sit in groups of fifty. Fifty was manageable by one or two disciples. Being practical when it comes to numbers is important to Jesus. He is the most practical Person ever! The disciples learnt from this exercise and implemented the lesson later as we shall see in the book of Acts.

Luke 24:13 Now behold, two of them were travelling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, "and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. "Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. "When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. "And certain of those *who were* with us went to the tomb and found *it* just as the women had said; but Him they did not see." Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to stay with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"

Two of the disciples were travelling together. We are only told the name of one, Cleopas who is not mentioned anywhere else in scripture. Jesus did not appear to them because they were important. We don't have to be special for Jesus to make Himself known to us, but being two or three together in the name of Jesus or because of Jesus makes us special as far as Jesus is concerned. When the two of them sat at table with Jesus He was revealed to them. How many does it take to break bread to not forget the body and blood of the Lord Jesus? Two will do very nicely. How many does it take to have Jesus open the scriptures to us? Where two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus, He is there and He does His usual stuff. He teaches. He heals. He refreshes our spirits. He builds up. There is no limit to what Jesus will do when He is there.

Acts 2:36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together (Greek sense is 'about the same thing' = in harmony) and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, Here the number of disciples goes from one hundred and twenty to around three thousand one hundred and twenty, in one day! Repenting, being baptized in the name of Jesus the Anointed One for the remission of sins qualified them to receive the Holy Spirit and be added to the number of the disciples, the body of Jesus. They continued in the apostles teaching and community with each other. They broke bread and prayed together. But when numbers become so large, numbers have to be taken into account when it comes to these vital things. So we see them daily in the temple outer courts, en masse, supporting the apostles in their making known the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus the Anointed One. The temple was a public space, not belonging to the disciples. A great place to share the good news with all those who were there on religious business. Public place outreach is suitable for support by large numbers of disciples.

Teaching and encouraging the disciples though was not done en masse in the public place of the Temple. This was best done in small groups, house to house. Breaking bread was simply having their meals together, house to house. Whenever they came together to share a meal they broke the loaf and shared the cup to not forget the body and blood of the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God slain for us. By this means they could keep clean consciences, After the meal, usually in the late evening, all in each house could use the gifts that had been distributed by the Lord Jesus for the mutual edification of them all. By being gathered in smaller groups house to house in this way all could learn to pray and care for their brothers and sisters and learn to use their gifts. In this we see the disciples employing the practical lesson learned in the feeding of the five thousand, to break the number into smaller manageable groups. For this we need open hearts and open homes – only really possible by the operation of the Holy Spirit in each individual disciple. By this all men knew they were the disciples of the Lord Jesus, by their demonstrated love for one another.

Acts 5:42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ (Anointed One-King).

Outreach was possible and effective house to house. That is inside the house, not at the door!

Acts 9:26 And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought *him* to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out.

Here Barnabas has received Saul, as Christ had received himself. This is the building block of the body of Christ, individual disciples knit together by the love of God shed upon them by the Holy Spirit. Truly God sets the solitary in families! These relationships are essential to the building up of the body of Christ.

Acts 11:22 Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul.

Again Barnabas seeks out Saul and brings him as a fellow worker. Behind the scenes, though, it is the Holy Spirit who is knitting brothers together, for His purposes.

Acts 11:29 Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

By now it is evident to all that Barnabas and Saul are fellow workers, a team in Christ.

Acts 12:25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark. Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away.

Just like Jesus choosing His apostles and sending them out in twos, The Spirit of Christ, Who is the mind of Christ, works in exactly the same way.

Acts 20:17 From Miletus he (Paul) sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them: “You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, “serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; “how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house,

Here Paul is explaining to the elders how He served them in the gospel and in teaching both in public (large numbers – evangelising) and house to house – small numbers for teaching, care and encouragement. He says this so that the elders will learn from Paul’s example and evangelise in Public and care for the flock house to house out of genuine concern.

Acts 20:28 “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. “Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

Paul knows that after his departure some elders will raise themselves up and draw disciples after themselves. Those who draw the disciples after themselves tend to avoid dividing their followers into small groups to serve one another. Instead they prefer to get all their followers into one location at one time so they can personally lead them wherever they want to take them. Sadly today this is seen as normal, with a solitary elder (The Pastor, Vicar, Priest etc) dominating the flock he has drawn after himself. It should not be so among the children of

God. In this Paul was only applying practically and relevantly to the situation in the local assembly that which Jesus had warned His disciples about here:

Matthew 23:1 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. "Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. "For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. "But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. "They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, (gatherings) "greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' (Teacher, Teacher) "But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. "And do not be called masters (director, leader); for One is your Master, the Christ. "But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. "And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

The desire to be seen to be special may lead to dividing the body of Christ locally. Through exalting oneself and allowing the disciples to refer to one by whatever title sets them apart as leader instead of the Christ. Sadly this is so common that it is accepted as 'good' and not challenged as it should be among those bought with the blood of God's own Son. Multiple elders with shared oversight/care is the way to safety in this minefield.

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Hebrews 3:12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "*Today*," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin

This is only possible where brothers and sisters dwell in unity. Having received one another as Christ received us. Without a two or three type close relationship I will not be aware that my brother is in trouble and even if I know, I will not be best placed to give help. If I only have superficial chats with fellow big meeting attendees none of this is likely to happen. But God sets the solitary in families!

Hebrews 10:19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

This is a clear healthy exhortation to not forsake coming together in the name of Jesus. Going to a theatre style event with large numbers in the name of a group, 'church' or denomination does not count. Only in genuine one to one, or among as many as can comfortably fit in a home situation, will each member grow in functioning in the gift they have been given. Thereby each one will be built up in their most holy faith in the Head of the assembly, Jesus the Lord, the Anointed One.

Time to ditch 'Churchianity' for the reality of the body of Christ, each member knit together to a few other brothers by the love of God shared in our hearts.

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