

HE SENT THEM OUT TWO BY TWO

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Dr. Victor Choudhrie, whose biblical mentoring God has used to bring about great numbers of house churches in India, and other church planting movement leaders, underscore the importance of workers going out two-by-two.

In a recent training workshop held in a very rural part of South Asia, participants reported that they were sometimes set upon by fanatics and opponents who insulted them and even assaulted them. When asked about their method of approach to local communities, they reported that they normally go out alone. This practice is clearly at odds with the practice of Jesus who sent out the Twelve and the seventy-two in pairs (some manuscripts say 70).

Reasons for Sending out Workers in Pairs

1. Travelling in groups of two or more was Jesus' and the apostles' consistent practice.

To avoid working alone is patently biblical. There are at least three levels of authority for what churches and missions practice: 1) the commands of the New Testament, 2) practices of the New Testament that were not commanded, and 3) church traditions that were neither commanded nor practiced in the NT. Christians historically have preferred to adopt apostolic practices except when those offend local culture or cause more harm than good.

2. There is more power from God when two agree together in prayer.

Jesus promised, "If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven" (Matt. 18:19). Since evangelistic outreach into non-Christian regions faces continual opposition from the devil and from evil persons, workers can benefit from concerted prayer. Two or more who go together can pray together.

3. Two workers can usually bring more spiritual gifts into play than can one.

Since gospel workers have as their objective to evangelize families and plant churches in the homes of receptive folks, they will be better equipped to do so by the gifts of the Holy Spirit in each one of them. God promises to give to churches apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers who can equip those churches (Eph. 4:11-12).

4. One worker may have teaching gifts and another, other practical gifts.

Fulfilling both the Great commandment to love God and neighbour and Jesus' Supreme command to make disciples, dual workers can use both speaking gifts and serving gifts (1 Pet 4:11). The two 'Great' commands ('Great Commandment' and 'Great Commission') are like the two wings of a bird. Working together, the bird flies with confidence. If the feathers of either wing are clipped, it only goes in circles, as do church bodies that fail to balance the two 'Great' commands. Ministries that serve both the spiritual and physical dimensions of local communities normally prove more effective at both than does a ministry that 'specializes' in one or the other.

5. Two workers can experience the Presence of Jesus in their midst.

Two workers can be more certain of the "voice" of the Holy Spirit leading their activities and granting them insight. As soon as the two have led a third to faith in Jesus, they already qualify as a nuclear church in which Jesus dwells (Matt. 18:20). This promise of Jesus makes worship and

Body life a reality from the earliest days of a church plant and provides a model for the reproduction of new cells and congregations.

6. Dual workers serve as reliable witnesses to the outcomes of their work.

When the Apostle Peter went to the home of Cornelius in Caesarea, he took along with him six brothers from Joppa who served as witness to the unexpected outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon non-Jewish believers (Acts 10:45; 11:12). Reliable testimonials can encourage others and confirm outcomes. In some cases, workers can better defend each other in cases of false accusation as well as in courts of law, discouraging wanton attacks against a worker who goes out alone.

7. A pair of workers can encourage each other keep each other accountable.

Lonely and frightened gospel workers can easily fall prey to their fears and to various kinds of temptations, whereas a pair of workers can more easily resist incitement to sin and can reason together about obstacles to their work (2 Cor. 7:6). While it can happen that co-workers come to a glad parting of ways, it is more usual that they remain encouraged by each others companionship. In our experience as mentors of church planters, most serious failures, both moral and strategic, have occurred while workers were travelling *alone* or during the fatigue that follows 'mountain top' ministry, such as Elijah's suicidal depression after his triumph on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18-19).

8. When one worker trains another, they will often go out together for a time.

Neither Jesus nor his apostles made it a practice to work alone; they both normally chose co-workers who were less experienced than themselves, because they saw in their apprentices a potential to become effective workers (Acts 16:1-3). In Acts 13, it is reported that the Holy Spirit sent out Barnabas, the more experienced, and Saul. Later, Saul, called Paul, became the more prominent. Travelling with less experienced workers is a key component of *mentoring*.

9. When one worker is detained at a place, the other can go or return where needed.

Because Paul had taken co-workers with him to most localities, he was later able to leave one at a place or send one where they were recognised (1 Tim. 1:3; Tit. 1:5; Col. 1:7). An independent worker can easily die, become disabled or be detained, leaving earlier contacts undeveloped.

10. A pair of workers appears more serious and important to sceptical communities.

Whereas an individual can be taken as a marginal babbler (Acts 17:18), two may gain a hearing. Local communities will look upon a pair of workers as representatives of a community or an organization, when a single worker may be mistaken for a fool.

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