

Two are Better than One

Satan's greatest victories come when he prompts people to mix just a little error and perversion with a whole lot of truth. That error and perversion destroys the truth and produces something frightening that scares godly people to death (as it should). However, in order to combat the little bit of error, these godly people often have a knee jerk reaction and throw out the heap of truth that accompanied the little bit of error.

I'll give you a for instance. Twenty-five years ago on the campus of Wichita State University, I was invited to a weekly Bible study by some guys who were part of what was called the Wichita Church. It was a great little small group. Folks were on fire for what they were studying. Plus, they already believed we had to be baptized for the remission of our sins. What could be better, I thought. Then I had a couple of Bible studies with the one who invited me and went to a couple of movies with him and some of his friends. I was invited to a bigger group that met once a month on a Friday night. It was an exciting night. There were some things that were red flags for me, but there were other things that I thought, "Hey, this is how it should be done." I was then invited to their citywide Sunday congregational assembly that was meeting in the conference center at a local hotel. I was already a member of a congregation so I never attended that.

I don't actually remember what the issue was over which I dissented with the guy. The timeline on what information I had about this group is hazy. But I do remember that I disagreed with him. He said we'd talk about it again later. I still disagreed with him the second time, and he basically said that if I couldn't come around on this and do what he said, he didn't have time to deal with me because he needed to deal with people who had open and honest hearts.

Some reading this can probably already tell that the group I had come in contact with was part of what is commonly called the Boston Church movement, earlier known as the Crossroads movement. It was a "discipling" movement that sprouted out of a local body of Christians in Florida that was later taken over by a fellow named Kip McKean and led by a church in Boston. As it became more organized, it became known as the International Church of Christ (ICC) and was headquartered in LA. The entire movement was anchored in a "discipling" process that partnered people together. They were called "prayer partners." I don't know how this partnership idea started in the early days of the movement, but it ended up being a mind and relationship control tactic. Just as the fellow who met me started manipulative control tactics that claimed I had to completely agree with whatever he said or he didn't have time for me, the discipling prayer partner exercised complete and absolute control over the disciplined partner. As I investigated the group more, I even found documents that expressly explained how to develop this relationship—when to invite them to which events, how to develop a friendship by inviting them out on social events, who else to connect them with and when so as to maximize social envelopment. One document taught disciplined partners to listen to their disciplers to the point that if told to always wear a red shirt, they should do it because their discipler knew best.

What do we have here? We have a whole lot of truth mixed in with a little bit of error. The whole lot of truth is seen in the excitement about evangelism, the purpose of discipleship, the need for interconnections. The little bit of error is sprinkling in the emotional manipulation and personal control, coupled with the pyramid type structure that ultimately made Kip McKean the uber prayer partner who was over the entire structure and was supposedly directly disciplined by Jesus Christ Himself.

Why bring all of this up? Because **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** says:

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken (ESV).

This is absolute, unadulterated truth. Yet, for the past 20 years, whenever I preach and teach on this passage and suggest that people need to find others to hold them accountable, to challenge them, to provoke them, to work together, to grow, someone inevitably says, "Edwin, have you heard of the Boston Church? What you are suggesting sounds like Prayer Partners. We can't do that." This has happened in multiple congregations all over the country. And I think Satan just sits back and laughs. He was successful. First, he was successful in getting false teaching and error to persuade so many people who got trapped in the manipulative control of the cult of the ICC. But second, and perhaps the even greater coup on Satan's part is he has successfully convinced Christians who want truth to abandon one of God's most successful and powerful tools to help us grow and maintain faithfulness, overcoming

our enemies. He has caused us to isolate spiritually from one another and led us to believe we have a healthy, doctrinal reason for doing so. But we don't.

Two are better than one. Don't believe me. Believe God. He said it. Don't let the devil's tricks persuade you to abandon God's unadulterated truth. Find someone to grow with. You might even find two or three someones to grow with. But don't try to walk this path alone. After all, it is the lone gazelle the mountain lion picks off.

—Edwin L. Crozier