

THE POWER OF A PRAYER TEAM

Matthew 18:18-20

18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. – Matthew 18:18-20 KJV

There is power in praying together. Elijah operated as a solo prophet for years until his ego, pride, and discouragement wiped him out. (1 Kings 19) From that time onward God changed his life and ministry by giving him a prayer partner, a soul-mate, a kindred-spirit intercessor. It was only in that context that the “mantle” could be passed on.

A Biblical Principle

Now there is an interesting biblical principle. Mantles are passed from person to person. Anointing rubs off. As Dr. James Kennedy coined in his Evangelism Explosion training, “It is better caught, than taught.” Passion in prayer, and anointed praying cannot be taught. It is caught, like a cold or a virus it spreads from one person to another. That was certainly the case in the early church with the manifestation and outpourings of the Holy Spirit. The flame spread from person to person. That’s God’s way!

Wearing Out

Back in the Old Testament Moses example reinforces that principle. Moses was a one-man-show until his father-in-law, Jethro, saw the foolishness of his Lone Ranger strategy. Wisely Jethro urged Moses to enlist the help of others in his ministry. His observations were correct;

“What is this thing you are doing to the people? This thing you are doing is not good. You will surely wear away (literally, ‘fading you will fade’) you, and this people with you. This thing is too heavy for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself.” (Exodus 18:14-18

Together, Not Alone

He was advised to set up other wise and godly men to share in the ministry. (verse 21) You see God’s intention is never to have solo servants. God ordained a team ministry for all of his ministering servants from Jethro to Jesus. In the very same context, one chapter later in Exodus 19, and verse 6 God declared, “*You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.*”

Hands Raised to the Throne

Apparently this was a lesson God had been trying to teach his servant Moses. Back in Exodus 17 Moses sent Joshua and the army to fight their first battle with the Amalekites. Moses stood the mountain alone lifting his staff in the air as he prayed for the army. When his arms tired and drooped the battle went poorly for Joshua. When he again lifted his arms high the battle went well. He needed help! Alone is not God’s plan or wisdom. Aaron and Hur saw what was happening and came to Moses’ aid. They stood on his right and left and steadied his hands until the sun went down. So the battle was won.

The clincher in that story is the conclusion. God ordered a memorial to be written (vrs 14-15) So they called the name of the place, "Jehovah-Nissi", or "The Lord Our Banner," because, God said, "Hands were lifted up to the throne of the Lord."

The Spirit Comes On All

Moses was discouraged. The people complained to him day and night. He cried out the Lord concerning the burden of his ministry saying, "Did I give birth to them that I should carry them in my boom? I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me." (Numbers 11) Then the Lord commanded Moses to take seventy elders of the congregation to the tabernacle with him and God would take of the Spirit that was on him and put it on them, and together they would bear the burden of the people.

11. He asked the LORD, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? 12. Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their forefathers? 13. Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!' 14. I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. 15. If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now--if I have found favor in your eyes--and do not let me face my own ruin." 16. The LORD said to Moses: "Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the Tent of Meeting, that they may stand there with you. 17. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit that is on you and put the Spirit on them. They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone.

24. So Moses went out and told the people what the LORD had said. He brought together seventy of their elders and had them stand around the Tent. 25. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do so again.

In Numbers 11:19 the Holy Spirit come on Eldad and Medad, two elders in the congregation, who prophesied. Joshua was outraged and told Moses to rebuke them. His response to that revealed Moses evidently learned the lesson. "And Moses said unto him, Are you envious for my sake? Would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!"

26. 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. 27. A young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." 28. Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' aide since youth, spoke up and said, "Moses, my lord, stop them!" 29. 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!"

THE POWER OF TWO OR THREE

Matthew 18:18-20

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The Benefit of Two (or Three)

Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived gave great advice in the area of minitering in a team, rather than alone. In Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 he proclaimed this principle. "*Two are better than one*" and "*A three-fold cord is not easily broken.*"

9. Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: 10. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! 11. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? 12. Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

The Power of Two (or Three)

Jesus confirms the principle in Matthew 18:18-20 and expands it even further. We call this principle, "The Power of Three."

18. "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19. "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

Here is the secret of the power of two or three.

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I. The Power of Handcuffs

"whatever you bind" – vs 18

II. The Power of Harmony

"if you agree (symphonize, harmonize)" – vs 19

III. The Power of His Presence

"I am in the midst (manifest presence)" – vs 20

Jesus always sent out his disciples in twos, never alone. There is good reason in his doing so – prayer partnership, friendship, defense of one another.

Practical Application

- Prayer Partnerships - "two of you agree as touching anything and ask..."
- Accountability Partners - "as iron sharpens iron."
- Ministry Teams - "A three-fold cord is not easily broken."