



CO2 - Church of Two

Smaller Still

The Transformational Power of Churches of Two

We all know that Jesus called twelve disciples. However, we have missed the fact that he also combined them together in pairs. (Matt 10:2-4, Acts 1:13, etc.) No doubt Jesus had in mind the principle that "two are better than one" (Ecc. 4:9-12). For this reason, it seems likely that the first and most basic expression of church for Jesus was between just two people (Mt. 18:20). To say this another way the Kingdom (the rule and reign of Jesus) is expressed first in a "church of two".

Neil Cole agrees with this idea in his book *Organic Church* by stating that "The basic unit of Kingdom life is a follower of Christ in relationship with another follower of Christ. The micro-form of church life is a unit of two or three believers in relationship. This is where we must begin to see multiplication occur. Let's face it: if we can't multiply a group of two or three, then we should forget about multiplying a group of fifteen to twenty."

The "church of two" is the basic building block for all larger expressions of church.

A Track To Run on

A CO2 (Church of Two) is a powerful context for transformation because it provides both a track to run on and a partner to run with. The two practices that we have chosen as "the track to run on" are rhythms of attention that give priority to listening to the King and noticing His grace in one another. This is in obedience to the instruction in Heb. 3:13 to daily come alongside to encourage one another. As human beings, it seems that when we are learning something new (changing our brain) we need a very clear "track to run on". In simple terms, here's what our CO2 "track" involves: engaging in two practices with one other person as close to daily as possible. (From this simple starting place, these practices spill over into family life, simple churches, etc.)

This is what Paul had in mind when he told Timothy, "Train yourself in godliness... it has value for all things". (1 Tim. 4:6-7) In other words, godly habit patterns are the key to everything. And, those habit patterns are the result of engaging in spiritual disciplines. Just like learning to eat healthy. Just like learning to play tennis. Just like learning to play the piano. You get the picture.

In short, a "church of two" is ...

*Two people (see Eccles. 4:9-12) ...

* Connecting as close to daily as possible (See Heb. 3:13) ...

*Around two foundational spiritual disciplines (see 1 Tim. 4:7-8).

John Eldredge in *Wild at Heart* expresses perfectly how we feel about spiritual disciplines. He writes "The disciplines are never the point. The whole point of a "devotional life" is connecting with God. This is our primary antidote to the counterfeits the world holds out to us. If you do not have God and have him deeply, you will turn to other lovers... The point is simply to do whatever brings me back to my heart and the heart of God." p. 204. That's exactly the point of the CO2 concept!

CO2 Spiritual Discipline #1 – CHECKING IN – Sharing With One Another on a Heart Level

Principle: . Connecting with each other heart to heart. Intimacy is the result of mutual self-disclosure. "Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down." (Romans 12:15, *The Message*) This practice helps us grow towards being what Eldredge calls a "fellowship of the heart". "We check in regularly with one another... out of a desire to watch over one another's hearts (p. 200).

...God is calling together little communities of the heart, to fight for one another and for the hearts of those who have not yet been set free. That camaraderie, that intimacy, that incredible impact by a few stout-hearted souls – that is available. It is the Christian life as Jesus gave it to us. It is completely normal." -*Waking the Dead*

Also, as we listen to each other without trying to fix the other, give advice, or make our feelings go away, we are practicing joy. Joy means we are glad to be together no matter what. Chris Coursey shares in his book *Transforming Fellowship* that "joy is the fundamental ingredient in the formation and expression of personal character" and that without it, it is impossible to learn a new brain skill (p. 7). Checking in grows joy in us and lays the foundation for true character transformation to happen. Many people believe that if we just had the right information, we could change our character. Unfortunately, this is not true. The conclusion of 30 years of study says "that godly character that holds up under pressure and 'suffers well' requires training in specific skills that retrain the way our brain sees the world and responds to people" (Coursey, 10) . Daily checking in retrains our brain in several of the relational skills we need to acquire lasting transformation

Here's how it works. Every day each person shares one or more words that most describe the present condition of their heart. We encourage you to share at the level of vulnerability you are comfortable with. Use the acronym SASHET as a starting place: Sad - Angry - Scared - Happy - Excited - Tender. No advice giving here. After sharing, each person reaffirms their commitment to the relationship and the journey by saying, "I'm in." The benefit of checking in like this day after day is cumulative as trust and safety grow

CO2 Spiritual Discipline #2 - LISTENING PRAYER – Conversational Intimacy with Jesus

Principle: Connecting with God on a heart level. Life and ministry flow from listening to God. He is our King, our Lord, our Healer, our Savior, our Counselor, our Maker, our Good Shepherd, our Provider, our Head and our Coach (the list goes on and on!) We cannot live the life He has for us without hearing His voice. Learning to sense God's perspective at every given moment radically changes the way we respond to the ups and downs of life. In the garden, Adam and

Eve trusted their own perspective of reality. We can see restoration happen as we seek God's perspective instead of trusting our limited version of reality.

How it works:

While there are so many ways to do this, we suggest one of the following options.

1) Ask each other "What are you hearing from the Lord Today?" The assumption is that each person is spending time each day in listening prayer. Be tentative as you share: "I think this is what He is saying..." or "This is what I sense..."

2) Ask God "How do you feel about being with us." Spend 5 minutes in silence together "listening" for spontaneous thoughts, feelings, images, or sensations that come into your mind. Share with each other and weigh what is said. Treat this like an experiment. There is freedom to fail. Remember the goal is to "strengthen, encourage and comfort" (1 Cor 14:1-3).

3) Read a Bible passage and pay attention to words that stand out to you, images that come to mind, and feelings that emerge. Share with each other.

4) Ask the coach how you two can "listen" together best. Share what you sense.

However you listen together, keep practicing. Remember this is a skill that takes practice. Your ability to "hear" improves the more you do it. .

Mark Virkler's Four Keys to Hearing God's Voice

- 1. Quiet myself.** I must learn to still my own thoughts and emotions, so that I can sense God's flow of thoughts and emotions within me. "There is a deep inner knowing (spontaneous flow) in our spirit that each of us can experience when we quiet our flesh and our minds".
- 2. Fix the eyes of my heart upon Jesus.** Jesus, our perfect example, demonstrated this ability of living out of ongoing contact with Almighty God. He said that He did nothing on His own initiative, but only that which he saw the Father doing, and heard the Father saying (Jn. 5:19,20,30).
- 3. Listen for a flow of spontaneous thoughts.** Jn. 7:37-39; 16:12-15. "For most of us, most of the time, God's inner voice comes to us as spontaneous thoughts, visions, feelings, or impressions. For example, haven't each of us had the experience of driving down the road and having a thought come to us to pray for a certain person? We generally acknowledge this to be the voice of God calling us to pray for that individual. My question to you is, "What did God's voice sound like as you drove in your car? Was it an inner, audible voice, or was it a spontaneous thought that lit upon your mind?" Most of you would say that God's voice came to you as a spontaneous thought."
- 4. Journaling,** the writing out of our prayers and God's answers, provides a great new freedom in hearing God's voice. God told Habakkuk to record the vision and inscribe it on tablets... (Hab. 2:2). It had never crossed my mind to write out my prayers and God's answers as Habakkuk did at God's command. If you begin to search Scripture for this idea, you will find hundreds of chapters demonstrating it (Psalms, many of the prophets, Revelation) . "