

The Three Strand Rope

The single cord was strong in and of itself but easily snapped when over stressed. Soon rope makers learned to wind three cords together which more than tripled their individual strength. Ecclesiastes 4:12 says if one prevails against him two shall withstand him, and a three fold cord is not quickly broken.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.” (II Cor. 13:14) "According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure." (I Peter 1:2) Grace, the desire and strength to do the will of God is the result of the three dimensions of the Trinity at work in our lives.

This theme of strength reflects the triangular support which is emphasized in an overwhelming manner throughout Scripture. Great leadership and work was accomplished in 3's: Moses, Aaron, Miriam/ Moses, Joshua, Caleb/ Peter, James, John/ Jesus, Apostles, Prophets/ wisdom, understanding, knowledge (Pro 3:19-20, 24:3-4). The ability to test and validate a product is also stated in 3's: being made of gold, silver, or precious stones or of wood, hay, and stubble (I Cor. 3:10-15). "On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness." (Deut 17:6) "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." (I Tim 5:19) Furthermore, Jesus was vindicated by the baptism of water, blood, and the Spirit (I John 5:8). He was recognized as Prophet, Priest, and King (Isa. 33:22).

Further validation that our foundations are built on the strength of triangular structures (the strongest building component in the world), is amplified in that we are the third planet from the Sun; time is measured in past, present and future; we are composed of solid, liquid and gases; each atom is made up of a proton, electron and neutron; each cell is made up of a nucleus, plasma and wall; and that we are body, soul and spirit. Ministries are developed by planting, watering and allowing God to give the increase. Children are raised more effectively by the testimony of the father, mother and the witness of the child's spirit. However, in like manner, evil is carried out by the stronghold of three rebels. Even the devil imitates the Trinity of God with the Beast, the Anti-Christ, and the False Prophet.

Although my heart and mind have been deeply exercised in thinking upon these truths, I did not know how to make the application until more recently. For the longest while, we carried out a discipleship program by a one-on-one relationship with our staff, however; we realize that there is strength in building accountability among three disciples. Just as Jesus built this accountability between Peter, James, and John, with Himself serving as their advisor, so we now group apprentices according to their strengths and weaknesses to grow in support of one another and with accountability to staff for their effectiveness.

In working with groups across the country, we realize that in order to overcome a habit or raise a standard, this principle must also be put into place. I find that coaches are discouraged with trying to raise the standard for their young athletes, often being

undermined by the parents of those very athletes with the result that all three of them lose. When teachers try to raise the standard they are often undermined either by the administration or the parents, with the result that the student, administration, teacher, and parents all lose. This is such a clear illustration in horse training as well, for it is impossible to effectively change the belief and value system of the horse without the witness of two or three points of reference. Many times they are unseen or unclear to an observing audience, but the support of the seat or the leg aid with the rein helps the horse to discern the exact direction which he should take. Even when training a young horse, the silent but consistent witness of the round pen fence coupled with the active pressure of the trainer allow the horse to discern a source of direction and desired goal and bear witness with its own spirit.

I am coming to the conclusion that we will not see lasting change or renewal in our society without the cultivation of three points of reference. The Scripture clearly tells us that a fact must be confirmed by two or three points of reference. It is one of the deepest desires of every parent to know that their son or daughter could discern truth from error and would learn to walk in truth in this perverse generation, even in the parent's absence. How is this developed? First of all, if a father and mother disagree on points of leadership and discipline, the child will conclude that there are no absolutes in the home. If however, two parents agree it can begin to bear witness with the child's spirit that this is a truth that must be obeyed. Wise parents bring other people into their child's influence, that the same spirit, the same value system can confirm a quality, right way of life, and a pattern that they may observe and obey all their days. The more that this is exercised, the greater witness that child's spirit will bear to the truth and have more confidence in choosing righteousness over error.

Therefore, even more important than just winning lost people is the concept of building a foundation that the lost might have structural support to walk through this world. So convinced are we of this that we began to encourage leaders to not only win the individual but to win the structural support of that individual's life, whether it be parents, the church family, community leaders, etc. I do not believe we will see a significant impact or social change without men and women of like values standing in support of one another. Today one of the saddest indictments of our day is that if a person is confronted about sin in their own fellowship they simply often go to the next church where they are readily accepted. In reality, that church should ask them why they have come and can they help them go back and resolve the problem from which they have come.

When a rope becomes frayed or unraveled, it soon loses its strength. In like manner, the scripture warns us that when we become separated or isolated we lose the power of a combined testimony, the oneness of spirit, the oneness of faith and fellowship that is the core and the basis upon which the world will examine both the quality and object of our faith. It is with this very intent that we are working to develop new resources not just for young adults but also to begin to mentor leaders in the community. It is our hope that within a short period of time, we will see a new Sermon on the Mount® (SOTM) Headquarters developed with new materials to help disciple and mentor adults (parents, coaches, business people, and church leaders) with the principles that have been so effective in our own walk, relationships and ministry. The outreach

ministries through SOTM will spearhead this emphasis with subsequent opportunities for men and women from all over the country to come back for more leadership training. We are seeking to develop a new application of the materials that we have long used with the apprenticeship training for believers who are not able to spend a year of their life in this type of context due to age, prior commitments, etc. and yet would desire to learn from the same type of studies and implementations. Together may God grant us the grace to strengthen the pillars of society for the hope of the next generation. – Lew Sterrett