

Lake Cities Community Church
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Bible Numbers: Making Them Count!

TWO
Synergy or Schism?

“Synergy occurs when you take two very different objects – and combine them to create a powerful third reality– and the new creation is greater than what would have been possible with either of the items separately!” Isn’t that cool? I remember that discussion distinctly occurring in an advertising class I took as a marketing major at the University of Arizona. The professor was talking about creative ads and gave several examples of companies who combined very different elements to create synergistic ads. Let me give you a few current examples as of what I mean.

Take for example an insurance company. What company took insurance products and combined it with a lizard in their ad campaign? Yes Geico insurance. What company took a polar bear the and combined it with a carbonated beverage? Yes, the Coca Cola company. How about a piece of fruit with a computer? Apple computer! You have the idea. Computers and apples, polar bears and coke, lizards and insurance have nothing to do with one another, yet each together created synergy.

I’m going to argue today that the power of synergy does not originate with advertising – but with God. Taking two very different entities and forging them into a synergistic new creation – is what God loves to do!

We are, this morning, continuing in our study of Bible numbers and are, as you can tell, today studying the number TWO. By way of structure today I am going to use the Star

Wars structure – we will start with the Dark Side of the number two and move to the light – the beautiful side. Actually, before we get to the dark side, let's begin with a general discussion of the number. OK? Let's get started.

General Discussion of the Number Two:

The number two is a very interesting Bible number that is often overlooked. What is being communicated is the idea division or difference. We not longer have one item – but two. We have “other.”

In terms of general use – you had to have at least two people to confirm a covenant in the Bible (Genesis 15). There are two angels, for example, on the ark of the covenant (Numbers 7:89). You have to have two witnesses to condemn or bring charges against someone in both the Old and New Testaments (Deut 17:6, Matthew 18). God promises His presence to where two or three gather together in His name (Matthew 18:20). In that sense, the number two is key as it is the beginning of relationships. I like the way the Dictionary of Old Testament Theology explains the number two: “ In the context of companionship the number may stress a common will between two people or parties, but two is also sufficient for conflict, oppression and domination.” (NIDOTTE). Two things can therefore result from two people: good things – a common will, synergy, fellowship or bad things Conflict, oppression and domination.

Dark Side of the Number Two

Let's talk more about the (Dark) side of the number TWO. When you think of numbers representing evil or man, probably the number six comes to mind. But the

number two is right up there. TWO can represent: sin division, strife, apostasy, evil and most of all broken relationships.

(1) You will recall the prophet's words: [Jer. 2:13](#) "For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns That can hold no water. It may be incidental that the Lord lists "two evils," but it also could be that He is communicating the basic message of separation. This use is present also in the New Testament.

(2) [Matt. 6:24](#) "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. Half-hearted devotion – Conflict.

(3) Back to the Old Testament. Rebekah, you recall, was pregnant with twins. Two boys. "But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I *this way*?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples will be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger." (Gen 25:22-23). This is a classic passage about our sin nature. Two people in tension and conflict even before they are born!

(4) Elkanah was a man in the OT. You might recall: [1Sam. 1:2](#) He had two wives: the name of one was Hannah and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. [1Sam. 1:6](#) Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. Another example of conflict. Two people – not in harmony, but conflict. Rivalry. Envy. Bitterness.

(5) In the early church Paul and John Mark came into conflict, and they separated from one another -- and then Barnabas told Paul to give him a second chance. Paul would have none of it. [Acts 15:39](#) **And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another....** Paul and Mark – separated. Paul and Barnabas – separated. Isolation. Unforgiveness. Even pastors can be in deep relational conflict. Paul knew what he was talking about when he exhorted others to unity.

In Philippi, Paul said: [Phil. 4:2](#) **I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.** Now this is an important verse we need to consider for a few moments. Notice two things. First there is HOPE. There is a place of harmony. You don't have to live in the dark side of TWO. How is this possible? Because they are IN THE LORD. Apart from Christ separation is the ONLY option. In Christ we can move from separation to unity, harmony and life.

In my HR days, I found myself supervising two women (Jan and Lori) who could not have been more different. Jan was older – Lori was younger. Jan was outgoing and fun, Lori was introverted and quiet. Jan rose through the ranks over time. Lori was a college graduate. Jan was a very moral Mormon, and Lori was a single mother lesbian. And they could not get along to save their lives. They were both great workers and very competent, but because of their differences they were in constant conflict. I remember one day being in a conference room with the both of them trying to mediate a conflicts, and it was a tense. But because they were not believers - they held nothing in common at the spiritual level – there was no possible synergy between them. And this has always been the world's problem – most “peace” in the world is only a thin veneer of civility. Deep harmony is only available in Christ.

The Beautiful Side of TWO

But in Christ we have the restorative power of the Gospel. We have spiritual synergy. Have you ever thought about all the times in Scripture where two become one? The first example is in creation: [Gen. 1:4](#) God separated the light from the darkness. [Gen. 1:5](#) God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day. God takes the one and creates two, and then he takes the two and creates one. That becomes the model from the Lord for our relationships.

Later, God created man, and out of man a separate being, woman, was created. Two people – separate? Not really. [Gen. 2:24](#) For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. God takes the one and creates two, and then he takes the two and creates one! And in the one there is life, and harmony not as two separate individual coexisting together, but as one new entity.

In the New Testament the Jews and Gentiles were in great conflict with one another. Yet both responded to the gospel - and the power of the gospel trumps any powers of difference. This is a longer passage, but listen carefully.

[Eph. 2:12](#) remember that you (Gentiles) were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. [Eph. 2:13](#) But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. [Eph. 2:14](#) For He Himself is our peace, who made **both groups into one** and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, [Eph. 2:15](#) by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself **He might make the two into one new man**, thus establishing peace, [Eph. 2:16](#) and might reconcile them both in **one**

body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. Eph. 2:17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; Eph. 2:18 for through Him **we both** have our access in **one Spirit** to the Father. Eph. 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,

One becomes two and two becomes one. Synergy! God's power of unity, bought with his life, brings people together in Christ. God takes two very different people male and female, Jew and gentile, rich and poor, slave and free, young and old and any other combination you can think of – and creates unity, harmony and healthy vibrant relationships. The wisest man who ever lived said: "Eccl. 4:9 Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor."

Application

And so we are left with a choice. When we have two – will they move toward one, or will they move toward division? Ok –let me let you in on a little secret. I know that you are struggling in a relationship right now with another Christian. I know – you thought I didn't know. It is OK – I am the pastor, I know everything. Your personalities clash. They have offended you. You don't like the way they are raising their kids. Harsh words have been spoken. You have been misunderstood. Bitterness has been growing in spite of the fact that you say you are not bitter. Can we be real for a moment? Is that OK? We all, myself included, struggle in relationships. Do you believe the two can become one?

On your handout is a place to put their name -- "Me and _____." In the blank I want you to put the name of the person you are struggling with. Now, if they are sitting

next to you, you might not want to jot their name down, but at least place their name in your mind. Because we are reminded this morning that, in Christ, any tension filled relationship – where you are far apart -- can be restored, you can be reconciled because that is what the gospel does. Do you believe that?

But reconciliation will not happen without hard work on our part. Like Paul said to Euodia and Syntyche – “I urge you to be reconciled to one another.” You have to make hard choices to obey God in this area. Let me give you three quick ingredients for reconciliation. Humility, forgiveness and initiative. You must be humble before God and the other person. Loud words and prideful strutting has never brought together two warring people. Proverbs tells us “a soft answer turns away wrath.” You must forgive the person who has wronged you. I’m sorry - but it is as simple as that. As long as you hold onto your anger and disappointment – you will never be reconciled. And you must take the first step. Some of you are waiting for the other person to act, and you feel strongly the ball is in their court. But to you God said, “Go and be reconciled. Leave your offering at the alter until you have reconciled with your brother or sister in Christ.”

Let me conclude with this true story observed in the ministry of D.L. Moody. He tells about an Englishman who had an only son. Unfortunately he spoiled his son, who, as he grew into the teenage years, became proud and stubborn. One day they had an awful quarrel. Both were angry. They said things that cut deeply. The Father said, “Get out of my house, and never come back unless I send for you.” The son said, “Don’t worry, I will never come back.” The Father said, “Fine. I will never send for you.” Away went the boy.

The mother, as mothers often do, began to seek reconciliation between her

husband and her son. She pled with the boy to write to the father – but he would not. She pled with the Father to bring home his son. He said he would never do that. At last the mother was broken, her health failed and she was on the door of death. The husband asked if there was anything he could do for her before she died. She just looked at him and he knew what it meant. She said, "Send for my boy. That is the only wish on earth you can gratify. If you do not love him when I am dead and gone, who will?"

For the sake of his wife, the father sent word for the boy to come, and he came at once to her bedside angry that the father had not told him earlier of his mother's sickness. When he arrived, the father went to another part of the house. The mother took her sons hand and said, "Just speak to your father, and it will all be over." But the boy said, "No, I will not, until he speaks to me." As death was near the father too came into the room. The poor woman took her husband's hand in one hand and the boy's in the other, and spent her dying moments in trying to bring about a reconciliation. Then just as she was dying-she could not speak-so she put the hand of the boy into the hand of the father, and there and then she died!

The boy looked at his dead mother, and the father at his wife, and at last their hearts broke. The Father opened his arms, and took that boy back into his heart, and by their dead mother's body they were reconciled.

Beloved. When Christ died on the cross – he took the hand of the Jew and the hand of the Gentile, the hand of the rich and the poor, the hand of the slave and free person, male and female, husband and wife, your hand and the hand of your enemy -- and in his death

and by his death -- he broke down all barriers so that you could be reconciled. Spiritual synergy. That is what Jesus does. That is the power of the gospel.