

Marriage Transformation Group (MTG)

Definition: Two or more Marriage LTGs (Life Transformation Groups) meeting together to strengthen one another in the disciplines listed below.

Objective: To see the Kingdom of God come in your marriage, family and home and then to see your home become a base of operation for reaching the world.

Our Agreement:

1. We will, to the best of our abilities, **do the "Three Dailies" every day** as a couple. We will attempt to make this a top priority in our schedule.

Prayer outline: "Father, thank you that you have called us into an intimate relationship with yourself and that you delight in blessing us. Right now we want to remember some of the ways You have blessed the two of us:

"Thank you that you have also called us into an intimate relationship with each other. We acknowledge that our marriage is the first and most foundational expression of your church. In order to function as a church today, we need your help in the following areas:

"We remember that your desire is to bless all the families of the earth through us. Today we are asking for you to show us one couple who you are preparing for family church. We will pray for them and share our story with them as you provide the opportunity."

2. We will **meet with our MTG (Marriage Transformation Group) each week** for training in how to do family church.
3. We will do the best we can to **read together and discuss** one chapter of the book Intimacy (Doug Weiss) each week.
4. We will give **at least the first ten percent** (a tithe) of our income to the King. We will ask him what he wants to do with this money to further his Kingdom, giving special attention to planting Marriage LTGs and to those in need.

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The Three Dailies

From Intimacy by Douglas Weiss (Chapter 9). The book can be obtained from the website at www.intimatematters.com.

"Many marriages have **little to no structure** that encourages intimacy in their relationship.... Passion in marriage is a result of making intimacy a priority for life. Many Christian couples think passion either is a part of their relationship, or it isn't. The truth is that passion is a dividend that comes from making **consistent investments** in the priorities of a marriage relationship.... Many couples try to get the passion back into their relationship, when what they need to do is to get their priorities back. Once you reestablish the priority of the

relationship, the passion naturally follows and grows." One way to do this is by using the "three daily exercises".

1. Prayer. "Remember that prayer is just talking aloud to God with your wife in the same way you would talk with a friend. Prayer doesn't have to last for hours. It doesn't require you to kneel or take any other particular posture. It is simply the principle of connecting with God together, and it is essential. We have learned that intimacy is tri-dimensional, involving spirit, soul and body. As we grow spiritually together, our intimacy in the other two areas will grow as well."

2. Feelings. "Communicating emotional responses and learning to honestly share feelings is a second very important skill that spouses need to develop and maintain throughout marriage.... For men who lack the skill to share their feelings with their spouse, it is one of the greatest hindrances to having healthy intimacy in their marriage.... **These skills can be learned by** anyone, including men!...**By practicing together daily** a couple can develop the skill to share their feelings, which is critical for intimacy and ual success. I have seen husbands and wives move from emotional illiteracy to emotional communicative competence by diligently practicing this exercise."

- In the **first sentence** choose whatever feeling you want and give a present-tense example of the feeling. In the **second sentence** you use the same feeling word, but you choose an early experience from childhood or adolescence that it relates to. Two feeling words a day per person. Use list to broaden range of sharing. Alternate.
- **No examples about each other.** Key to safety.
- Maintain eye contact
- No feedback for 72 hours. Emotional intimacy **requires a safe zone.**

3. Praise and nurturing. "If our goal is to be like our Father in heaven, then part of his nature flowing through us will be the nurturing and praising of others.... It is a **skill we must learn** as adults...it is essential for a vibrant, ongoing intimate relationship."

- Share two things you love, appreciate or value about the other person. Alternate.
- Maintain eye contact. Let the praise into your heart. Respond with "thank you."

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A New Kind of LTG

Neil Cole's **LTGs (Life Transformation Groups)** are small (2 or 3 people) discipleship groups with very specific spiritual disciplines (read Scripture, confess sin, pray for the lost). These groups provide a structure for serious discipleship as well as the basic building block for multiplying house churches. The LTG is a brilliant concept for at least two reasons:

First, because needs are met in this smaller group that can't be met in the larger house church. As a result of the LTG, when the larger house church meets, people have more realistic expectations because a lot has already happened in the smaller group. To say it another way, healthier people are coming to the house church and the house church can therefore be a healthier and more positive meeting. Some discipleship activities can only happen in a group of 2-3.

Second, because the LTG is both simple and small, it is easy to reproduce. As Neil says, if you can't multiply LTGs, you probably won't be able to multiply HCs. The LTGs are one of the main reasons he has been able to see over 200 house churches started in the last 3-4 years.

OK. Here's the new part. *Maybe there are different ways of doing LTGs. In fact, maybe the very best way is to think of a marriage as a kind of LTG.* Instead of Neil's three disciplines, we will use three other disciplines (called **The Three Dailies** - [see article on this](#)). So, the marriage becomes the basic (though not necessarily the only) discipleship group. (What a novel idea!) We will call this basic group a **Marriage LTG**. This recognizes the fact that there is no group that has more potential for "life transformation" than the marriage.

A larger group where couples are trained and are accountable to other couples is an **MTG - Marriage Transformation Group**. This group meets weekly and functions as a kind of house church. (See article outlining the commitments of this group.)

Benefits? First, **each couple is becoming a healthier unit**. Second, each couple comes to larger house church gatherings with **significant needs already met** resulting in healthier and more positive meetings. Third, there is **potential for rapid multiplication of churches** because it is easy to teach other couples about being church and about doing the basic disciplines (The Three Dailies).

Here are some **further thoughts** about the Marriage LTGs along with some ways that they are different from the original LTGs. See what you think.

1. The original LTGs meet **weekly**. The Marriage LTGs meet **daily** (or as close to daily as possible) to do the Three Dailies. The Three Dailies are both harder (because they are done daily) and easier (the disciplines are easier than those of the LTGs).

2. The original LTGs multiply through division or "giving birth." (When the fourth person is added to the group, it is ready to divide into two groups.) **The Marriage LTG (a couple doing the Three Dailies) multiplies through infecting another couple.**

3. In some ways the Marriage LTG is the *best of both worlds*. One of the hard things about the original LTGs were that you get close to 1-2 other people and then you start a new group and lose those relationships. With the Marriage LTG, **you keep the initial group (the marriage) until you die**. At the same time, there is still *potential for rapid multiplication* because the 3Ds are easy to teach to a new couple. They are **highly contagious**.

4. A Marriage LTG could become *ingrown*. To prevent this, one of the agreements is that **each couple prays for one other couple to infect** (ie, to disciple) **with the vision** of the Marriage LTG.

5. The 3Ds are **the starting point, not the ending point**. Other elements of growth (like reading the Word, confessing sin, etc.) can be added by the King. The whole idea is that our marriage/family is an outpost of the Kingdom. We are under his rule and reign.

6. The Marriage LTG (marriage = church) is really **more organic** than the original LTG. The basic unit (the couple) is God ordained. You can't get any more natural or organic than this! You are strengthening and building on the very unit that God has put in place.

7. Other expressions of church can be built **on this foundation of the marriage**. For instance, with the addition of children - Sabbath meal would be one way to do this. Also, other people (singles, other families) can be included in family gathering. Perhaps specific singles could be adopted by families.

8. The larger HC becomes a **gathering of families** (like the synagogue--remember the *minyan*?). A major goal of this larger meeting is to celebrate and encourage what is going on in the marriages and families.

(Worship, spiritual gifts, teaching, etc. fit very well into this.) As marriages (and families) get healthier, people come to the larger HC in a healthier condition. Expectations of what the larger HC can do are more realistic.

9. Singles could do some variation of the 3Ds. Kenny Moore and I have prayed together (Luke 10:2b) almost every day for the last two months. This has been very positive and is similar to the prayer partner idea that my youth group did when I was in college. The idea is to encourage everyone who wants to grow spiritually to be in some sort of subgroup of 2-3 people that connects daily and is committed to spiritual disciplines. This is the context of maximum discipleship. We will have to give thought to involving singles because the focus on marriage could cause them to feel left out.

10. **Tithing** is one of the agreements of the Marriage LTG. This is a basic element of discipleship. Seems like something important happens to a couple who commits to this. Also, it involves the couple in helping to finance the larger vision. This whole way of doing church must have both an inward and an outward focus.

11. The Marriage LTG **emphasizes different disciplines than the original LTG**. It emphasizes relational intimacy and blessing. The original LTG emphasizes reading Scripture, confession of sin and praying for the lost. In the family church, these other disciplines grow out of the intimate relationship and are encouraged by the MTG.

12. The 3Ds can also be used in **our relationship with the King** as well as with our spouse. Think about it.
 1. Pray. That's obvious. Invite the Kingdom in my life. Listen to the King. 2. Share two emotional words. I can do that with God as well as with my spouse. Wonder if he would share two emotional words with me each day? Certainly would deepen my intimacy with Jesus. 3. Share two ways I want to bless Jesus. Wonder if he would share two ways he wants to bless me? What a concept! "Well done, good and faithful servant! ...come and share your master's happiness" (Mt. 25:21).

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Unifying Family and Church

1. Jesus is the King and because of His great love for his father (Eph. 2:4) he has "rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves..." (Col. 1:13).

2. By the Kingdom we mean **the rule and reign of the King**. We mean all of the benefits and responsibilities of living in submission to King Jesus. His desire is that we would "live a life worthy of the calling we have received" (Eph. 4:1).

3. The word translated "**church**" is *ekklesia* (from *ek* = "out" and *kaleo* = "to call"). It means "those who have been called out or summoned for a special purpose." In this case, it refers to those who have been called out of the dominion of darkness and called into the Kingdom of the Son. Properly understood, **church is the primary expression of the Kingdom of God**.

4. **The church is a big deal to God!** "The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence" (Eph. 1:22-23, *The Message*).

5. **The church is God's primary visual aid for the entire universe.** "His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, and according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord" Eph. 3:10-11.

6. The church is *not* simply a meeting in a special building for one or two hours each week. Rather, **it is the Kingdom of God lived out in a group of people on a 24/7 basis.** Those people do meet together regularly to strengthen and build up each other (1 Cor. 14:26) but church is not limited to those meetings.

7. In order to extend the Kingdom into a particular region or people group, **the King often comes first (Lk. 10:1) to one particular household (oikos)** which is led by a man (or woman or couple) of peace (Lk. 10:5). Examples: Cornelius (Acts 10), Philippian jailer (Acts 16), Lydia (Acts 16). This household is first of all the demonstration of the Kingdom (Wolfgang Simson: "a shopping window of God"). Then, it becomes the starting point from which the virus of the Kingdom spreads to the surrounding area or people group.

8. **So, the first and most foundational expression of the church (and the Kingdom) is often one particular household.** This is consistent with Jewish values. The rabbis refer to the home as "a *miqdash me'at*, that is, a **small sanctuary or miniature temple**.... Foundational to all theory on the biblical concept of family is the Jewish teaching *that the home is more important than the synagogue. In Jewish tradition, the center of religious life has always been the home*" (Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, p. 214, 216).

9. More specifically, we can say that within that household **it is the marriage that is the first and most foundational expression of the church (and the Kingdom).** Paul explains this amazing truth in Eph. 5:22 - 33. Wilson tells us (p. 205) "...Jewish tradition teaches in a striking way that the joining of a man and woman in the covenant of marriage is a reenactment or replica of God's eternal covenant relation to his chosen."

10. So, **the church (and the Kingdom) is expressed first between husband and wife**, then between parents and children, then in the relationship between several households (the Jew called this a synagogue which is a word that simply means "a gathering" and then in larger expressions of the church.

11. **Can a church be as small as two people (husband and wife)?** Based on Mt. 18:20, I believe it can. "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." "The smallest group of Christians--even a couple--enjoys the largest promise of God--Jesus. That should encourage Christian couples; Together in prayer or service *they constitute a veritable temple* so they can expect miracles with their children, their congregations, and with their Christian mission in the world" (Bruner, *Matthew: Volume 2*, p. 655).

12. The King "invades" one household for the benefit of that household--to "lavish" upon it his grace (Eph. 1:7-8). **He also intends on using that household as the "base of operations" to extend his grace to other households** (Lk. 10:5-9). "All the families of the earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:3). "Make disciples (subjects of the King) of all people groups (*ta ethne*)" (Mt. 28:19-20). *Ta ethne* can refer to any way in which people are grouped - ethnic groups, geographical units (towns, zip codes) etc.

13. All of the above represent *an important paradigm shift* in our thinking about the church. From church as a meeting once a week in a special building to church as 24/7 Kingdom relationships in a particular household. There are *at least two potentially important outcomes of this way of thinking. First, marriage and family relationships might be significantly strengthened. Second, the church might be released to expand rapidly and spontaneously.* ("Church = family" is the ultimate expression of "simple church." Only that which is simple can multiply rapidly.)

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