

Authentic Apostolic Partnerships - Part 2

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In this series of articles on Authentic Apostolic Partnerships, we are investigating and contrasting the contemporary notion of an 'apostolic network', and many of the unhelpful ideas which often underpin it, with God's plan for the apostolic.

The Benefits of Apostolic Partnerships

In **Part 1**, we unpacked the language the Bible uses to describe the relationship that churches should have with one another and with apostles. We found that the word which beautifully describes these relationships is '*koinonia*'. *Koinonia* means 'partnership or community', and so we learn that the relationship which God has in mind for us as local churches is far greater than a loose federation or church network. Let us now go on to explore some other vital aspects to the Biblical pattern for relational apostolic partnerships.

Loving the People and the 'Pastor'

In the Bible we find a very special relationship within apostolic partnerships. We find that the leaders as well as the people are intimately known by the Ephesians 4 gifts working within the field. For example, Paul would speak of members of Chloe's household (1 Corinthians 1:11), and would oftentimes mention individual saints by name! Another striking example of this is in the long string of names in Romans 16:1-25. Paul shows that apostles should know and love the individuals that make up God's house and be interested in each one. Everyone in the church should enjoy relational friendships and have opportunities to develop themselves. In this environment people feel safe, because their church leaders are in relationship with other Christ-like apostles, prophets and elders (as well as other gifts in the field) who actually know the leaders, know the people and love the church. Not only this, but these outside voices will speak the truth in love and jealously guard health and truth within the churches with which they partner (2 Corinthians 11:2).

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The tendency in apostolic networks can be that only pastors and a few select leaders enjoy relational friendships and opportunities to develop themselves outside of the local church. It is the select few who learn from other leaders, are exposed to new ideas and are blessed by other fruitful gifts within the field.

Serving for Free or for A Fee?

In apostolic partnerships, love should be the motivation for those who come and serve the church. The leaders in the New Testament were willing to pay their own way to go and serve, whether they were blessed financially or helped to pay for their ticket or not. In networks, there is sometimes a fee or a list of expectations placed upon the local churches to bless the preacher who comes in.

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The Antibody or The Virus?

God's vision is that apostles and other Ephesians 4 gifts work skillfully to place Christ in the foundation of every part of the church. Apostles and teachers should speak out to warn churches of dangerous doctrines and fads (Titus 1:10-15) and use the Scriptures to show local elders how to avoid these pitfalls. They should help the churches negotiate the strong storms that blow against them. Their role is also to help churches deal with internal problems, relational breakdowns, faulty premises, and unbalanced or false doctrines. They should not be afraid to speak out about and even to name dangerous, destructive doctrines as they help the churches negotiate their way through whatever is thrown at them. Apostles provide antibodies for the minds of those in partnership with them by carefully illuminating how new fads can be destructive. In this they immunise the church against dangerous thought patterns and doctrines.

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The tendency within networks is for the latest winds of doctrine and the newest fads to sweep through churches like a wildfire. When apostles are not helping to build correctly, the newest programme or system to guarantee church growth can easily displace the authentic, 'every person is a priest' kind of Christianity. Many of the 'grow your church' fads promote the kind of church growth that draws a crowd, but does not necessarily grow a healthy church. In networks, there can be an 'anything goes' mentality. There is a false sense of security in thinking that as long as Christ is preached, churches can be left to themselves to deal with their issues and problems.

Read **Part 3** of the 'Authentic Apostolic Partnerships' series if you have found this article helpful and would like to find out more about God's architecture for healthy churches.

Article Series: [Authentic Apostolic Partnerships - Part 1](#) | [Authentic Apostolic Partnerships - Part 3](#)
