

Andrew Selley

THE MINISTRY & ROLE OF THE APOSTLE

UNDERSTANDING CHURCH GOVERNANCE



SECOND EDITION

The Ministry and Role of the Apostle:

by Andrew Selley



The Ministry and Role of the Apostle

Published: One16 Publishing

January 2024, Version 4

Previous editions 2013 & 2014, March 2015, March 2018, 15 October 2020

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers
Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Reproduction, printing and distribution is restricted and subject to obtaining approval from the copyright owners at one16publishing@gmail.com

Table of Contents

FOREWORD	6
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	8
INTRODUCTION.....	9
LEADERSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH	11
PRE- & POST-ASCENSION APOSTLES.....	14
THE RECOGNITION & QUALIFICATION OF APOSTLES.....	19
THE PURPOSE OF APOSTLES.....	22
DIFFERENT TYPES OF APOSTLES WORKING TOGETHER IN TEAM.....	25
THE FUNCTIONS AND WORK OF APOSTLES	31
THE PRINCIPLES OF APOSTOLIC PARTNERSHIP.....	38
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN APOSTLES & ELDERS.....	47
APOSTOLIC PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS THE SAINTS	60
APOSTOLIC PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS APOSTLES	64
APOSTOLIC PARTNERSHIP AS A BIBLICAL MODEL	66
IN CLOSING	72
THE APOSTOLIC THROUGH THE AGES.....	73
REFERENCES.....	76
ABOUT THE AUTHOR.....	77

FOREWORD

by Jonathan Stanfield

The church in the 21st century desperately needs apostles just as much as she did in the 1st century if she is ever to come to maturity, unity, and build up the body in love as every saint is equipped for the work of the ministry. Her calling is to the nations, and in these last days the office of the apostle will unlock her into Christ's glorious calling. In the global church today however, it is common to find itinerant church consultants and loose ministry networks instead of graced apostles and devoted partnerships in the gospel as we see in the New Testament.

In what is possibly the most exhaustive publication on apostolic ministry, Andrew Selley writes from unique first-hand experience on how this foundational gift from Jesus works with elders leading local congregations, sweeping up entire regions of churches into a movement with one heart, mind, and purpose.

In just over a decade since the Lord called the Four12 Global partnership of churches into existence, Andrew Selley, as the lead apostle, has modelled what he teaches in this book with around 800 congregations (at the time of publication of this book, but fast increasing in number) working together as one right across the world in almost every cultural context imaginable.

If you're unfamiliar with what the Bible teaches about how the early church was led and partnered with apostolic ministry, or even if you already have some degree of experience, there is no doubt that as you turn each page, there will be fresh revelation and the testimony of the Holy Spirit of the timeless ways of Jesus in His church.

Open your heart, and prepare for an impartation as you read and study this book.

Jonathan Stanfield is the lead elder of Living Hope, a multi-site church partnering with Four12 on the Isle of Man. He serves on the apostolic leadership team of Four12 Global, and ministers apostolically worldwide. Jonathan is married to Annette, has four daughters and is passionate about equipping saints to serve Jesus.

by Brad Verreyne

I have known Andrew for a little over 25 years now, and have been a first-hand benefactor of his revelation and passion for the church to be an authentic expression of Jesus on the earth. He has been a living epistle of his own teachings on the apostolic, relentlessly laying down his life for local churches to become mature and established in Jesus.

In this book, he has unpacked the apostolic in a beautifully practical way, skilfully highlighting from Scripture the necessity of this gift in the early church in ensuring local churches grow up as healthy churches. I love that we, the readers, are left with a clear way forward as to how to work with this gift in our churches and are equipped to distinguish the true apostolic from the false. Also, that those graced with this gift, now have in this book a type of a guide, setting parameters and a pattern for them to observe as they apostolically work for the health of local churches.

Thank you, Andrew, for this much needed resource, I believe it will have a massive impact in time to come!

Brad Verreyne is the lead elder of Oxygen Life Church, a multi-site church partnering with Four12 in Gqeberha, South Africa. He serves on the apostolic leadership team of Four12 Global, and ministers apostolically worldwide. Brad is married to Angela, and they have three children.

by Greig Garratt

I have known Andrew and Emsie for many years, and I enjoy the privilege of close friendship with them.

I have watched Andrew respond to the apostolic call of God on his life from the early days of the Ephesians 4 team we served on together, until now.

The Lord led him to pioneer a very healthy local church, Joshua Generation, that now has congregations across Southern Africa and has also resulted in the birthing of the Four12 Global apostolic household.

Andrew has a passionate love for the Lord and for His church, and it shines through in his preaching, teaching and in the way he leads his team.

His risky hobbies and sports activities, and his huge zest for life, actually accentuate and model the kind of life the church can be living in this age.

Apostolic teaching and modeling are critically important for the church today, and this book goes a long way to adjusting the church to the purity, strength and urgency that Jesus desires.

I would urge every church leader to read this book in an effort to better see the kind of biblical church that is possible and that our world needs.

May the Holy Spirit give you revelation and faith as you read these pages!

Greig Garratt is the lead elder of newDAY Church in Johannesburg, Gauteng. He also serves on the apostolic team of New Covenant Ministries International (NCMI). Greig is married to Vanessa, and as a couple they are passionate about building God's Kingdom.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Special thanks must be given to the Lord Jesus Christ for revealing these truths to me, and for His faithfulness in continuing to lead and teach me (and the Four12 leadership with me), about the apostolic and building His church His way.

Thank you also to Joshua Generation Church - the church that I planted in 1999, and currently still serve as Visionary Lead Elder - for giving me the time to learn, teach and write these important things down. In particular, to Michael d'Offay and Mike Davies (both fellow elders and five-fold teachers), and Nadene Badenhorst, thank you for lending your sharp minds and perspective and your assistance in updating the original version of this book.

To the Four12 partnering churches across the world, thank you for following me as I follow Christ and for giving yourselves, together with the Four12 leadership, to the mission of making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20) through healthy, local church that reflects the church of the New Testament.

I especially want to honour my wife, Emma, for walking this faith journey with me. We have stumbled our way through so much together, and this booklet is the fruit of that journey. Her untiring love and support have freed me to search these things out, and without her partnership, I could not have walked in and learned these truths. Thanks also to our beautiful daughter, Enyah. Thank you for giving up so much of your dad's time that we can serve our King as a family. Your sacrifices will not go unrewarded.

INTRODUCTION

Since I was introduced to teaching on the apostolic as a young leader in the church, I have been passionate about seeing this office restored back to the church. As I have grown in my leadership, I have become more and more aware that in order for any local church to be truly healthy and walk in the fullness of God's calling, it must be linked to an apostolic grace. I am massively indebted to men such as Dudley Daniel, Chris Wienand and Tom Tapping, who shaped me, moulded me, and were used powerfully by God to bring many churches into a greater revelation of who God is, resulting in greater health and maturity and leading to a deeper unity. I consider these men, like Dudley, to be apostles, raised by God with a message and a mandate to restore the apostolic to the church. This they did faithfully and powerfully, impacting many thousands of churches around the world.

Over a number of years, as God has increasingly begun to use me in an apostolic capacity, (first on another man's team and since 2011, as the apostolic leader of the Four12 Global partnership of churches), I have revisited some of the principles of church leadership and how local churches relate to apostolic gifts.

Recognising that I stand on the shoulders of giants, I have undertaken to examine afresh what Scripture says about this important relationship, attempting to divest myself of existing preconceptions and prejudices. The conclusions I have reached are somewhat different to where I started, but I firmly believe that that which I have seen, will be invaluable in helping build healthy churches. If we embrace Scripture wholeheartedly, we will find many important principles that will help us in achieving the very purpose for which God raised up the office of the apostle, which is;

"to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ..."
(Ephesians 4:12-13, ESV)

As a movement, we often get confused with the New Apostolic Reformation movement (NAR). At the outset, I want to make it clear that while we share the concept of the apostolic, our theology and outworking of this grace in Four12 are vastly different from NAR, and in no way are we associated with their beliefs or practices.

One of the (many major) departure points between us and NAR, is with regard to Christian dominionism. According to C. Peter Wagner, who is considered the architect of NAR, dominionism is the belief that it is part of God's mandate to Christians to take dominion (control) over secular society and to bring "the kingdom of heaven to earth" by eradicating crime, corruption, injustice, poverty, etc and working to bring peace and prosperity to society instead. This belief is closely aligned with the so-called "Seven Mountains Theology", which holds that Kingdom-minded people should occupy every one of the seven areas of society (Religion, Family, Education, Government, Media, Arts & Entertainment, and Business). In this way, they can use their influence to create an environment in which the blessings and prosperity of the Kingdom of God can permeate all areas of society.

From a theological point of view, this is one of the major distinctions between the beliefs that I (and the apostolic leadership team that I lead) hold to, and the beliefs held by the leaders and churches who align themselves with NAR. While, as Christians, we should influence for good whatever environment or place in society we find ourselves in (being "*salt and light*" – Matthew 5:13-16), I do not believe that the Kingdom comes through external

laws and policies – no matter how Christian, or how good, they are. I also do not believe that is primarily what we should work for - Jesus did not, neither did Paul, even though they both lived in very evil and unjust societies. Instead, they both preached a different Kingdom – an internal Kingdom that comes through hearts being convicted of sin and righteousness (John 16:8), turning to Jesus Christ as their Saviour and giving Him Lordship over our lives.

The Updated Book

This book is an update of the original version first published in 2013, which was an early attempt to put onto paper the conclusions I and the apostolic team working with me, have reached. In coming to the conclusions that we did, we have had to wrestle through a number of the outlined principles within these pages, as they did not fit within previous understandings of church government. The pages contained in this book are the result of a journey of some years, much study and reflection, much prayer, much discussion and not a little pain as I, and the team working with me, have given ourselves to being used by God in this capacity, and to helping church leaders understand the importance of working with the apostolic to build healthy churches that reflect God's blueprint and design.

While large portions of the original book remain unaltered, other portions have been reworked to bring greater clarity and deeper understanding. In particular, I have added a section on the qualifications of apostles (Chapter 3), and why apostolic partnerships are different to church networks or denominations (Chapter 11), and written more extensively on the relationship between apostles, elders and the local church (Chapter 8). While the book is primarily aimed at church leaders and those functioning as Ephesians 4 gifts, it is also key that non-leaders/saints have a grasp of the apostolic and understand the importance of joining themselves to a church that partners with the apostolic. To this end, I have included a chapter specifically aimed at non-leaders/saints, explaining why it is important to join/belong to a church that partners apostolically (Chapter 9).

I recognise that the audience for this book will be very varied; for some readers the very idea that apostles still function today will be new, for others my understanding of how such apostles work will be very different to their current understanding. To cater for every paradigm is virtually impossible; one simply cannot qualify every statement and define every word in order to prevent misunderstanding. Many readers will read the content through a grid of their own theology, experience or personality. All I ask is that the reader approach the subject matter humbly, with an open heart and seeking to hear the heart of Jesus on the matter.

My hope is that this book becomes a tool that will be used to build the church of Jesus Christ, to the glory of God.

Enjoy the read.

Andrew Selley
Apostolic leader, Four12 Global

LEADERSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

CHAPTER ONE

A Biblical "Blueprint"

Leadership in the local church today uses many different patterns of leadership and government. These are often adopted from the secular context and are based upon pragmatism or business principles. While many would apply biblical terminology to these structures and systems so that it would seem as though they are rooted in Scripture, if we dig deep enough, we'll find that the undergirding concepts are often more rooted in pragmatism rather than trying to carefully nuance what the Bible says on matters and applying them accordingly.

On the one end of the spectrum, churches (typically larger churches) are organised as denominations or institutions. The leadership structure of these churches is typically quite hierarchical / "top down", with a formal authoritative body (such as a synod or church board) setting the doctrine, making the decisions and giving the directives to be implemented by the churches forming part of that denomination or institution. On the other end of the spectrum, non-denominational / independent type churches do their own thing without having to account to any "higher" leadership structure. Somewhere in the middle, you find churches that associate in loose church networks (which, as I explain in Chapter 11, is something different and distinct to apostolic partnerships discussed in this book).

However, it is important that we take care not to go beyond Scripture when looking for leadership models for the local church, for if we do so we will inevitably fail to build on the pattern that God has revealed in His Word. It is so important that we get this right and actually do build according to the biblical "blueprint", because the local church is God's plan to change the world and through which the Kingdom will advance on the earth.

"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, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ephesians 3:10-11, NIV) (my emphasis)

The New Testament clearly describes how leadership works within a local church, and how churches are to relate to each other. Christ is the head of God's Kingdom and He is therefore the head of every Christian and every church (Colossians 1:18). There is no human head of the church.

In the same way, the Bible is the only written creed for the church, so we must neither add to nor subtract from its simplicity. We must build upon the foundation of Scripture because Christ is the architect (Hebrews 11:10), and He has given us the plans and the design for the church He has promised to build.

Every local church must be connected to Christ through the Holy Spirit. No church exists in isolation. It must be connected to Christ in order for it to have life. Equally, it must follow Christ to allow Him to build it, for Jesus said, "*I will build my church*" (Matthew 16:18, NIV).

As I will explain in greater detail below, every church around the world that is connected to Christ in this way (with Christ as its head) is called, amongst other things, God's "field" because it is the place where God is working (1 Corinthians 3:9, NIV). Every church that is connected properly to Christ is also loosely connected to every other church, because they all belong to Christ.

Smaller "Fields" within God's "Field"

"For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building."
(1 Corinthians 3:9, NIV) (own emphasis added)

We see that the New Testament describes the church as God's "field". This concept of God's "field" is important for us to understand. The word for "field" in this Scripture (Gk. *georgion*) includes an implicit understanding of an area of activity, with length and breadth, but it also carries the sense of actual work done; of care, cultivation and management, much like a farmer who works his specific farm. Jesus has defined what is (and what is not) His church. He is the source of life and the one who actually works in the "field" that the Father has entrusted to Him, which is the only proper expression of the church within the world. Jesus has been entrusted with the entirety of God's Kingdom upon the earth, and thus He is the Lord of all God's "field".

Importantly, only churches that are connected to Christ, through the Holy Spirit, can properly be called God's field, because they are places where He is working and has Lordship. This concept is easy to understand if you think of a soccer field. When you play football, you quickly learn that there is a perimeter line within which the game must be played. If you step outside that line, you are no longer on the field and thus are no longer able to play the game. In the same way, it is possible for the church to step over the line and be outside the perimeter of what Christ is doing. Although a gathering of Christians may call themselves a "church", they will not be in Christ's field unless they have Christ as their head.

Unfortunately, not every church is connected to Christ in this way and it is possible for a church to lose connection with Christ. In his letter to the church at Colossae, Paul warns those who are in error that they "*have lost connection with the head*" (Colossians 2:19, NIV). Unless this vital connection is regained, the level to which this disconnection has occurred will impact upon Christ's area of rule in that church.

One of the ways this can begin to happen is when the church leadership no longer follows the Spirit but instead chooses to follow the leading of men, or some other thing. An example is found in the letter to the Galatians where the church was in danger of deserting Christ by "*turning to a different gospel*" (Galatians 1:6, NIV). The real danger for them was that they were heading to being disconnected ("*accursed*" - Galatians 1:8, ESV) from Christ if they continued. Thus, they were in danger of falling outside of Christ's field when Paul wrote his letter. As an apostle, he was trying to bring them back from legalism and under Christ's influence and Lordship.

Apostolic “Fields”

Significantly, in the same way that the Father has entrusted His Kingdom (field) to the Son, so the Son in turn entrusts and delegates His responsibility and authority to those who will work and care for His field. The first office (meaning position of leadership) of earthly responsibility delegated by Jesus was that of the “apostle”.

Through the eyewitness testimony of the first twelve apostles, the gospel spread quickly leading to church plants, first in Jerusalem and, following the persecution that broke out against Christians in Jerusalem, then also in Judea, Samaria and all over the Mediterranean – just as Jesus said would happen (Acts 1:8). With the expansive growth of the early church, smaller “fields” (areas of work or spheres of influence, under apostolic authority and responsibility) started developing within God’s broader “field”.

As the father has entrusted His field to the Son, so the Son entrusts and delegates responsibility and authority to those who will work and care for His field.

In the New Testament, we find three, possibly four, apostolic fields. The first is Paul’s field amongst the Gentiles, comprising most churches in Europe and Asia Minor at the time (Galatians 2:7-8). Paul describes his relationship with the churches under his authority and responsibility, and their relationship with one other, as a “*partnership*” in the gospel (Philippians 1:3-5, NIV). The other clear example of an apostolic field, is Peter’s field amongst the Jews, including many of the churches in Jerusalem and Israel (Galatians 2:7-8). We also see that, after the death of Paul and the rest of the apostles, many of the churches that had been in these fields, started looking to the apostle John for leadership (1 John; 2 John; 3 John and Revelation 2 and 3). A fourth field most likely evolved with Barnabas and John Mark, also working within the Gentile churches around the area of Cyprus (Acts 15:36-41) while Paul was still alive. For more on apostolic fields, see Chapter 7 dealing with “The Principles of Apostolic Partnership”.

The New Testament is still the “blueprint” or model for how God wants to build His church today, and what we see are churches working in partnership with apostles.

PRE- & POST-ASCENSION APOSTLES

CHAPTER 2

Let's do a brief study on this key word, "apostle". The first apostle that the Bible mentions is Jesus, who was "*appointed*" over God's entire house (Hebrews 3:1, NIV). The Father sanctified Jesus and sent (Gk. *apostello*) Him into the world (John 10:36). This is where the word "apostle" is derived from. The Father delegated His responsibility and authority to His Son and sent His Son as His representative, or Apostle, to build God's church (Hebrews 3:1-5).

While the word "apostle" can have a fairly broad meaning, which we will consider later, the primary way we are using it, is in its governmental application. Jesus, as God's first Apostle, was chosen by the Father and was given delegated responsibility and authority as His representative to build the church. Jesus now chooses certain men and delegates His responsibility and authority to them, so that they might represent Him to the church and build the church through the grace He has apportioned to them.

So we learn that: The Father first sends the Son as His Apostle (Hebrews 3:2). The Son then sends certain men as His apostles in His name (John 20:21), and delegates responsibility and authority to them. In other words, Jesus portions out some of His own apostolic role and field entrusted to Him by the Father, to men He chooses and sends out as His apostles. Ephesians 4:11 (NIV) says that "*He [Jesus Christ] gave the apostles...*"

The first twelve men that Christ chose to be Apostles, had a very special apostolic calling. They were to be witnesses of His ministry upon the earth and of His resurrection. Their qualification was that He had called them specifically to tell others about the things He did before and after His resurrection. They would specifically be witnesses (Acts 1:21-22). These twelve men would have a very special grace upon them, and would always be regarded as the greatest of Jesus' apostles. They are not, however, the only apostles, nor the only kind of apostles that Christ would subsequently raise and send.

What do I mean by this?

Modern-Day Apostles

A big question many people have today, is whether there are modern day apostles. "Surely there were only the twelve and Paul?" To answer this question, we must firstly distinguish between pre-ascension Apostle (before Christ's ascension), and post-ascension (after His ascension) apostles.

Pre-Ascension Apostles

At the beginning of Christ's ministry, we see that Jesus chose twelve men, calling them Apostles (Matthew 10:2). These men travelled with Him for His three years of ministry. Because they were chosen before His crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, these were His "pre-ascension Apostles". They were the twelve (Matthew 10:2; Acts 1:22) witnesses of Christ's resurrection. Matthias (Acts 1:21; 2:14) replaced Judas Iscariot and he was chosen because he had been with Jesus throughout His entire ministry. Thus he was also a pre-ascension Apostle. According to Scripture, the primary purpose of these early Apostles was that they would be "witnesses" of Christ's life "from John's baptism", as well as "of his resurrection" (Acts 1:21-22, NIV).

Post-Ascension Apostles

The Bible also teaches that Jesus will send a new type of apostle, with different qualifications, who will carry a different role, gifting and responsibility.

Most interestingly, the Bible also teaches that Jesus will send a new type of apostle, with different qualifications, who will carry a different role, gifting and responsibility from these aforementioned twelve pre-ascension Apostles. In Ephesians 4:8, we read, "when He (Christ) ascended on high, he led a host of captives, and gave gifts to men." (ESV)

We must note that it was after Jesus had "ascended" that He gave these "gifts to men". We see in verse 11, that the first group Paul mentions here are apostles.

These apostles were different to pre-ascension Apostles in that they were chosen and sent after Christ's resurrection. This is a different group to the original twelve.

The first two post-ascension apostles we find, are mentioned in Acts 13:1-2, 4. They are Paul and Barnabas. Both of these men are set apart by the Lord and are clearly called apostles:

- Paul (Acts 14:4,14; 1 Corinthians 15:8-9)
- Barnabas (Acts 14:14)

It is not long and we begin to see other post-ascension apostles appearing:

- (Possibly) Andronicus (Romans 16:7)
- James (Jesus' brother and writer of the book of James) (Galatians 1:19)
- Jude - we learn from 1 Corinthians 9:5 (ESV) (where Paul mentions the "brothers of the Lord" as travelling apostles who take their wives with them) that Jude was also seen as an apostle. This is strengthened by the fact that Jude wrote a letter with apostolic authority.
- Titus (2 Corinthians 8:23) - The Greek word for "messengers" is "apostolo" (noun). Paul instructed Titus in his letter about doing the work of an apostle, for instance Titus is instructed to ordain elders in "every town" (Titus 1:5, ESV) and this makes it clear that Titus was seen to be an apostle. Titus is also the co-author with Paul of the letter to the Thessalonians, and is later included by Paul who calls him a fellow apostle with himself (1 Thessalonians 2:6).

- Timothy is mentioned by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 1:1 as co-author of this book, and later as a fellow apostle (1 Thessalonians 2:6). Timothy is also instructed in Paul's letter on how to serve the churches as an apostle and ordain elders, etc.
- Silas/Silvanus is mentioned by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 1:1 as a co-author, and later as fellow apostle (1 Thessalonians 2:6).
- Apollos (1 Corinthians 4:6,9)
- *Note:* For special note on Junias (Romans 16:7), see end of this Chapter.

Thus we have a number of people mentioned by name as post-ascension apostles, with inferences in a number of other places that there were more post-ascension apostles that were recognised by the early church (1 Corinthians 9:5; 2 Corinthians 11:5).

It is worthwhile noting that approximately fifty years after Pentecost, when John penned the book of Revelation, eleven of the pre-ascension apostles had already been martyred (only John was still alive) and Paul himself had been beheaded. Yet, John commends the church in Ephesus because they *"have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false"* (Revelation 2:2, ESV). That anyone could even consider calling themselves apostles and would need to be tested by the churches to find the real from the false, is proof in itself that many called themselves apostles, apart from the original twelve and Paul. This is confirmed in 2 Corinthians 11:13 (ESV), where Paul also mentions a number of people who are *"false apostles"*. We know that where there is the counterfeit, that there must also be the authentic. Thus, it would seem that many were calling themselves apostles in the early church.

In Chapter 4 of the letter to the Ephesians, we find that these post-ascension apostles are to continue within the church in the same way that prophets, evangelists, teachers and pastors must continue. We are told that these (five-fold) ministries will be needed until Christ's return (Ephesians 4:13). These gifted apostolic men (along with the other Ephesians 4 gifts) are to *"equip the saints for the work of ministry"* (Ephesians 4:12, ESV). This equipping will continue, and Christ will keep giving apostles to the church, *"until"* a number of things happen which have not yet occurred.

"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds[a] and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,[c] to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes." (Ephesians 4:11-14, ESV)

It is important to note the word *"until"* (Ephesians 4:13, ESV) which means, "up until a point in time". Therefore, Christ will continue to give these gifts that will continue to equip the saints up until the things mentioned in Ephesians 4:13-14 occur.

These are:

- unity of the faith,
- unity in the knowledge of Jesus,
- until we mature to the fullness of Christ.

To date, the church has not yet found the unity of the faith or a unified understanding of Jesus, and we are certainly not yet mature to the fullness of Christ. In fact, these things will only fully happen when Christ returns and thus each generation of saints will receive their own apostles until Christ returns to the earth on the Last Day. Even the great apostle Paul tells us that he has *“yet to have taken hold of it”* (i.e. perfection) (Philippians 3:13, NIV), and he tells us that only *“when the time of perfection comes”* (Christ returns), will the imperfect disappear (present knowledge, prophecy, immaturity (1 Corinthians 13: 8-12, NLT).

Thus, apostles will be needed in every generation, along with prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, to help equip the saints in that generation, so that the church can fully express the glory of Christ upon the earth. Only when Christ returns, will we no longer need these five-fold gifts.

What is really astounding, is that only one evangelist is mentioned by name in the entire New Testament. Today, we would have no problem if someone called himself an evangelist, but we sometimes struggle if someone calls himself a post-ascension apostle. This does not make sense, because in Scripture there are more apostles named than any other ministry gift or office!

Note on Junia:

Junia is only mentioned once in the Bible, namely in Romans 16:7. Depending on the particular Bible translation, this Scripture reads as follows:

“Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.” (NIV)

“Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.” (ESV)

“Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews, who were in prison with me. They are highly respected among the apostles and became followers of Christ before I did.” (NLT)

“Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.” (KJV 1900).

This Scripture verse has been the subject of some debate as to who exactly Junia was.

Firstly, was Junia male or female?

On the question of whether Junia was a man or a woman, the dominant view through church history, and also amongst Bible scholars, is that Junia was a woman. It was not until the 13th century that a claim was made that Junia was in fact a man, and that Bible translations should therefore be altered to reflect the masculine form of Junia, namely “Junias”, instead.

This view has been largely rejected by Greek scholars however, who agree that the accentuation of the word in early manuscripts favour the female rather than the male version of the name.

The next question then, is whether Junia actually functioned in the office of an apostle?

Some say that Romans 16:17 should be read as saying that she was an apostle, and then use this interpretation of the Scripture verse as support for the argument that females can be apostles. The problem with this interpretation is that, outside of Romans 16:17, there is no other scriptural support for female apostles. (In fact, all the apostles mentioned in the Bible, including the original twelve, are male).

The Bible says that “*every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses*” (2 Corinthians 13:1, NIV). Sound hermeneutics therefore dictate that we do not build our theology on (our interpretation of) something that appears once only in the Bible – especially with so many questions created by the ambiguity of this specific verse.

Having ruled out the possibility that Junia functioned in the office of an apostle, what could the text possibly mean?

As I explain elsewhere in this manual, the Greek word *apóstolos* can also be used simply to describe “one who is sent out”, or who is a “messenger”. One possible interpretation therefore is that Andronicus and Junia are “*outstanding*” (NIV) or “*highly respected*” (NLT) amongst those who have been “sent out” with the message of the gospel, or who act as messengers of the gospel. In this sense, all believers are “sent ones”, called to proclaim the gospel and to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

Another possible interpretation is that Andronicus and Junia were husband and wife, and are referred to jointly much like Aquila and Priscilla were a pair. It is even possible (although not clear from the text at all) that Andronicus, being the male in the pair, functioned in an apostolic capacity, with his wife Junia being his close co-worker but not carrying the same governmental authority as her husband.

Another possible interpretation is simply that Andronicus and Junia, whoever they were and whatever role they played in the early church, were “*well known*” (ESV) and “*highly respected*” (NLT) by Paul and the other apostles of the day – and in this sense, were “*outstanding*” (NIV) (meaning “excellent”, “exceptional”, “wonderful”).

THE RECOGNITION & QUALIFICATION OF APOSTLES

CHAPTER 3

It was very easy for everyone to know who the first twelve Apostles were. These twelve pre-ascension Apostles were personally called and chosen by the physical Lord Jesus. When Judas failed, and the eleven felt led by the Holy Spirit to replace him, a new dynamic in how to choose Apostles began to emerge. In Acts 1:12-26, we see the Holy Spirit working with existing Apostles (the eleven) to recognise and authorise a new apostle for the Lord Jesus, and this was Matthias.

It is still Jesus who chooses those who will be apostles. However, because He is no longer physically upon the earth, the process for acknowledging who Christ has chosen is different. It is important to note that every apostle must be chosen by Christ, and men cannot choose this office for themselves. It is the Holy Spirit who will reveal those whom Christ has called to be apostles. He will train and equip them, enabling them with the anointing to be recognised by men. It is also the Holy Spirit, who will create moments where such apostles will be recognised within the body of Christ.

Every apostle must be chosen by Christ and men cannot choose this office for themselves.

The key here is that the apostles will be recognised by other leaders within the body of Christ. A man cannot decide by himself that he is an apostle and then send himself. He must be sent by the body of Christ upon the earth - specifically by those called to be leaders, and those who appoint such men, must be careful to observe all the Bible says on the matter to ensure their choosing is according to the pattern of Scripture and not just an appointing of influential church leaders who don't meet the proper biblical criteria. We see this principle in both the releasing of Matthias (Acts 1:21-26), as well as with Paul and Barnabas, who were recognised by existing prophets and teachers in Antioch (Acts 13:1-3). In fact, every one of those called to be apostles were recognised by existing apostolic or prophetic ministries. Timothy, Titus, Silas and so forth, were all recognised by Paul and his team before they were acknowledged to be apostles within the body of Christ.

To avoid confusion, I need to bring clarity about Paul's claims that his apostleship did not originate with man. Many believe that Paul simply endorsed himself and needed no other ministry to recognise his apostolic mandate. This is a misunderstanding of what Paul was actually trying to say. As mentioned earlier, no man's apostolic ministry, or any ministry for that matter, originates with man. It is always Jesus who calls and anoints a person for ministry. When Paul tells us in Galatians 1:1 (NIV), that he was "*sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ*", he is simply telling us that his authority is not from the earth, but from heaven. Every apostle is chosen and sent by Jesus - not by an organisation, or by a man. The body of Christ recognises, but Jesus is the one who ultimately chooses and sends those He calls as apostles.

When Paul was sent out of Antioch as an apostle, we see a wonderful working together of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit's men (the prophets and teachers in Antioch). It was the Holy Spirit who said that they should send Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2), but it was also the prophets and teachers in Antioch who "*placed their hands on them and sent them*" (Acts 13:3, NIV). So we learn that it was both the Holy Spirit who sent Paul (on Jesus' behalf), as well as the prophets and teachers in Antioch, who recognised the ministry to which Paul was called and sent him out. Even later, when Paul began to doubt his ministry, we see that men endorsed what God had called him to, when we read in Galatians 2:7-9 (ESV), "*they [the apostles in Jerusalem] saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised ... perceived the grace that was given to me*".

From this we learn that apostles will be called by Jesus, set apart and sent by the Holy Spirit, and recognised by existing leaders. Until these things line up, no man should call himself an apostle!

It is therefore correct to say that God used human elements in propelling Paul and Barnabas out into their ministries as apostles. However, they had already received their individual callings from the Lord, prior to being prayed for, sent out and recognised by the church. The church recognises and places its approval upon apostolic ministry, but the origin of apostolic ministry is with God.

The Qualifications of an Apostle

Some argue that apostles cannot exist today, because they are not eyewitnesses to the life of Jesus, like the original twelve Apostles were. We see furthermore that Paul qualified as an apostle because he was personally chosen and encountered the resurrected Christ. It is true that Paul bases his apostolic authority on the fact he saw Christ (1 Corinthians 9:1), but does this mean that all apostles today must have the same experience?

While Jesus can still appear and meet with people today, we don't hold that all apostles today must have had that experience. This is because the twelve Apostles and Paul were unique among all apostles. The twelve were unique eyewitnesses to the ministry of Christ and they are foundational to the city of God (Revelation. 21:14). Paul was unique in the sense that although he was a post-ascension apostle (along with many others like Barnabas, Silvanus etc.), to him was given the revelation of the gospel (Galatians 1:11-12; Ephesians 3:5) which we walk in today. Paul says, "*then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*" (1 Corinthians 15:7-8, ESV). When Paul says, "*last of all*", he is not saying he is the last of the apostles, but the last one Jesus appeared to. In other words, we see how he was part of a category of apostles we don't see today. Of course, he was unique in that (along with James and others), his letters became Scripture. With other apostles mentioned in the New Testament (post-ascension), it is not said anywhere that Barnabas, Silvanus, Timothy or Apollos had seen the Lord. In this book, we refer to Paul as a kind of model for us (as he encourages believers to follow his example) in how he builds church, but we acknowledge he is unique in his revelation of Christ, which we build upon today and do not go beyond.

Another argument that questions the validity of modern authentic apostles, is that not all operate consistently in signs and wonders. Paul clearly states, "*The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.*" (2 Corinthians 12:12, ESV). We understand this as Paul saying that "*signs and wonders*" were a characteristic which accompanied his ministry, rather than a qualification. So, the sign of his apostleship was in his enduring patience to work with the churches. Of course, there were many others who performed miraculous gifts in the early church who were not

apostles, and this continues today. Jesus even warned against false christs and false prophets who would “*arise and perform signs and wonders*” so as to “*lead astray ... even the elect*” (Matthew 24:24, ESV). For example, we see Philip in Acts 8 performing miracles, yet he was a deacon. Rather, the defining factor for being an apostle (then and now), after being called by God, is that Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9 that his defence for his apostleship is ultimately the fruit of the Corinthians. The seal of his apostleship was their lives (1 Corinthians 9:2).

Changed lives and transformed communities are great evidences of authentic apostolic ministry.

So, the real “signs and wonders and mighty works” were the lives of the Corinthians who were powerfully changed by Paul’s ministry as they were regenerated by the grace in His message, and their transformed lives were the sign of Paul’s authentic ministry. Likewise today, changed lives and transformed communities are great evidences of authentic apostolic ministry.

Must Apostles be Elders in a Local Church?

While all apostles should be sent by a local church – and will certainly at one point have been elders within a local church – the nature of the gift can mean that they might not function as elders within a local church once they are fully exercising their apostolic ministry. Obviously, apostles can remain as elders in local churches (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23). Both Peter and John were called elders (1 Peter 5:1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1) and apostles (Luke 6:13). However, this is not always the case. We do not find that Paul was called an elder, nor Barnabas, Apollos or Titus to name a few, so we must not be dogmatic about this. It is highly probable that in many ways the apostles were received and embraced by local elders as though they were “senior” or highly respected elders, when they worked into the established churches. Apostles always end up working alongside elders in very close relationship.

In summary then: Modern-day apostles are called to serve in this office by Jesus Himself. This calling is confirmed by other leaders in the body of Christ – who recognise the fruit of the man’s grace gift and ministry. He is then released as an apostle, and sent out from his local church to serve the churches trans-locally in this capacity.

THE PURPOSE OF APOSTLES

CHAPTER 4

A few years ago my wife and I set out to build our first home. The area in Cape Town where we bought our plot has very sandy soil, so unless we placed the correct concrete steel mix into the foundation, the house would have ended up being unsafe to live in. Foundational cracks would have caused the walls and roof to come down. The second thing we needed to learn, was how to build a house properly. Because it was our first attempt at building, we made many mistakes and there were parts of the house that we had to learn to live with. Had we had proper advice and perspective at that time, minor building changes would have completely altered our house and made it much more comfortable to live in.

In the same way, whenever we set out to build or plant a church, the Bible is very clear that we must be careful about the kind of foundation we lay, as well as how (including the materials with which) we build the house. According to the Bible, Jesus is the architect and He has designed how He wants His house to look. Those who build the house therefore must ensure that they build according to God's specifications. I remember one day when our own house was being built, we came onto the building site to find that our bricklayer had built a wall where one was not specified. He tried to convince us that we should leave the wall, but since we did not want the wall where he had built it, we had it torn down. In the same way, when we build things into God's house that He did not intend, we will find that God Himself will come and tear that part down. Unfortunately, because the house of God is made up of people, there is often hurt in the tearing down process and the responsibility is ours because we built incorrectly. Paul says each man must be careful how he builds (1 Corinthians 3:10).

Here is a working (incomplete) list of some of the things leaders often build into God's house (the church) that Jesus will want to tear down, because they are not according to His design.

In addition to making sure that the church is always built on the foundation of Christ, apostles make sure that whatever is built upon that foundation, is according to the biblical blueprint.

Apostles ensure the church is built on the foundation of Christ.

"By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved - even though only as one escaping through the flames. Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple."
(1 Corinthians 3:10-17, NIV)

From this Scripture, it is clear that we can either build church with “*gold, silver [and] costly stones*” or with “*wood, hay [and] straw*”. The fire of God’s judgment will test how, and with what, we have built and will expose the quality of the workmanship. It will ultimately destroy that which has been built with inferior or worthless material, and only that which has been built with precious and costly materials according to the biblical blueprint will stand.

Man-Made Leadership Structures

Very often the church adopts the leadership structures of the world in an attempt to make it more effective. We end up with things like committees, boards, CEO type leadership or no leadership at all. The problem is, we do not find these things in the Bible, and by adopting secular patterns we typically end up with secular systems and people. God is clear in the Scripture about how He wants His church to be built and we must be careful that we obey His patterns.

Balanced Building Elements

When we built our first church building, we developed a major problem with our walls and concrete. The ratio of sand to cement was incorrect, with the result that the building was declared unsafe by our engineer and had to be torn down. This was costly and emotionally very draining. In the same way, it is important for the church to have the correct ratios when it comes to every spiritual truth. An area where this is important is the ratio between leaders and saints. In some churches the leaders do everything and the saints show up for the show. This is not the way God intended the church to function. Ephesians 4 teaches that it is the saints who ought to do the work of the ministry. An incorrect ministry ratio here dishonours Christ and diminishes the church’s effectiveness and glory. This is one example of where we need to get the ratios right. But, when we consider how many aspects there are to church life, we quickly realise that we can easily develop a skewed, badly built building that Christ will want to tear down.

In some churches, the pastor is expected to be an entire Ephesians 4 ministry team! This is not biblical, and places massive undue pressure upon a man. Again, it is a mindset that must be torn down so that we can build properly.

Some churches believe that because they have the Scripture and a local eldership team, that is enough. But again, the Scripture teaches us that no local church should exist in isolation. Every church mentioned in the Bible was in relationship to others from outside of its boundaries, sharing their own grace, perspective, and gift. By cutting out the Ephesians 4 ministries, the church will invariably end up not properly reflecting the fullness of Christ and will be deficient in many areas. Often this will lead to a drift away from biblical truths and the implementation of man-made systems and programmes, which seem wise, but that are actually non-biblical paradigms which weaken the structure and fabric of all that the church is called to do.

Jesus warned us in Matthew 7:24-27, that we must be careful how we build. If we build upon the Rock (what is true), then our house will stand. But if we build upon sand, the house will fall down at the first sign of a storm. We must put the Scriptures into practice to ensure that the house is built properly. Paul likewise warns us in 1 Corinthians 3:10 (ESV), “*let each one take care how he builds.*” He goes on to tell us that our work will be tested and only if it stands, will we receive our final reward before the Lord.

Apostles Ensure The Church Is Built According to God's Design

One of the great things about apostles is that they are often master/expert builders (1 Corinthians 3:10). When local elders are busy building houses (churches), God has provided help in the form of expert builders or apostles specifically graced with the wisdom concerning church government and building church according to the biblical blueprint, who can come onsite and give good building advice in order to ensure that the house is built properly and according to specifications. We see the practical outworking of this in the letters that the apostles addressed to the local churches. In each one they are bringing

Apostles help local leaders build houses that will glorify God.

correction to the building that local elders are building, thus ensuring that the house being built is according to the biblical specification. Without the help of these expert builders, there is a very real chance that the house will need to be torn down, or at least parts of it will need to be. Apostles can be used to help local leaders build houses that will glorify God.

The Bible tells us that Jesus is the cornerstone of the church (Ephesians 2:20; Matthew 21:42). The cornerstone is the first stone to be placed into the ground. Every other part of the building must be aligned properly with this stone to ensure that the house is built properly. The church of Christ can never be shoddily put together. It needs to be perfectly aligned with Christ and the Scriptures. Apostolic grace works alongside local leaders to ensure that this happens properly.

The foundation of the church according to Ephesians 2:20, is the ministry of the apostles and prophets. It is these gifts that come into the church at its infancy (foundation building) stages to ensure that it is properly aligned with Christ. They help to lay the foundations properly and to correct any existing ones that are being built wrongly. We see this practically lived out in Acts 8 where Philip had planted a church in Samaria, but had not laid the foundations properly. The grace upon his life was insufficient to lay the proper foundations because God has decreed that the church will never be built by one man working on his own. His intention was always team. Immediately, the apostles Peter and John, were sent to ensure the foundations were laid properly. When they arrived, they found what was lacking and began to teach and minister into this. The ministry of the Holy Spirit was released into that church through them and the church was properly rooted in Christ. This still happens today. As apostles and prophets come into local churches, they supply what is lacking in faith and ensure that the church is built upon the proper foundations of Christ and His Word (Matthew 7:24).

Because apostles are graced by the Lord Jesus to lay foundations that align with Christ, they know how to build the church the way Jesus wants her to look. From its inception and throughout each stage of growth, it needs regular apostolic input to keep it centred upon its foundations and to ensure it is being built properly. Apostles should always be working alongside churches that are growing and help churches that are stuck to find breakthrough. Apostles are able to discern what Christ is doing, and to bring the correct revelation of this at the appointed time, into the appointed situation.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF APOSTLES WORKING TOGETHER IN TEAM

CHAPTER 5

As we mentioned earlier, the word "apostle" can have a fairly broad meaning biblically. The Lord apportions different measures and kinds of apostolic grace upon each of his apostles (and any other gift for that matter). Not all apostles will have the same mandate or magnitude of ministry. The anointing will flow differently through each and there will be varying degrees of wisdom, capacity and power - depending upon the specific calling on the life of that person.

We see this concept beautifully in every apostolic team in Scripture. Peter is clearly the leader of the original twelve apostles and is appointed by Jesus to lead the team. In Acts 1 we see him leading the replacement of Judas, and in Acts 2 he is the spokesman for the twelve. We know also that the three (Peter, James and John) had greater influence than the rest of the twelve. Likewise, Paul spoke later of James, the brother of Jesus (who had replaced the apostle James, the brother of John, who was martyred). Galatians 2:9 (NIV 84) references "*James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars*". Here these three are distinguished from the rest of the apostles in Jerusalem. It is interesting to see James mentioned before Peter, indicating James' pre-eminence which had developed in Jerusalem.

There are people (including apostles) who are more eminent and influential, and there are those who are less eminent and influential. This does not mean that one is more of an apostle than another. To illustrate, a man may be a God-given evangelist, but cannot minister to the capacity that the late Billy Graham did. Both will see salvations, but someone like a Billy Graham will be eminent in that he will see thousands come to Jesus in one meeting, whilst the other person may see 1000 in a lifetime. Both are genuine evangelists, but one has a greater anointing or grace capacity than the other. Both are needed however in Christ's body - each within their proper place. The same principle holds true for apostles.

Let us consider the various kinds of apostles we see in the Scriptures. While, in explaining the different kinds of apostles hereunder, the apostle Paul is mentioned as an example in various instances, our own experience has been that there are different types and measures of apostolic graces on different men, for different purposes. We see that Paul was a leading apostle, as well as a master builder, pioneer apostle and an apostle to a specific group of

Only in the plurality of apostles will we find the fullness of Christ manifest; apostles should not work on their own.

people. Not all apostles are all of these things however - in our experience and in the patterns of Scripture, few are). In this way we can properly relate to the measures of grace that Christ has apportioned. It is important that we consider people according to the measure of grace given. One size does not fit all, and each apostolic figure will be different from another. It is vitally important for each to understand who he is according to the individual measure of grace that he has been given. It is also very

important for the churches to receive the man according to his measure - not more, or less. It is for this reason that apostles always work together, because only one man is the complete apostle and his name is Jesus. Only in the plurality of apostles will we find the fullness of Christ manifest; apostles should not work on their own.

Witnesses

The first twelve apostles had a very specific apostolic mandate. We see that the Lord Jesus called them specifically to “*be my witnesses*” (Acts 1:8, NIV) and this call was later confirmed in Acts 1:21-22 (NIV) when Judas was replaced. Peter explained that he felt the Spirit wanted them to choose someone who had “*accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.*” (Acts 1:21-22, ESV). Obviously we will not see this kind of apostle again today - it was unique to the twelve.

Leading Apostles

Every team needs a leader. Apostolic/prophetic teams will need a leader to keep them focused and moving forward according to plan. God will raise certain apostles to lead teams of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers who in turn will work in specified churches that the Lord has linked together within that field.

Paul tells us that he was entrusted with an apostolic field of influence. This field included many Ephesians 4 gifted individuals and almost the entire Gentile work of that time. The Corinthian church came into this and Paul called them an “*area of influence God has assigned to us, to reach even to you.*” (2 Corinthians 10:13, ESV). Paul was clearly called to be the leader of this apostolic/prophetic team and to minister to numerous churches around the Gentile world. Paul was a leading apostle and his grace functioned best when he was leading the team of people God had put together. However, just because a man leads a team within a local church, does not in itself make him an apostle. An apostolic leader will end up drawing numerous gifted individuals around him, and will find God will assign many churches to be cared for under his leadership. He will be called to be an apostle, and called to lead a team. If the wrong kind of apostle leads a team, that team will end up being deficient, because a grace is trying to function in a way that God has not intended it to. Only those specifically called by the Lord Jesus to lead an apostolic field should be serving as leading apostles.

The grace required to lead an apostolic team is not common. In the New Testament, we see only four apostles with this gift - Peter, Paul, Barnabas and later, possibly John. We know that Peter led the apostolic band that worked together into the Jewish segment (Galatians 2:7-9). We then see Barnabas, who initially leads with Paul, working alongside him (Acts 13:2). Paul begins to emerge within this apostolic sphere as having a greater grace and so progressively begins to take over leadership from Barnabas. By the time this small band of apostles reached Perga (Acts 13:13), Paul was emerging as the leader, with Barnabas playing a supporting role. Not long afterwards, Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement and the apostolic band is torn. Barnabas moves off, with John Mark supporting him, and opens a new apostolic field, beginning with Cyprus. Paul goes on to grow a very large apostolic field and becomes known as an apostle to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:7-9).

By the year 95AD, we see the apostle John leading an apostolic field in Asia minor (Rev 2 and 3). Other apostles will gather around these kinds of gifts and will find that their ministry functions properly in relationship to leading apostles. Apostles like Timothy and Titus, find themselves at maximum effectiveness working alongside Paul, and it is likely that these men would not have had nearly the impact they did upon the early church had they not been working alongside a Pauline type gift. The same can be said of John the apostle, and many of the others who worked alongside Peter (Acts 3:1; 4:7; 8:14 and 25).

Master Builders

Some, but not all, apostles lay foundations (i.e. the foundation of Christ Himself) in the church. The grace of God upon them will enable them to build with wisdom as master/expert builders. In 1 Corinthians 3:10 (ESV) Paul, speaking of himself, says *"...like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation"*.

Master builders have wisdom concerning church government and like architects, know how to build the church properly. They instinctively know what messages need to be preached; what areas need to be strengthened or corrected; when the church needs to be encouraged; which leaders to raise, or which Ephesians 4 gifts need to be "imported" to supply what is lacking in the church. They are able to see the "bigger" or complete picture, and discern the aspect/s that are lacking to bring the church into health and maturity.

This kind of apostle is vital to the growing health of every church. There are not many master builders however. We would see that, in the New Testament, there are only two - namely Peter (an apostle to the Jews) and Paul (an apostle to the Gentiles).

Maintaining/Reworking Apostles

As mentioned above, apostles (not unlike the other Ephesians 4:11 gifts) carry different graces. Not all apostles lay foundations, or are master builders. Some build on the foundations that others who have specifically been graced to lay foundations (master/expert builders), have already laid. They may bring a particular aspect that is vital or even essential to build into the church and without which the church would be lacking in health and maturity, but this does not make them master builders.

While one apostle breaks new things open, very often it is another within the apostolic team that does the actual building. In 1 Corinthians 3:10 (NIV), Paul says *"I laid a foundation ... someone else is building upon it."* In this case, Apollos was building upon what Paul had broken open. Generally, this kind of grace has a pastoral aspect to it and loves to work alongside local pastors/elders to help them grow the work. They carry general management type wisdom, and love the complicated intricacies of helping the local church become healthy so that it can continue to grow.

John the apostle had something of this within him. We do not see John anywhere in the New Testament planting new churches or breaking open new ground. He is always coming into what has already been broken open and grounding it in the love of God. His letters to the churches in Asia Minor reveal a maintaining and reworking apostolic grace. His primary motivation is the church's health. John built upon the foundations laid by Paul, Timothy and others to ensure that the churches remained healthy.

Because these type of apostles are not foundation layers or master builders, it is essential that they are closely connected to and work closely with apostles with the grace and discernment to see the complete picture. Because they have been given an "entrustment", they should always refer back to master builders and be wise in how they build, so that the church does not end up lopsided because of their own gift or lens. It is important that they realise they are a part of the building that is needed, but they are not foundation layers.

Pioneer Apostles

Some apostles will want to pioneer new areas and find that they are always looking for something new to break open. Paul had something of this within his makeup, alongside many other kinds of apostolic grace. He tells us in Romans 15:20 (ESV), "*...I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation*". These kinds of apostles generally do not want to worry about the maintenance of churches or the intricacies of how they must be built. It is always the new frontier, something new that they want to break open. Paul tells us in his letter to the Corinthians, "*I planted the seed, Apollos watered...*" (1 Corinthians 3:6, NIV). Paul was generally breaking open new ground, but was also able to raise up a team around him who would do the practical serving and building (watering), to enable the church to remain healthy and grow.

This grace in itself is able to enlarge an apostolic field, but will not always be sufficient to maintain the field in full health. Obviously Paul, while he primarily enjoyed breaking open new ground, was also graced with a maintaining and building grace. Paul knew how to build the church. However, we see that he generously gave of himself to enlarging the field so that God's glory could increase, while he raised up others to maintain and work the field. Pioneer apostles do not always need to lead a team, they can also serve within a team, but will generally be found on the outer limits, enlarging the field, planting new churches, or drawing new things into the field to be worked by others.

Message Apostles

Sometimes the Lord wants to restore a specific concept, or message to the church. He will then put a message strongly upon an individual and send him to the church with a "now" word from heaven to build that aspect into the church. God will anoint this man as he preaches this message faithfully, and the church will rally around the life that is in the word. An example of this would be someone with a specific message about the Kingdom, healing, faith, grace, etc.

Very often, this kind of apostle is not necessarily a master builder who is graced with wisdom concerning every aspect of building church, nor a foundation layer in the church; he may not even have a good understanding of church government, but he does have a "now" message for the church that will supply what is lacking in the church regarding that particular aspect. The message apostle is therefore useful as an impact player or specialist to supernaturally impart that specific thing at the right time and in the right context. A problem can arise if he tries to lead a movement or operates alone, because churches that relate to him alone will become quite unbalanced and not reflect the fullness of Christ if they emphasise only one message. Like maintaining/reworking type apostles, this type of grace should therefore ideally function within an apostolic team.

Biblical examples of this type of anointing would be the apostle John, who was known as the apostle of love. We do not see John leading a movement (at least for most of his life); he works alongside Peter and James. Whenever John would have spoken, the church would have received a wonderful revelation of the love of God. In this, he was able to help the other apostles establish the whole counsel of God within the saints.

Apostle To Specific People Groups/To Do Specific Things

The Lord will call certain groups of apostles together in a specific field, from time to time, to work either in a specific people group, or around the restoration of a specific thing. We see this when Jesus called the twelve apostles, in the early part of their ministry, to work amongst Jews. Matthew 10:5-6 (NIV), "*Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.*"

These groupings of apostles will be rallied around an apostolic leader of God's choosing. We see this in Peter leading the apostolic work among the Jews specifically (Galatians 2:7-9). We also see a large group of apostles working together to reach the Gentiles. Again, this group had a leader in the apostle Paul, but those that were apostles within his field were called specifically to minister to Gentiles (Galatians 2:7-9).

Anyone Sent By the Church

It is important to distinguish between those who carry the office of apostle, and those who are sent for some purpose by the local church or by an apostolic team. Strictly speaking, anyone sent (Gk. *apostolos*) to do something on behalf of someone else is being apostolic. They may not have the office of apostle, but they are nevertheless "sent ones" (Gk. *apostolos*). Epaphroditus was sent (Gk. *apostolos*) by the Philippian church to help Paul practically and Paul wrote that he is "*your messenger/apostle [Gk. apostolos], whom you sent to take care of my needs*" (Philippians 2:25, NIV). Epaphroditus is not functioning in the office of an apostle, but he is being apostolic in going on behalf of the local church. In this sense, any missionary or saint who is sent to go and support or minister beyond the local context, is being apostolic. They will not carry the government or the authority that Paul, Peter, or Timothy may have had, but they will be a blessing to the church they minister in.

Plurality of Apostles ("Team")

One of the fears that people have today, a fear that causes many to reject the concept of apostles, is that a man given this level of authority could abuse the church for his own selfish gain, or abuse the church with his controlling leadership style. Many would point to the Roman Catholic Church as an example and say that in Protestantism we do not need any "popes". However, this fear is unfounded when the concept of a biblical apostle is placed within the framework of the rest of Scripture. The Bible gives many checks, balances and systems for keeping apostles accountable. When the whole of Scripture is applied to the concept of apostles, we find that the gift is wonderfully beneficial, with very few possibilities of going awry. To properly understand God's accountability structure for this important gift in the body, we must revisit the biblical concept of how apostles are to work within their authority.

Scripturally, no one man should ever have absolute authority over the church. The concepts of "submission one to another" and plurality of leadership are vital components to healthy apostolic ministry. Even the greatest apostle, Paul, could not act unilaterally in his leadership. We must remember that Paul was himself one of many apostles and, indeed, functioned within a plurality of apostles. Note how many times he uses "we" in place of "I" when giving commands in his letters to local church leaders and churches. In almost every one of Paul's letters where he exercises authority in the local churches, he does not write alone but includes other apostles in his introduction and writing. Within the plurality of an apostolic team, churches can be ensured a proper perspective. Examples of this include:

- 1 Corinthians - Paul and Sosthenes
- 2 Corinthians - Paul and Timothy
- Galatians - Paul and all the brothers with me
- Philippians - Paul and Timothy
- Colossians - Paul and Timothy
- 1 Thessalonians - Paul, Silas and Timothy
- 2 Thessalonians - Paul, Silas and Timothy

Scripture shows the presence of plurality in the apostles from the very inception of the church. Jesus did not appoint one leader but a plurality of leadership over the church. There were twelve apostles over the Jerusalem church from the beginning. As the apostolic ministries increased, they continued to function in submission and accountability to one another, rather than in isolation.

Since the apostles were the highest level of leadership, it provides insight that there was plurality even at this highest level in the early church. There was never only one apostolic ministry, nor did these apostles function independently of others. Paul himself submitted to the council of apostles and their judgement in relation to the Gentile believers (Acts 15). Every apostolic team should have multiple apostles and prophets, who work together in mutual submission one to the other. While every team will have a leader, that leader must live within the accountability system of mutual submission, along with everyone else from within the team. Apostles who work on their own are dangerous and should be avoided. The biblical way is always a team.

Scripturally, no one man should ever have absolute authority over the church.

The biblical way is always a team.

THE FUNCTIONS AND WORK OF APOSTLES

CHAPTER 6

It is important to note that local churches will need to draw upon the benefit of an entire team of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. God has not designed that one man will be able to do it all. As an apostolic team works in local churches, various apostolic gifts will be needed at different times. The other Ephesians 4 gifts will find themselves working alongside apostles within an apostolic team and field. Local elders working alongside Ephesians 4 gifts, within an apostolic field, is God's blueprint for how His church should function properly.

This book is not primarily looking at the other Ephesians 4 gifts, but is concentrating on apostles. So, let's look at what apostles do within an apostolic field into local churches.

What Do Apostles Do?

Providing Vision

Apostles create an opportunity for the local church to partner in something bigger - a vision beyond the local.

Apostles, and those working with them, provide vision for local churches. They create an opportunity for the local church to partner in something bigger - for instance a vision of making disciples of nations. The nature of the apostolic gift sweeps churches and ministries up with it in the message and ministry that God has given to that apostle/apostolic team. Local churches suddenly find that they see beyond the confines of their own four small walls.

Nations, inheritance, partnership and mission all find their proper purpose within an apostolic field and ministry. Local churches that are connected properly to apostolic ministries begin to attract large capacity people who sense within themselves a calling to more. Within the apostolic field, these large gifts are able to function properly in accordance with the measure of grace given them, while still being rooted well into local expressions of church. In 1 Corinthians 16, we see that the Corinthian church, the churches all around Galatia, as well as the churches from Macedonia (2 Corinthians 8:1), were swept up into a partnership with the Jerusalem church. They were thus able to help each other because of their link with Paul.

A brief study of Paul and his working with the churches shows how his apostolic vision of reaching the Gentile world became the vision of all the churches within that field. Their partnership was around a common mission, the apostolic vision given to Paul, and all the churches pooled their resources, energy, people and purpose around Paul's overriding vision.

We see an identical trend within the churches partnering together around the Jewish mission, under Peter's apostolic ministry. All the Jewish churches within that field gave

themselves to Peter's vision of reaching the Jewish world for Christ. Likewise, today, local churches will be swept up into the vision of the apostolic team that God has linked them to and that this, in turn, will define their own mission. Without a vision, God's people perish and cast off restraint (Proverbs 29:18). Is it any wonder that the churches around the world today are floundering, primarily because most are not in relationship with an apostolic vision?

Strengthening Churches

Churches will always be stronger because they are linked together in unity with others in an apostolic field. Unity brings blessing. We read in Acts 14:22 (NIV), that the apostles were *"strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith"*. One of the amazing ways that apostles will strengthen local churches is by giving out of spiritual gifts (Romans 1:11). It would seem that when apostles are working in a local church, there is a greater grace flowing into the church and somehow the Lord Jesus is able to impart spiritual gifts to the local members of the church. This obviously strengthens them, which strengthens their local church; which in turn increases their church's influence and enables them to make disciples across nations. We need apostles to help us strengthen our local churches.

Providing Exposure to Christ in Other Churches

Within an apostolic field, churches do not flounder about on their own, but are dynamically linked with other churches from around the world (Colossians 4:8). Through this link, strength and unity come, and where there is unity God commands a blessing.

Apostles provide unity in the faith. Ephesians 4:13 (NIV) teaches us that the fruit of the apostle's ministry is *"unity in the faith"*. We have already shown how this grace unites congregations and involves them in the broader body of Christ (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 16:19; 2 Corinthians 8; Colossians 4:7-9). Churches find a much deeper unity with others, specifically with those working within the same field. It is hoped that, as these apostolic fields of united partnership grow, they will find each other until we actually do find a much broader *"unity in the faith"*. This can only be found in the proper knowledge of the Son of God (Ephesians 4:13).

Protecting and Fostering Relationships

Apostles and apostolic fields keep local churches from being isolated entities. They bring about much-needed relationship with other churches and other leaders. Scripture uses language like *"partnership"* for all the churches and individuals who work together within an apostolic field (Philemon 17; 2 Corinthians 8:23, NIV). Thus, relationships are forged and disciples are strengthened by the love and support of other ministries and people.

Preparing God's People for Good Work

A mixture of the Ephesians 4 gifts working together within an apostolic field provides training, equipping, coaching, resourcing, commissioning and places where local, individual ministries can function within the wider body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12). Through the grace flowing from them, apostles are able to stir up the people to serve the Lord; they are able

to provide proper training and equipping as they work alongside local pastors, and help “build” up strong, healthy saints that make up strong, healthy churches. As apostles function properly, they help the saints mature in Christ (Ephesians 4:13-16) and they are also able to help each person function properly within the grace and calling that God has determined for them (Ephesians 4:16). People come into their destiny when they are properly linked to apostles. Without this important gift, we often find pastors (instead of the people) doing all the hard work. Apostles are able to bring about the reproduction of not just believers, but disciples who produce more fruit. Paul tells the Corinthians that, “*the seal of my apostleship*” (1 Corinthians 9:2, ESV) is their changed lives and how they are following the Lord Jesus as disciples.

Ensuring Sound Doctrine

Today, many would consider teachers to be the custodians of good doctrine within local churches, but this is not what we see in the Bible. While teachers may work alongside apostles, we see that biblically it is the apostles who are custodians over doctrine (what we as an apostolic partnership of churches believe in). They set the boundaries of, and have final authority over, sound doctrine in the churches.

**We need apostles
to help us strengthen
our local churches.**

Paul the apostle tells the Corinthians that he will send Timothy to them, who will “*remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.*” (1 Corinthians 4:17, NIV). It is Titus, as an apostle, who must “silence” the false teachers on Crete and who must choose and teach the local elders to also be able to refute false doctrine (Titus 1:10-11, ESV). Interestingly, these elders are exhorted to “*hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught... [by the apostles]*” (Titus 1:9, NIV).

The elders chosen by the apostles should be able to defend the truth in their absence, but it is the apostles who teach the elders in the first place. In Matthew 18, Jesus commands the first apostles to go and to spread His teaching and, in 2 Timothy 2:2, this pattern continues. Paul commands Timothy, “*And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who also will be qualified to teach others.*” (2 Timothy 2:2, NIV). Again, it is Paul’s doctrines that are being spread into all the churches to ensure that they are biblically healthy.

It is important to emphasise that no modern-day apostle can come up with new doctrine. They are to build upon the foundations of the first Apostles, ensuring with the local elders that every church within their sphere remains healthy and biblically accurate.

Consistently, we see that it is the apostles who are correcting false doctrine in the New Testament letters, dealing with things like grace and legalism. It was the apostles’ doctrine that the church followed in Acts 2:42. Normally, apostles will work very closely with local elders and there should generally be a consensus regarding what is right. We see this in Acts 15:6 where the apostles and the elders met to discuss the doctrine of circumcision.

Let’s see this played out in Scripture: In Acts 15 we see a dispute in the local church at Antioch, caused by men who had gone down from Jerusalem (though not sent). The elders sent Paul and Barnabas to consult the apostles and elders in Jerusalem on what was doctrinally correct. Initially the whole church met to discuss the problem, but this did not work. Finally, the apostles and elders met to discuss the matter. At the end of much discussion by the apostolic team (primarily Peter, Barnabas and Paul), the Apostle James makes the final judgement that becomes binding on all the churches. His judgment concurs

with other key apostles and this decision is spread and followed throughout all the churches. Obviously, if any apostle teaches something that is clearly unbiblical, they should not be followed. However, because apostles work in team and are accountable to each other, this is highly unlikely to happen.

Thus we learn that it is the apostles who keep the local churches "*true to the faith*" (Acts 14:22).

Correcting Error

Local churches in the New Testament quickly drifted into various errors and it was always the apostles that brought them back. As an apostle, Titus would "*exhort and rebuke with all authority*" (Titus 2:15, ESV). Even mature eldership teams and churches are prone to drift into error. When John wrote the book of Revelation it was at the end of the first century. Most of the churches were around 50 years old, with mature elders. All of the other letters included in the New Testament had already been written. They were already recognised as Holy Scripture (2 Peter 3:16) as they were circulated around the churches. This in itself reveals to us that the Scripture is not enough and we still need the gift of apostles. Amazingly, five out of seven of the churches within Asia were unhealthy, and without significant repentance they were in grave danger. John writes again as an apostle to bring them much needed correction and direction. What should be of concern is that each of these churches believed that they were doing well - see Revelation 3:14-18. Sardis thought it was filled with life, but to the Lord it was already dead (Revelation 3:1)!

All of these churches had had years of apostolic input. The church at Ephesus, for example, had been planted by Paul. Timothy had lived there for many years, as had John the apostle. In spite of this, they still needed apostolic input and direction and without John's letters (and their proper response to them), Jesus was about to "*remove their lampstand*" (Revelation 2:5, ESV). In this way, from time to time, apostles will bring much needed correction to local churches to make sure that they continue upon the road to life and are built well (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

Bringing Balance and Wholeness

Paul tells us that he longs to visit the Thessalonians so that he can "*supply what is lacking in your faith*" (1 Thessalonians 3:10, NIV). Apostles are normally multi-gifted and will also partner closely with other ministries within an apostolic field. As a result, they are able to bring precisely what is needed for wholeness and balance to the local churches. Paul had over 40 Ephesians 4-gifted people working alongside him in his apostolic field.

Apostles will draw upon the correct gift/person for the specific situation to open up the right grace needed for each church. For example, Paul tells the Thessalonians that he has sent Timothy to them "*to strengthen and encourage*" them in the faith (1 Thessalonians 3:2, NIV). Apostles seem to be able to discern what key ingredients are lacking within a local fellowship and are graced to be able to provide in the area of deficiency. This is precisely what happened in Acts 8:14, where the apostles provided what was missing in a local fellowship in Samaria, bringing the church to balance and maturity (Ephesians 4:12-14). In Acts 14:21-22 (ESV), the apostles were, "*strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith.*"

Apostles keep churches free from wrong emphasis. They are able to keep any new theological trends and emphases within the broad spectrum of Scripture and God's dealings. They keep the churches from being "*carried away by all kinds of strange teachings*" (Hebrews 13:9, NIV), ensuring that they remain stable, not being tossed to and fro by the "*new thing*" (Ephesians 4:14, ESV).

Apostles correct doctrinal off-centeredness and bring correction to incorrect practice. As "*expert builders*" (1 Corinthians 3:10, ESV), they are able to ensure that the proper foundations (Ephesians 2:20) are laid and guarded, thus keeping Christ and the gospel in the centre place. At the same time to ensuring that all the other doctrines and Scriptures fit within their proper place, so that the "whole house" can be properly built.

Giving Perspectives on Difficult Matters

Apostles help the local church discern what the Lord's mind might be in an area where the Scripture is not clear.

Because of the wisdom that comes with the apostolic gift, apostles are able to provide local elders with wise perspectives on difficult matters. In the New Testament the local elders would often ask the apostles what they should do, or how they should deal with certain situations. We read in 1 Corinthians 7:1, that the Corinthians had asked Paul for perspective about numerous situations. In 1 Corinthians 7:12 we see that Paul makes a judgement in a situation that was scripturally not clear. Unfortunately, there are many situations where the Bible does not provide a specific perspective and we are thus not scripturally equipped to deal with every situation or difficulty. In moments like these, apostles are invaluable. Paul tells the Corinthians, "*I say this - not the Lord*" (e.g. 1 Corinthians 7:12, NIV). In this we learn that he makes a judgement that can help the local church discern what the Lord's mind might be in an area where the Scripture is not clear. In this short portion of Scripture alone, Paul makes his own judgements about what the Lord would want (1 Corinthians 7:8, 25). Apostles then, give "*expert advice*" as "*master builders*" (1 Corinthians 3:10; Philippians 3:17; 2 Timothy 1:13)

Providing Safety

Apostles are able to assist local elders by discerning and exposing negative influences that may surface within the wider Church and which may affect the local church (1 Corinthians 5:1-5; Galatians 1:7-9; 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 2:14-19). They also provide added credibility and security for local elders when dealing with gifted "wolves". In Acts 15, the apostles are able to provide the local leaders in Antioch with credibility, added authority and authentication, by sending their judgement regarding those Judaisers, who are teaching a false gospel and putting people in bondage. This added safety for the local church is invaluable and helps to keep the local churches safe.

Ordaining Elders in the Church

It has been said, "*show me your leaders, and I will show you the future of your church*". Choosing the right leaders is vital for ongoing health (Titus 1:5-9).

God's plan for appointing leaders in the church, is that apostles ordain elders. In the New Testament we see that the apostles Paul and Barnabas appointed elders (Acts 14:23). In the

same way, both Titus (2 Corinthians 8:23, where “messenger” is *apostolos*) and Timothy (Acts 19:22; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2:6) served as apostles with Paul, and were sent into local churches around Ephesus and Crete to appoint elders.

When speaking of himself as an apostle, Paul said that he was a “*skilled master builder*” (1 Corinthians 3:10, ESV). Apostles seem to rightly know who should serve in what capacity (including as elders), and when. Working with local elders, apostles are able to discern grace and character in future leaders and ensure that the right people are appointed to the right places. This serves local churches and keeps them healthy and safe. Another benefit of this is that the future work of the apostles, with local leaders and churches is based upon relationship and the recognition of grace within the individual leaders in the “field”.

Also, it is good for the local churches to see that the local leaders are in relationship and submission within the wider body of Christ. God did not design elders to work autonomously of apostles, nor apostles independently of elders. Each office needs the other to properly serve the church of Jesus Christ. So, apostles receive delegated authority and responsibility from the Lord Jesus Christ, and these apostles in turn delegate some, though not all, of their authority and responsibility to elders in the local church.

Holding Lead Elders Accountable / Dealing with Disputes in Eldership Teams

Because we live within a culture of honour in each local church, it is sometimes extremely difficult for the local leaders to deal with a visionary/leading elder who is abusing his authority and lording it over the others. There may well come times when local leaders will find it very difficult to challenge, or even to address their lead elder. However, as a result of their relationship to apostles, they are able to get a neutral perspective and godly authority can come alongside and help them process or correct a lead elder. We see this biblically in 3 John 1:9-10, where John writes of coming to correct Diotrephes, who appears to be full of pride, and who has refused to receive an apostolic delegate.

Exercising Discipline

Apostles bring perspective in discipline issues for local churches. The Corinthian church is not processing a sinning member the way God has instructed, so in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul gives them instructions on how to correct this matter. Again, in 2 Corinthians 2, Paul gives instructions on how to process the forgiveness of the repentant sinner. We see in this that apostles are involved with elders in the disciplining of erring members, and should be consulted through the various processes. In a church that is mature and seem to have the values well, a simple case of discipline may be something that the local elders could process by themselves without the need for apostolic input. However, when the case is not clearcut, is complicated or there is any form of backlash, wisdom says reach beyond yourself and get a master builder involved for perspective. In doing so, the church will also model something of biblical accountability.

Apostles are also involved in the disciplining of elders. In fact, as soon as an elder has been caught in sin, it is high priority that apostolic grace be brought in to help the local church process this very difficult situation properly. In one of the churches in Asia we see that the leading elder, Diotrephes, began to exercise his authority too strongly because he had ambition in his heart (3 John 9). John, as an apostle, mentions that he will deal with the situation. Thus we see that apostles will work with the other elders - in this case Gaius

(vs. 1) and Demetrius (vs. 12) - to deal with erring elders/pastors. Thus, biblically, it is apostles working alongside local elders who properly process discipline cases. It is normally the judgment and instruction of the apostles that the local churches carry out.

Strengthening Local Elders

It is wonderful for any work in God's Kingdom to know that it is not alone. Apostles carry the same love for the local church as any elder would. In 2 Corinthians 11:2 (NIV) Paul tells us that, as an apostle, he feels "*divine jealousy*" for the Corinthians and that he "*longs to present*" them to Christ "*as a pure virgin*". In this we see the heart of an apostle, one who loves the Lord Jesus and who works hard to see the churches being readied for His return. Apostles feel a deep love for the members of the churches they work with and their desire is to strengthen the elders as partners in the gospel. Apostles pray unceasingly (1 Thessalonians 3:10; Ephesians 1:16); they lose sleep over and carry their concern for the churches within their hearts (2 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 8:16; Philippians 2:19-22; 1 Thessalonians 3:5).

Elders do not feel alone, but benefit from this support of the apostles and are strengthened and encouraged to fulfil their eldership roles well for the Lord Jesus (Ephesians 6:22; Colossians 4:17). In 1 Peter 5:1 (NIV), Peter writes to the local elders and speaks of himself as "*a fellow elder*" (Gk. *sumpresbuteros*). His use of the Greek *sum* speaks primarily of his union, partnership or togetherness with them as an elder (Gk. *presbuteros*). As a senior elder and an apostle, Peter appeals to these elders. We see here the wonderful, deep unity of Christ's church. Peter does not live there, yet he can speak to these men as a partnering apostle/elder. He is giving instruction to them, which reveals that he carries authority over them. The issue is not about his (or their) "*lordship*" (1 Peter 5:3), but about the care and service of the church for Christ's glory.

Providing Continued Leadership Training

We see in Acts 20:17-38 that apostles will continue to come back into churches to provide ongoing leadership training. Apostles will continue to father/mentor local elders on the ground to prepare them for the various stages of future church life.

THE PRINCIPLES OF APOSTOLIC PARTNERSHIP

CHAPTER 7

As previously stated, when Christ began His ministry, the first thing He did was to recognise and raise up apostles. As Jesus expands and expresses His rule on the earth through the church, He begins with apostles. This is confirmed in 1 Corinthians 12:28 (ESV), “*And God has appointed in the church first apostles...*”. The Greek word for “first” (Gk. *protos*) used here, implies having greater authority and responsibility. Of course, this does not mean the apostle is more important in the body than the other gifts, but rather carries greater spiritual weight and influence. Another example of apostles being first, is found in Ephesians 4:11 when Paul puts apostles before prophets and the other gifted individuals.

As we will see, Jesus delegates responsibility and authority of His field to apostolic teams. It is as though He divides the vastness of His Kingdom into smaller units so that they can be effectively cared for.

Jesus delegates responsibility and authority of His field to apostolic teams.

Just as the universal church across the whole world is referred to as Christ’s field, the Bible also calls these smaller areas of responsibility and rule “*fields*” (2 Corinthians 10:13, NRSV). The English Standard Version (ESV) replaces the word “*field*” with “*area of influence God assigned to us*”, to try to show that various churches are assigned under Christ to an apostolic team’s influence and authority.

In the Greek, the words *metron kanonos* are used to define this concept. It is helpful to understand them:

- *Metron* - “measure; the unit of length, breadth, or volume”
- *Kanonos* (from root *kanon*) - “a definitely bounded or fixed space within the limits of which one’s power of influence is confined; a province assigned to one”

The word *kanonos* has the concept of governance within it. The English word “*canon*” illustrates this. It is a “rule, or standard of faith and practice over a set portion of the church.”

As we would understand, the words *metron kanonos* therefore speaks of that specific area or number of churches over which Christ has entrusted an apostolic team, with rule and responsibility.

If Christ is head of a number of local churches within a field and He entrusts that power of influence to an apostolic team, then these apostolic teams, under Christ, have rule, authority (2 Corinthians 10:8) and responsibility over the churches within their field.

(For further reference to apostles having rule, see 1 Timothy 5:21; 2 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Corinthians 7:17b).

As already explained, these apostles delegate some aspects of their rule, authority and responsibility, and partner with elders who oversee local churches.

From the below Scripture we learn the following important principles:

"But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you. For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you. For we were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ. We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others. But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged, so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's area of influence."
(2 Corinthians 10:13-16, ESV)

Principle 1: Apostles are assigned areas of influence

Apostolic teams are entrusted/assigned (2 Corinthians 10:13) areas of activity (v15) by Christ, over which they must ensure that Christ's standards and practices are followed. This is clearly shown in Matthew 28:18-20 where Jesus is speaking directly to the apostles, and later confirmed by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-7,14 and 2 Timothy 2:2.

Principle 2: Local churches are not autonomous entities

In the ideal biblical model, local churches are not autonomous, isolated entities, but fall within an apostolic team's area of authority (2 Corinthians 10:13). In fact, the word "autonomous" is not used in Scripture and is actually contrary to the nature of Christ, which is submission (Ephesians 5:21). Our modern concept of individual autonomy is more rooted in the ways of the world than in the ways of Christ. Note the following Scriptures: Romans 12:5; Philippians 2:2; Ephesians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 12:12; 1 Corinthians 1:10.

Terry Virgo, quoting E. Stanley Jones, has said that, "*The modern idea of churches, separate, sovereign, and independent is unknown in the New Testament*".

A. Motyer says, "*The churches were not seen as static islands while he (Paul) travelled the seas of apostolic missions – writing them theological treatise. They are in partnership with the apostolic mission.*" (Sovereign Grace)

While it is possible that some autonomous churches may have existed, it is evident that this would have been the exception.

Principle 3: Local churches are connected with an apostolic team

In the New Testament, it is important to note that local churches related to an apostolic sphere/field. Every church that was planted in the New Testament was connected with an apostolic team who would ensure the work was cared for, rooted properly in Christ and placed within a field.

We can even see an example of this in a church that was not planted by an apostle. The church in Samaria (Acts 8:4-14) was planted by Philip (a deacon). Immediately upon hearing about the new work, the apostles visited the church to parent it, in a sense, and made sure that it was rooted properly in Christ and healthy.

This is the consistent pattern of the New Testament and, extending this further, it is consistent that apostles should "parent" "orphaned" churches.

Principle 4: Different apostolic fields/areas of influence

As previously mentioned, each apostolic sphere is called a "field" - an area of activity; an area of influence (2 Corinthians 10:15); a territory (2 Corinthians 10:16). In the New Testament we find three, possibly four, apostolic fields.

- Peter's field

We read in Galatians 2:7-8, that Peter was entrusted with the Jewish churches. James and John, along with the other original apostles, worked together with him in this field, under Peter's leadership.

- Paul's field

We read also in Galatians 2:7-8, that Paul was "*entrusted*" with the Gentile churches. Paul worked with many others in this field. Names such as Barnabas, Timothy, Titus and John Mark for example, should be well known to the reader. In fact, Paul mentions a total of over 40 people by name who worked within the fields God had entrusted to them as part of Paul's team.

- John the apostle's field

After the death of Paul and the rest of the apostles, many of the churches that had been in these fields began to look to John for leadership. We see how John wrote his letters (1 John, 2 John, 3 John) instructing the believers in Asia Minor, and then, as Christ directs him, writes seven letters to the seven churches, also in Asia Minor (Revelation 2 and 3).

- Barnabas' field

A fourth field most likely evolved with Barnabas and John Mark, also working within the Gentile churches around the area of Cyprus (Acts 15:36-41) while Paul was still alive.

Principle 5: Different churches in each apostolic field

Refer to 2 Corinthians 10:13-16 quoted below.

Christ, as the head of the Church and with authority and responsibility for His field (the world), assigns local churches within smaller fields to an apostolic team. The word "*assigned*" (2 Corinthians 10:13) (Gk. *merizo*) means, "*to divide out, to assign or to apportion to.*" It is helpful to see how this word is used in Mark 6:41 when Jesus multiplies the bread and the fish. The food was divided/apportioned out amongst everyone, so that every person received a specific amount. In the same way, local churches are divided/apportioned out into the care of apostolic teams, working within an apostolic field. This ensures that local churches are properly cared for.

Principle 6: Apostles' authority is limited to churches in their field

Apostolic teams do not have authority over every local church, but only over those entrusted to them by Christ. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV), "*But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence/field God assigned to us.*"

Christ apportions responsibility for churches to various apostolic teams. Only the churches assigned within their field will be the responsibility of that specific apostolic team. They will not be held responsible on the last day for other churches in other fields. So we learn then that every local church should be in partnership with an apostolic team that has been assigned for them by Christ (2 Corinthians 10:13). This means that every local church should prayerfully seek which apostolic team that is.

Principle 7: Churches in the same field partner together

Local churches partner together with apostles and all the other churches within the apostolic field. The Bible uses various words to describe how local churches work together in apostolic fields with apostolic teams. One of the primary words used is "*partnership*" - see Philippians 1:5, "... *because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now*", and Philemon 17 (ESV), "*So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.*"

Principle 8: Apostolic fields may partner with each other

Sometimes one apostolic field partners with another apostolic field or fields for a specific purpose. In Romans 15:26, we see that Macedonia and Achaia (regions of churches within Paul's field) partnered with Jerusalem (Peter and James' field) for a specific task. While the partnerships within specific apostolic fields were usually with other Ephesians 4 gifts, it is important to note that apostolic cross-pollination did happen and that different apostolic teams were also able to speak into the other team in order to ensure that all were rooted properly in Christ (Acts 15; Galatians 2:2) and healthy.

Principle 9: Apostolic authority may vary according to the field of responsibility

While apostles may minister in any field (in Galatians 2:11, we see Peter minister in Antioch which was Paul and Barnabas' field), they are primarily entrusted with, and have responsibility for, one field. They are, and will be held, more accountable for their work within those specific churches that Jesus has placed under their direct responsibility and care.

It is possible that the nature of apostolic authority may differ when working in another field. For example, we see that Paul seems to write with much more authority to the churches that he had planted or with whom he had a strong relationship (for example, compare the epistles to Corinth and Galatia with his letter to Rome, a city he had not visited at that point). Furthermore, Paul states that he has no desire to usurp the authority of another apostle or build on another man's foundation. "*And thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation.*" (Romans 15:20, ESV). What we see in Scripture, is mutual respect and recognition of the limits of authority delegated by Christ, while acknowledging the benefits of working together and receiving input from apostolic gifts from other fields.

Principle 10: Apostles are accountable

Apostolic leaders must submit themselves for audit from time to time, both to apostles within their respective fields and to other apostolic leaders outside of their field. This is done in order to ensure that truth prevails. This provides a greater accountability for the leaders, and safety for the churches within each field.

We see an example of this in Galatians 2:2 (NIV), where Paul says, *"I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain."*

Principle 11: The whole church gives themselves to apostolic partnership

Every member of the local church partners within their field. In the New Testament we find that all members work together to help the churches within each apostolic field, not just the leaders of the churches. We see apostles, other Ephesians 4 gifts (prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers), elders, deacons and all the saints working together to strengthen not only their local church, but other churches partnering within the field. It is the whole church that has a ministry within the field, not just some specialised Ephesians-4 gifts. Everyone partners for the glory of God! The consistent pattern in the New Testament, in both Paul's letters (which are normally addressed to the whole church), as well as the accounts we read, is that as far as possible the whole church was included in the work of the ministry.

This principle is seen beautifully in Philippians 4:21-22 (ESV), where Paul writes to *"every saint"*, not just the "gurus" or leaders, *"Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household."* In Philippians 1:5 (NIV), while Paul is writing to the whole church, he reminds the entire church of *"your partnership in the gospel"*. In Paul's letter to the Romans he addresses individuals (Romans 16) in such a manner that we can easily see how each member of the church was linked with Paul and his mission. This partnership is so profound that Paul can say of the Macedonian Christians, *"They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us."* (2 Corinthians 8:5, NIV).

It is vitally important that each member of every local church feels the enormity of the field and can give themselves in partnership to something bigger, for the glory of God. In this regard, it is my firm conviction that we have made too little of saints! God has chosen that through them, as a kingdom of priests, He will usher in His Kingdom and His glory. It is time to equip and release the saints to arise.

Principle 12: An apostolic field can be enlarged

A designated field or territory can be enlarged by anyone. In 2 Corinthians 10:15-16, Paul hopes to preach the gospel in the regions beyond the Corinthians, through outreach. But it is not only apostles that can enlarge a field; for instance, it is a deacon from the church in Jerusalem, called Philip, who enlarges Peter's field by preaching the gospel in Samaria (Acts 8:4-13) and planting a church. As soon as the apostles in Jerusalem heard about the new church in Samaria, they sent Peter and John to them (Acts 8:14). They began immediately working into this new part of their field to bring it to health and maturity. Anyone the Lord chooses can plant a church, but it is important for the church to be in relationship with an apostolic team.

Principle 13: Apostles work alongside other Ephesians 4 gifts

The new church must be built around gifted individuals in the field. This releasing of the saints does not mean that we do not recognise specific, unique, and specialist gifting within the body. On the contrary, Scripture is clear that within the saints, some will be gifted and called by Christ to equip other less mature or gifted saints, to do the work of the ministry. In Ephesians 4:11-12 (NIV), we read, *“So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people ...”*

It is important to note that the language here has to do with offices (a position of leadership and a certain authority), not merely people that can prophesy, or can lead people to Christ. Ephesians 4 indicates that these people are called to the five-fold offices of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher.

Thus, Paul is an apostle who has been called by Christ for the gospel (Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1). Agabus is a prophet (Acts 21:10), and Philip is an evangelist (Acts 21:8).

Again, these are not just normal saints who are sent, or who can prophesy. The Greek word for “apostle” in Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1 and other verses is consistently a noun, not a verb. This indicates that Paul was an apostle in office, not just in function. We today would call a man a “doctor” because he has been qualified and recognised to carry that office. We do not call someone a “doctor” just because he gives you some medicine – that would be absurd. While they may have done (verb) what a doctor would do, they do not carry the office of “doctor” (noun), and are not qualified. Likewise, when Paul calls himself an apostle, he is not telling us that he works like an apostle, or does apostolic things, but he is proclaiming that Christ has called, nominated and set him into the office of apostle. It is a noun, not a verb.

The five-fold gifts in Ephesians 4:11 come with a unique grace, namely to equip believers for the work of ministry and to build up the church until she reaches unity of faith, unity in the knowledge of Jesus, and maturity to the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:12-14). Some of these Ephesians 4:11 gifts represent government and rule (as in the case of apostles), some are enabling gifts, but all of them supply missing aspects in the local church to strengthen and help bring her to maturity.

Within each field we must properly recognise who Christ has given grace to, in order to function in a trans local (Ephesians 4:11) capacity to serve the various churches. These gifted individuals will work alongside the apostles leading that field, to administer health, life, training and equipping to local saints within the various churches. These gifts must be distinguished from the greater body (though they always remain as saints), recognised and released to serve and equip the wider body for service (Acts 13:1-4). The New Testament is consistent in mentioning these distinct gifts. For example, we read that in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers. Soon they ordained apostles (Acts 13:2-3) to begin a new apostolic field, working out of Antioch initially.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of a leading apostle is the rallying of other Ephesians 4 gifts around and alongside him, for the expansion of the Kingdom. In Paul’s team alone we find that over 40 individuals are mentioned by name as co-workers. This list excludes all the saints in other churches, who also worked with Paul in their varying grace abilities to further the Kingdom. That such a large group could work together in these early days without technology, cell phones and internet is utterly remarkable!

We find a number of individuals named, operating within their Ephesians-4 gifting.

Apostles

- Paul (1 Corinthians 1:1)
- Barnabas (Acts 14:14)
- (Possibly) Andronicus (Romans 16:7)
- Timothy (1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 6:7)
- Silas/Silvanus (1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 6:7)
- Apollos (1 Corinthians 4:6-9)
- Titus (2 Corinthians 12:18)

Note: For special notes on Junia (Romans 16:7), see end of Chapter 2.

Teachers

- Luke (wrote New Testament books Luke and Acts)
- Mark (wrote the New Testament book, Mark. 2 Timothy 4:11)
- Tertius (a scribe to Paul - Romans 16:22)
- Tyrannus (leader of a school - Acts 19:9-10)

Pastors

- Epaphras
- Archippus (Philemon 2; Colossians 4:17)
- Gaius (Romans 16:23; and a member of Paul's travelling team Acts 20:4)
- Jason (Acts 17)
- Justus (Acts 18:7)
- Onesiphorus (2 Timothy 1:16; 4: 19)

Prophets

- Lucius (Acts 13 & Romans 16:21)
- Silas (Acts 15:32), also an apostle (1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 6:7)
- Agabus (Acts 4:7; 21:10)
- Possibly the four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9)

Evangelist

- Philip (Acts 21:8)
- Possibly Epaphras (Colossians 1:7)

Apostolic Delegates (sent ahead of/on behalf of the apostle Paul)

- Aquilla & Priscilla (Acts 18)
- Erastus (Acts 19:22)
- Onesimus (Colossians 4:9)
- Phoebe (Romans 16:1)
- Trophimus (Acts 20:4)
- Tychicus (Colossians 4:7-8)
- Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25)

Unknown Gifts

- Aristarchus (fellow worker - Philemon 24; travelling team - Acts 19:29; fellow prisoner - Col. 4:10)
- Apphia (possibly wife of Philemon, fellow worker - Philemon 2)
- Demas (fellow worker - Philemon 24)
- Justus/Jesus (fellow worker - Colossians 4:11)
- Lydia (hospitality - Acts 16:40)
- Nymphus (hosted a church - Colossians 4:15)
- Philemon (fellow worker - Philemon 24)
- Secundus (member of Paul's travelling team - Acts 20:4)
- Sopater (member of Paul's travelling team - Acts 20:4)
- Urbanus (fellow worker - Romans 16:9)

(Some of these individuals could be named in more than one category)

Principle 14: Churches in a field share resources with each other

The churches in a field share resources to help each other at different times and in various ways as the Lord leads. In true New Testament churches, we see a far greater unity than what we are used to today. Within the apostolic fields there was an even deeper partnership and sense of unity. They saw themselves as one church, even as Jesus had prayed for this to be a reality. The local churches may have been defined by the city they found themselves in, or the area, but the emphasis they had in partnership, unity and oneness with the wider church within the field, was far greater than the modern-day emphasis upon individual autonomous, local churches. In fact, it could be argued that they saw themselves as one church, even as Jesus had prayed for this to be a reality. The churches share their resources because of their love and unity. For example, in 2 Corinthians 8:14 (NIV) we read, *“At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need.”* The goal is equality and this sharing of resources in partnership is seen again in the Philippian church with Paul, in Philippians 1:5 (NIV), *“because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.”*

This sense of sharing included:

- People

Timothy is sent by Paul to serve various churches (Philippians 2:19; 1 Corinthians 16:10).

Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25) is sent by a local church to serve Paul (Philippians 4:18).

- Finances

See Philippians 4:18-19; 1 Corinthians 16:1; 2 Corinthians 9.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:8, Paul speaks about us sharing our very lives! God is looking for a far deeper unity than we have settled for, and my hope is that we can begin to discover this together in our field.

We will discuss this principle of sharing, and what it practically means, in greater detail in Chapter 11.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN APOSTLES & ELDERS

CHAPTER 8

Note: We are not able to go into detail on the nature and role of elders in this book, but it is imperative to have a proper understanding of who and what they are, in order to understand how apostles work with them into the local church.

The great fear that typically holds churches and their leaders back from giving themselves to apostolic partnership, is the fear of being "controlled" (which, from a biblical point of view, is not how apostolic partnership should work at all). There should however be an equal fear about independence, because both are dangerous and neither one reflects God's blueprint and how He intends for churches to work.

The Bible makes it clear that God has designed each part of the body to need the other - each part functions best when in proper relation to each other part (1 Corinthians 12). This principle holds true with apostles, elders and churches. Apostles long to see healthy churches across the globe and generally, depending on what type of apostle they are, want to enlarge the Kingdom by breaking open new territory and working into new ground. Because the nature of the apostolic office is to function trans-locally, God has designed another very important office to work alongside apostles in serving and building God's church: "elders/pastors". Elders also function in plurality, but biblically they serve within the authority of an apostolic field and in relationship to Jesus' apostles.

**Because apostles
function translocally,
elders work alongside
apostles in serving
and building the local
church.**

The apostolic gift also functions best through delegation, rather than dealing hands-on with every intricate detail of running a local church. For this reason, apostles will quickly raise up elders/pastors within the local church to whom they entrust some of their authority and rule. Scripture makes it clear that the elders within each local church are given a level of autonomy in as much as they are tasked with leading church life and dealing with caring (1 Peter 5:2), leading (1 Timothy 5:17) and discipling the saints on the ground in the apostle's absence. Local elders on the ground must extend the rule of Christ, learning to work within local eldership teams and dealing with practical matters on the ground in the churches that have been entrusted to them.

Apostles want each local church to be strong and mature so that they can work alongside them as mature believers to enlarge the Kingdom through the field (2 Corinthians 10:16). God has designed elders to deal with the practical running, caring, discipling and mentoring of believers on the ground in each local fellowship. As the Ephesians 4 gifts work alongside local elders, the goal is for every local church to grow up into maturity.

In this way, more gifts will be released and more leaders freed up to plant new churches, or help strengthen the weaker churches within the field.

Healthy churches are supposed to become bases or “colonies” which will continue to serve outlying weak churches, until they, in turn, become strong bases for the gospel to spring from. Strong leaders emerging from within these growing, healthy bases can be freed up to work alongside the apostle and his team to further advance the Kingdom. All the churches within an apostolic field should see themselves as partners in the gospel. They should take a genuine interest in each other’s welfare, serving one another out of love for Christ. These churches will partner together with the apostles to extend the Kingdom.

The Authority of Apostles

A question that is often asked in the context of apostolic partnership, relates to who has the ultimate authority in the local church - the apostles, or the local elders? As a starting point, I remind us that in the New Testament authority is always something that is given, not taken. In Acts 2:42 (ESV), we read that the early church “*devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching*”. The apostles did not force people to do certain things.

The issue of authority is one of the great controversial subjects within the church today. Many have a deep mistrust of authority, and we find some trying to build churches without it. On the other hand, we see an abuse of authority in many scenarios, with one man wielding too much power and at times abusing the churches of Jesus Christ. Because the subject is controversial, it is important that we examine this from a biblical perspective, to ensure that we are building according to God’s pattern.

Authority upon the earth always functions within plurality - one man is never to have absolute power. Apostles are given authority by the Lord Jesus; Paul tells us that, as an apostle, he has been given authority by Jesus, “*the authority the Lord gave us for building you up*” (2 Corinthians 10:8, NIV). Again, he tells us in 2 Corinthians 13:10 that he does not want to be, “*harsh in my use of authority - the authority the Lord gave me for building you up.*”

The apostle cannot demand to have authority - it is given, or not given, to him based upon the conviction of the local eldership team.

It is important to note that the nature of this authority that Christ has given to apostles, is so that they can build up the church. While apostles should not want to lord it over God’s churches, they have been entrusted with “*all authority*” (Titus 2:15, ESV). In reality this is balanced by many things, but it is worthwhile mentioning here that local elders must discern where the Lord places them, and are free to relate where they believe the Lord is guiding them. The apostle cannot demand to have authority - it is given, or not given, to him based upon the conviction of the local eldership team (but more on this later).

In Titus 2:15, Titus is an apostle and as such carries the apostolic authority of the Lord Jesus upon the earth. In this sense, the ultimate governance of God upon the earth is placed within an apostolic team. When placed within an apostolic team, elders should be very cautious of usurping the apostle’s authority, and should only do so in very clear cases of abuse, or under clear leading from the Lord. If they break from an apostle whom the Lord has placed over them - they may find that they actually also break from the Lord, and find themselves outside of His purposes, field (area of working) and His authority.

No true apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ will ever want to abuse his authority. Also, apostles always function within an apostolic team to ensure that they do not become too high and mighty. In a showdown of authority between a local leading elder (Diotrephes) and an apostle (John), we see that John believed that he had authority over Diotrephes (3 John 9). Also, a brief study of Paul's letters reveals very quickly that apostles were bringing correction and rebuke to local elders and local churches. If apostles are able to "*exhort and rebuke with all authority*" (Titus 2:15, ESV) - (and we regularly see them doing this in each of the letters of the New Testament) - it is fairly obvious that apostles, working in a team, have authority over local church elders and churches within their field.

The Scope of an Apostle's Authority

Unfortunately, in some circles there has been evidence that apostolic authority has been very poorly exercised in its application to the local church. It is therefore important to state that, as far as possible, apostles should never "*lord it*" over the local eldership team of any local church (2 Corinthians 1:24; 1 Peter 5:3, NIV). God is looking for a partnership of mutual submission and respect. Hence it is vital that apostles and elders learn to work together and get along. Both need to honour each other's offices and to demonstrate the proper attitudes of humility and respect.

Elders are not children. By definition, they should be respected older men who have a proven, good track record. Thus, apostles should never treat such men as children, but rather as fellow workers. As far as possible, apostles should work within the faith frameworks of the local eldership team, helping these elders to process things internally (if correction is being brought), rather than demanding obedience that is neither understood nor embraced. While the apostle's authority must be brought to bear in areas of doctrine, moral failure, financial impropriety and the appointment of elders, for example, even this should be done in close consultation and unity with the local eldership team. The end net result should be as though they have made the decision together - an example of this can be seen practically in Acts 15:6-7, 23.

Equally, apostles must not try to micro-manage the local church. This is the call and mandate of the local elders who are on the ground (1 Timothy 5:17). Obviously, in important areas, the apostles should be given the liberty to speak, but they must be careful that they do not get too intricately involved in the detail. Again, it must be emphasised that, as the local elders show a track record of Christian wisdom for building the local church, that has been built upon the sure foundation laid by apostles and prophets, so apostles should become decreasingly involved in the details. The primary calling of apostles is to enlarge the Kingdom, not to micro-manage it. It could therefore be said that apostles enlarge the Kingdom and keep it healthy, while the local church elders are entrusted with the day-to-day leadership of it. Apostles come as servants to the church, not as masters of it!

Apostles come as servants to the church, not as masters of it.

In practical application, apostles cannot usurp the authority of church elders in the context of the local church. The local elders, based upon the Lord's guidance, always invite apostolic authority in. Local church elders should be careful not to reject Christ's gift of His apostle, because in so doing they may end up rejecting His wisdom and words into a situation. It is nevertheless their prerogative (as a team) to decide whether they will follow the advice given or submit themselves to apostolic authority. They have the liberty to withdraw from that apostolic field if, for example, they believe the apostles are not genuine or if they

believe that the apostles themselves have drifted from the faith (Revelation 2:2). Although this should only happen in extremely serious situations, it must be mentioned for the sake of the safety of the local church.

While apostles carry a greater authority than local elders, their authority isn't absolute. However, this is an authority that is recognised by the lesser office (elder) and not demanded by the greater (apostolic team). That having been said, if the local elders are not following apostolic perspectives, the apostles themselves may feel that they should withdraw their own ministry from those churches that will not listen to them. The apostle wants to build, so will become frustrated if his perspective is never received. In summary, there should be a continual balance held between elders and apostles, that is based upon a recognition of grace. Each must properly understand how to relate to the other, and continue to do so, to ensure that the churches can gloriously reflect Christ.

We can look at Paul's relationship with Corinth (and their leaders) to see the practical outworking of this. The local church in Corinth was in Paul's apostolic field (2 Corinthians 10:13). It had been established in AD52 and had initially flourished and grown. However, soon some significant issues and problems began to emerge. The local elders on the ground were unable to deal effectively (or on their own) with many of the issues that arose. Local elders can easily be 'too close to the cliff face' and drift into error. In Corinth specifically, we see pagan culture subtly infecting the church and the church, gradually accepting cult personality worship, sexual sin, issues over food offered to idols, lack of love to those different from them, etc. It is against this background that Paul writes to address the church with instructions on what they must do (1 Corinthians). It is in this context that he uses words like "authority" that the Lord has given him to help fix the problems. Paul addresses the church on each and every issue that he becomes aware of, giving instructions regarding dealing with sin and morality (chapter 5) and divisions (chapter 1). He corrects the wrong concept of grace (chapters 1-3), how to properly relate to Christian leaders (chapter 3 and 4), church discipline (chapter 5) and many other issues ranging from proper exercising of spiritual gifts to love.

The Corinthian church needed its relationship with Paul, Timothy and the others within the apostolic team, within that local field, to ensure that it was being built properly. In Ephesians 4:12 and 2:20, we see that apostles are needed to help churches remain healthy and mature correctly. Like Corinth, local churches today will need to be in proper relationship to an apostolic team, within an apostolic field, because God has ordained it in Scripture to be this way! Corinth needed the apostolic ministry and so do we.

**It would be impossible
for an apostle to carry out
his mandate without
authority.**

Thus, while the nature of how the apostles exercise authority is very important, it cannot be disputed that an apostle carries authority. Indeed, it would be impossible for an apostle to carry out his mandate without authority. The issue at hand then is the kind of authority that apostles carry in a local church and how it should be exercised.

This is a complex issue that has been debated since the very beginning of the so-called apostolic reformation of the late 70's. In order to come to a scriptural answer to this question, we need to look at the issue carefully. We also need to, as much as is possible, examine the relevant Scriptures without preconceived ideas, divesting ourselves of our prejudices, preconceptions and the baggage we so often carry.

There are a number of times where Paul either commands a church (its elders, or its congregation) or clarifies that a particular instruction is not a command (which he would only do if commanding was an option in the mind of his readers). I have listed some of these

Scriptures extensively and emphasised certain portions thereof in bold font to show how many times this occurs and in how many different churches, over an extended period of time.

*“Now **as a concession, not a command**, I say this. I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am.”* (1 Corinthians 7:6-8, ESV)

*“Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. **This is my rule** in all the churches.”* (1 Corinthians 7:17, ESV)

*“Now concerning the betrothed, **I have no command from the Lord**, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy. I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is.”* (1 Corinthians 7:25-26, ESV)

*“If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a **command of the Lord**. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.”* (1 Corinthians 14:37-38, ESV)

*“Now concerning the collection for the saints: **as I directed** the churches of Galatia, **so you also are to do**.”* (1 Corinthians 16:1, ESV)

*“But as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you--see that you excel in this act of grace also. I say this **not as a command**, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.”* (2 Corinthians 8:7-8, ESV)

*“And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we **command**. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ. Now we **command** you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we would give you this **command**: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we **command** and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.”* (2 Thessalonians 3:4, 6, 10-12, ESV)

*“I **do not permit** a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.”* (1 Timothy 2:12, ESV)

Likewise, John seems to exercise authority in a local church situation, where he seemingly deals with a proud and unsubmitive leader of the church:

“I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.” (3 John 1:9, ESV)

"So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church." (3 John 1:10, ESV)

We know, in contrast, that it is the local church eldership that tests the credentials of an apostle:

"I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false." (Revelation 2:2, ESV)

This does not mean that they have authority over an apostle, simply that they need not submit to a false apostle. Indeed, once having recognised an apostle, the Lord expects the submission we have seen.

We also all know Ephesians 4:11-14 (ESV):

"and he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,"
(v11)

"to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,"
(v12)

"until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," (v13)

"so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes." (v14)

Here the inference is that without the five-fold ministry, we will be tossed about by different doctrines. Similarly, it is an apostle's job (in conjunction with other ministries) to bring about unity. How can this happen unless he has the power to unite different parts of the body (i.e. different congregations), establish doctrine and even direction? This would not be possible without some degree of authority.

Notice again here that apostle precedes prophet (and the other offices). An apostle should be a forerunner and perhaps a person who can gather, equip and send out other giftings. The offices may flow together, but the apostle is preeminent (in function, not nature).

It has been suggested that Paul was only an apostle to some, not to all:

"Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 9:1-2, ESV)

A careful reading of this passage (in context with others) is not saying this. He is an apostle! The Corinthian church should recognise this and respond accordingly. To those who do not recognise his apostleship, Paul puts forward his claims in no uncertain terms. He is an apostle, but it seems he cannot force some people into believing so and submitting.

If the elders discern apostolic grace and wisdom, they should be bound by their conscience to obey.

In some ways, this may be paralleled with Old Testament prophets. A king had authority to rule his kingdom (as elders rule the church), but having recognised a man as a prophet of God and his words as the words of God, he would be bound to respond to those words. Likewise, if the elders discern apostolic grace and wisdom flowing from an apostle, they should be bound by their own conscience to obey his words.

Many have accurately taught that elders are responsible for discipline, doctrine and direction in the local church. However, whilst they are the local guardians of such matters, they should administrate these issues in line with apostolic guidance. These are the role of elders in conjunction with apostolic gifts. The following Scriptures (with my emphasis in bold font) are very illuminating:

*"... among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, **whom I have handed over to Satan** that they may learn not to blaspheme."* (1 Timothy 1:20, ESV)

*"I do not write these things to make you ashamed, **but to admonish you as my beloved children**. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me. That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. What do you wish? **Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?**"* (1 Corinthians 4:14-21, ESV)

*"For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, **I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing**. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you **are to deliver this man to Satan** for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord."* (1 Corinthians 5:3-5, ESV)

We see apostles involved in deciding doctrine, direction and discipline.

Here we see Paul involved in discipline cases, where he makes judgements and instructs the churches to carry out the discipline. Likewise, when we read Acts 15:1-20, we see an apostolic figure after much discussion, making a call on doctrine that is binding on all the churches.

Points to note regarding this council:

- There was a dispute in the local church (Antioch), caused by men who came from Jerusalem (though not sent).
- The elders of the largely Gentile church sent Paul and Barnabas (presumably leaders/elders in the local church, though also apostles in their own right) to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.
- It is clear that they were looking for a decision on a doctrinal matter from Jerusalem. Interestingly, it was a decision on the relevance of the Law, which the Jerusalem church was possibly better positioned to answer. Though Paul would have been well qualified to make a judgement, he was obviously not impartial in the matter.
- Initially the whole church met with the leadership.

- After the Pharisees pressed their point, the apostles and elders discussed the matter, possibly with the church present but not involved (v12 & 22).
- After discussion (open debate) and testimony, James makes a call that seems to have been binding on all the churches.

Here the apostolic gifts are used to set doctrine.

What if the apostles and elders disagree on a matter?

A question that is often asked, is to what degree apostles and elders should be in agreement on the interpretation and application of Scripture, etc? As already explained in this book, ultimately, apostles are the custodians of sound doctrine (setting the boundaries of, and having final authority over, sound doctrine), with the result that where elders drift or are clearly in error in their interpretation or application of Scripture, apostles have a responsibility to step in to bring correction and re-alignment. That said, where Scripture is grey on matters, an apostle cannot force his interpretation of Scripture on any elder or church holding to a different interpretation of the same Scripture. For example, on the issue of whether believers are "once saved, always saved" (as typically believed by Calvinists) or conversely, can lose their salvation (as typically believed by Arminians), Scripture is not 100% clear. Some Scriptures seem to support the former, while other Scriptures seem to support the latter.

In a matter such as this, there is freedom to "agree to disagree", as long as we keep moving together in the same direction having one heart, one mind and one purpose. The heart of any apostolic partnership should be a growing relationship and working together between the apostles and the local elders, where each purposes to get to know the other, to trust and to give grace in the understanding that we are on a journey together. Along this journey, there will be discussions and wrestling through some things together. This is normal and healthy, as long as we can agree and work from the premise that Scripture is the highest authority, and in our working things through, adopt a posture of humility and mutual submission to one another.

Generally speaking, apostles should work with the elders within a local church, and as far as possible there should be consensus.

In a crisis, or where major error develops, the apostles, in submission to those within the wider apostolic field, should biblically be able to override the elders within a local church. Generally speaking, apostles should work with the elders within a local church, and as far as possible there should be consensus. If the local eldership absolutely refuses to honour the apostles and the churches in the wider field, the apostles can only override the elders when it is clear scriptural failure. Even then, it is still possible for that local church to simply walk away, divorce themselves

from the apostles and that apostolic field and do whatever they deem fit. Only Christ will then determine on the Last Day who damaged His church, and the caution for us is that His judgement will be most severe!

We also see multiple times that the direction of the church is established by the apostles, especially by Paul. He instructs the Corinthian church in how they should conduct their meetings and in giving. He also appointed elders on numerous occasions, usually as part of his church planting strategy. At other times he sent Timothy, for example, as an apostolic delegate to ordain elders based on the criteria he sets. Therefore, we see apostles involved in deciding doctrine, direction and discipline.

There is a view that Paul's apostleship (and that of the twelve) was different to that of apostles today. We cannot refute that to be true, at least to some degree (apostles today do not write Scripture), but Scripture nowhere reveals such authority as we have seen; nowhere does it instruct us that apostles no longer carry such authority and responsibility.

The debate about who is the highest authority (apostle or elder) has been raging it seems, since the very foundation of the church. Perhaps this is simply the result of the flesh. Man likes to be in charge and likes to exert authority rather than submit. We need to recognise that it is actually Jesus who has the real authority; He is the head of the church. As His representatives (both apostles and elders) we have an obligation to hear His voice and respond to Him. There needs to be mutual submission, honour and a recognition of a different function, different grace gifting and therefore different types of authority (as per Philippians 2).

In this way, we see that apostles do not take ownership of churches, but do take responsibility for them. Responsibility requires authority. Therefore, an apostolic movement should be based upon the recognition, by the local church, of the apostolic gifting and the authority such a gift carries.

Apostles do not take ownership of churches, but do take responsibility for them.

One final picture is instructive; *apostolos* (Greek for apostle) was originally used in many ways, including that of the lead ship of a fleet. Is this not a wonderful picture? The lead ship would guide the rest. A wise captain would never pick his own line/route unless he was absolutely assured that the lead ship was not on a route that would lead to shipwreck. It was a brave (or stupid) captain who would separate from the fleet. An apostle today brings maturity and unity by going ahead, leading others and navigating through treacherous waters, to give those ships a sense of safety and security, and to lead them to their destination.

Over Which Churches Do Apostles Have Authority?

Authority is not institutional or denominational, but rather it is relational in that it is always given by reciprocal grace recognition, rather than demanded or institutionalised. Today, things are not quite as simple as they were in the early church. In those days, they simply had one church and everyone within that one church recognised who the real apostles were. Today, things are much more complicated and we have numerous denominations, independent churches and flows, each one of whom functions within its own authority. This may seem to complicate matters, but if we stick to the Scriptures, it is wonderful to see how simple and easy things can become again.

To understand which churches should be in which fields of apostolic relationship, we see a wonderful principle in Revelation 2:2 (NIV); Jesus commends the church in Ephesus because they have, "*tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.*" From this, we learn that it is the local church's responsibility to discern the genuine apostles to whom the Lord is linking them in an apostolic field. Initially, where a local church is considering coming under apostolic authority, the responsibility lies with the local elders to discern and prayerfully consider where the Lord is linking them.

It is the local church's responsibility to discern the genuine apostles to whom the Lord is linking them in an apostolic field.

Once these elders have discovered who it is they ought to partner with in the gospel, there is a giving over of themselves, and their trust, to those the Lord Jesus has given them as apostles. In this, there is submission and obedience that comes into that local eldership team in its relationship to the specific apostolic team to whom the Lord has linked them.

This is a very normal type of relationship within God's church, and is made easy to understand when we consider the similarities between an individual family belonging in a local church, and a local church belonging in an apostolic field.

Let me illustrate: I (Andrew), as a father and husband, am the head of my home. God has entrusted responsibility and authority to me to make sure that my family is brought up and kept within His Kingdom. Because no family is designed to exist as an autonomous unit (and God has designed all families to exist together in his church), upon getting married I make sure that I find that specific local church where the Lord will join my wife and I. In this quest, I will prayerfully consider the leaders, taking note of their message (for instance, is it the Word of God?) and the outcome of their way of life (Hebrews 13:7). Once satisfied, I will then proceed to join that local church and in so doing, I will agree to obey the leaders within it and submit to their authority (Hebrews 13:17).

In this process, I will yield some of my authority to those leaders and I will cease to be an autonomous unit. From that day onward, those leaders have a responsibility towards me, to correct me, teach me and shape me as a father and husband in my home (2 Timothy 3:16; 4:2). They should speak into how I raise my children, love my wife, deal with my finances and so forth, always ensuring that I am building according to God's great design. My family is no longer autonomous, but "*belongs*" (Romans 12:5, NIV) to that local church. Our destiny is from that day onward intertwined with the destiny of that local church, and a new unit is created - a church, made up of many families.

In precisely the same way we, the elders of "Church X", have been entrusted with the responsibility and authority to make sure that our church is brought up and kept within God's Kingdom. Since no church is designed to exist as an isolated, autonomous unit - and God has designed all churches to exist together within apostolic fields - we must prayerfully consider into which specific apostolic field the Lord is adding us. We must prayerfully consider the apostles (Revelation 2:2), taking note of their message (that it is the Word of God), the outcome of their way of life (Hebrews 13:7) and whether it is this specific field to which the Lord is adding our church.

Once satisfied, we will then proceed to join that apostolic field, and in so doing we will submit to the authority of the apostles within it (Hebrews 13:17). In this process, we will yield some of our authority to these apostles and will cease to be an autonomous unit. From this day onward we understand that these apostles are responsible for us - to correct us, teach us, and shape us as leaders in God's house (2 Timothy 4:2). They should speak into how we disciple our members, love each other, deal with our finances and so forth, always ensuring that we are building according to God's great design.

Our church is no longer isolated, but "*belongs*" (Romans 12:5) to that apostolic field. Our destiny is from that day onward intertwined with the destiny of those local apostles and a new unit is created - an apostolic field, made up of many churches.

Do Apostles Only Have Authority Over Churches They Themselves Have Planted?

The simple answer is “no”, because authority is always given to somebody by the individual and should not be “taken” from the top down. The Kingdom works because it is always an individual’s response to grace that flows from the heart, not because it is an institutional system that demands outer conformity. Thus, even if an apostle plants a local church, this does not mean that that local church will always be linked to him within an apostolic field. That having been said, we must be careful in our broken and depraved generation that we do not break what God has joined, while at the same time recognising that it is possible in the Lord for things to change. Sometimes it is possible that an apostle who plants a church is not able to effectively take the church forward, because he is not a primary apostle. In these types of cases it is a fairly normal for the church to begin to look elsewhere for future apostolic leadership.

John Mark worked for a season with Paul, but later found himself working in a separate field with Barnabas. In the same way, churches may migrate in their relationships with apostles as the Holy Spirit leads them. Apostolic authority is always a live, real-time medium and is not an institutionalised or denominational system. As long as the apostles and the churches believe that they are joined in the Lord, the partnership continues to mutually benefit both.

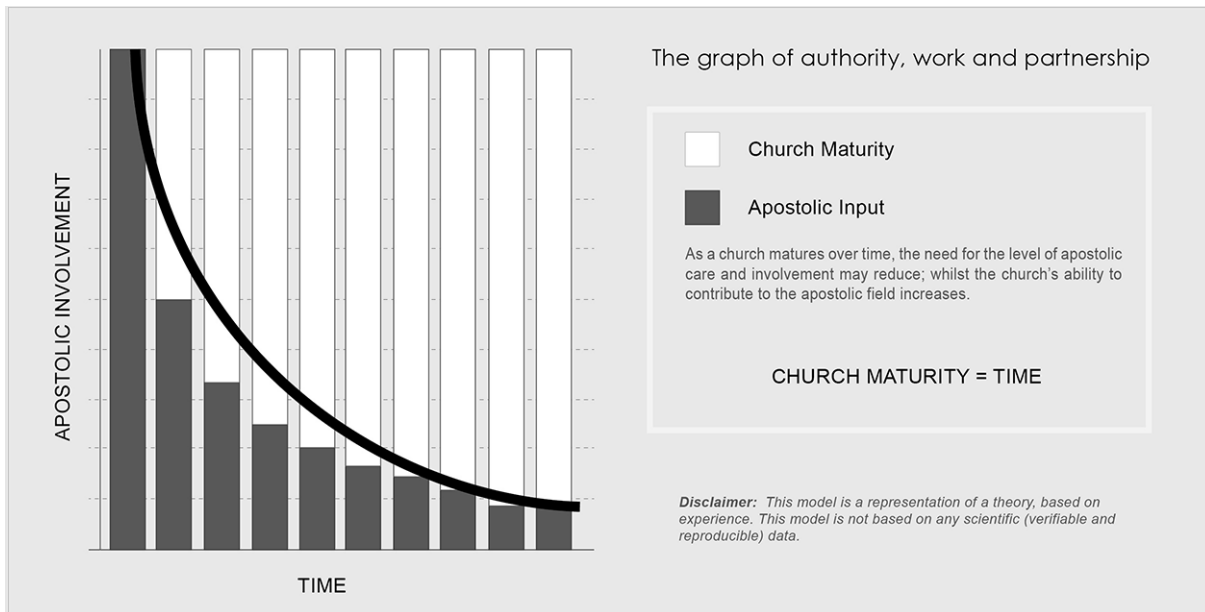
We do not know who planted the church in Rome, but we can guess that it was Jews who returned home after the Holy Spirit outpouring on Pentecost. Paul had never been to Rome, yet he wrote his letter to the Romans before he had personally visited the church (Romans 1:10-11). We see the same thing in Paul’s letter to the Colossians, in which he gave instruction and direction to a group of believers who he had never visited (Colossians 2:1, 5). Thus, it is possible for churches to be in relationship to an apostle even if he has never actually been to their church. This is because in the church we do things according to the Holy Spirit. Obviously, some correspondence would need to take place and some level of partnership entered into, but if the Lord is leading them that way, then a church and an apostle can be in partnership, even though they have never personally met. Normally this linking will occur because some of those working together in the apostolic field will have some form of relationship with the leaders of the local church, which will open the door for the apostles and churches to begin relating.

Importantly though, churches should partner together with apostles, because the Lord has led them into this relationship, and for no other reason.

Apostolic Input as the Church Matures

As congregations mature, their relationship with the apostle will change its form. In the early stages of a new church, there will be a high relational and emotional draw that the church will place upon its apostolic relationships. As the church matures however, it will draw less and less upon the apostles and begin to contribute as an “adult” member of that field. In Romans 1:12 (ESV) Paul talks about how churches and apostles will be *“mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.”* It is God’s intent that the apostle serves the church in order to impart to her and make her strong and mature. It is also God’s intent that the mature church will serve the apostle within his “field” and give of herself (2 Corinthians 8:5) and her resources such as people (Philippians 2:25; 4:18) and money (1 Corinthians 9:11) to further the Kingdom of God. We will look at practical partnership in greater detail in Chapter 11.

Below is a graph that illustrates this:



In this graph, we see that the apostle's workload decreases as the church matures. This frees him up to extend the borders of the field and enlarge God's Kingdom (2 Corinthians 10:16). He will be needed less and less as a mature eldership can now govern well through most issues. However, as mentioned previously, even very mature churches still need to be in relationship with apostles. The seven churches in Revelation were around 50 years old, and they had seen great ministry and powerful ministers ministering within them. Ephesus alone had had Paul, Timothy and John the apostle, living amongst them and devoting years of ministry to their maturity. The Ephesian church was around 40 years old and undoubtedly had seasoned elders leading it. Yet, we find that it still needed an apostolic voice to bring correction and direction (Revelation 2:1-7). The local churches will never be entirely autonomous, but will partner together in the gospel, with apostles, until Christ returns.

More mature churches will increasingly find that while they need to draw less from the apostle, they are concurrently able to add things for him and to help him more. As they partner in giving into the field, those maturing gifts within them will find their proper place within the wider body, and the church itself will enjoy fruitful ministry for Christ into the nations. This is the glorious nature of the apostles, elders and local churches in partnership in the gospel, for the glory of God!

The relationship between apostles and elders in the local church is always one of inter-dependence.

Importantly regardless of the church's level of maturity, the relationship between apostles and elders in the local church is always one of inter-dependence. The nature of man is to want to be independent. The nature of God, however, is one of inter-dependence, with each person of the Trinity (Father, Son and the Holy Spirit) in unity depending and relying on the other. The apostolic heart is for churches to mature and not remain in a perpetual state of childhood. Even in maturity however, they should reflect something of the inter-dependent nature of God.

Do Elders Decide Who They Want to Visit Within the Field, or Do the Apostles Decide?

Both can decide, depending upon the Holy Spirit's leading. Sometimes elders will believe the Lord instructs them to invite a specific gift in, and they then issue an invitation to that specific person. At other times, it is the apostles who decide what the local churches need. Often they will send someone that the church may not even know personally. Because of the relationships and trust within the apostles' sphere, the churches should be fairly confident to receive those that are sent to them.

Scriptural examples of this:

Antioch: In Acts 11:22, Barnabas is sent to Antioch by the apostles in Jerusalem to encourage and strengthen the saints. Again, they were not invited by Antioch, but sent by Jerusalem's apostles. Judas and Silas are sent to Antioch to advise the church regarding some things (Acts 15:22, 27).

Crete: Paul was very briefly in Crete, but sends Titus (Titus 1:5) to deal with issues on the island, within the various churches. Paul tells us that he will later send either Artemis or Tychicus (Titus 3:12) to help serve the churches there.

Apostles will send in various gifts to the local churches depending on what the churches need at that time, to strengthen them and bring about health. Apostles who are graced as master builders in particular, will know what the right gifts will be, for the right circumstances. From time to time apostles, and those working with them, will visit churches to "*see how they are doing*" (Acts 15:36, NIV), when the Spirit leads them to, when they become aware of situations or crises, or when invited by the local church.

APOSTOLIC PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS THE SAINTS

CHAPTER 9

Belonging to a church that is in apostolic partnership is not “an optional extra”, a “nice to have”, but is essential to the health of the local church and therefore, to our own health and growth as believers. But why is this so? How do “ordinary saints” who are not elders or in full-time ministry, benefit from the apostolic? Let’s look together at four reasons why.

They Equip the Saints for Works of Ministry

“So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-13, NIV).

God’s intention was always for the church to be a priesthood of believers, where every member of the body ministers to God and to each other.

In some churches, the pastor does all the ministry with the rest of the people looking on while he prays, prophesies, lays hands on the sick, casts out demons, etc. This is not how God intended church to be. God’s intention was always for the church to be a priesthood of believers, where every member of the body ministers to God and to each other. The Bible is clear that every believer has been given a spiritual gift, and that each one of us must play our part and use our gift(s), to strengthen and build up the body of Christ (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians

12). (As a sidenote, this is why the apostolic partnership that we are part of, is called “Four12”. Drawing on Ephesians 4:12, Four12 is about equipping the saints for work of ministry).

Ephesians 4 tells us that God gives certain men and women as trans-local gifts to the church (referred to as “the Ephesians 4-gifts” or “the five-fold”), specifically to train and equip the saints in using their spiritual gifts, and building up the church to function effectively, as the body of Christ on the earth – doing what Jesus did and showing the world what He is like.

These (five-fold) gifts include apostles, who carry a unique God-given grace on their lives, to help the elders in the local church to build God’s church according to the biblical blueprint or design. These men have the ability to see what is “missing” in the church, and what needs to be done to bring her into better health. Apostles also help to make sure that everything the church teaches and does, is properly rooted on the foundation of Jesus Christ.

They Help the Church Into Unity and Maturity

Ephesians 4:11-13 also tells us that the (five-fold) gifts, including apostles, are necessary to help bring the church into unity of the faith, unity in the knowledge of Jesus, and maturity to the fullness of Christ.

Our maturing as believers, and our growing together in genuine love and unity, is something that will continue for as long as Jesus is still away from His Bride. Only when He returns, will there be perfect unity forever, and will we ourselves be perfect as He is perfect. What the aforesaid scripture says, is that in the meanwhile, and for as long as we are still waiting for Jesus' return, we need apostles and other gifts to teach and train us how to grow in and to maintain oneness of heart, mind and purpose (unity). One of the ways in which apostles help to bring the church into unity, is by setting and uniting believers around the vision of what Jesus has called us to as the church. Also, where there is disunity and division, they bring perspective, correction and discipline if needed, and help to restore unity and order to the church.

What the Scripture tells us further, is that apostles (and other trans-local gifts) are needed to help us become more Christ-like and grow up in the faith. Again, they do this by teaching, training and leading by example, always going back to the foundation of who Jesus is, and pointing believers to Him as the author and perfecter of our faith.

Apostles (and other trans-local gifts) are needed to help us become more Christ-like and grow up in the faith.

The implication of Ephesians 4:11-13 is clear: without these gifts coming and working into our congregations, we will never come into the kind of unity and maturity that Jesus intended, becoming more like Him in every way.

They Safeguard the Church

Apostles who operate in team are, in a sense, given as protection for the local church and the believers who make up that church, and submit themselves to the leadership of the local elders. This is so, firstly, because of apostles' role to make sure that everything the local church teaches and does, is properly rooted on the foundation of the Lord Jesus and that no other foundation is laid or built upon (Ephesians 2:20, 1 Corinthians 3:10-11).

In addition to making sure that the church's foundations are right, apostles help safeguard sound doctrine. In other words, they make sure that the church's beliefs and values are Christ-centered and biblical and that the elders do not teach/preach things that are false. Where there is doctrinal error or drift, the apostles and their teams step in to bring correction and re-alignment with scripture. This is an important safeguarding against false or unbalanced doctrines that can easily find its way into the church, and ultimately do great damage to believers' faith.

From the pattern of the New Testament, we see it is the responsibility of apostles, and those they delegate to, to appoint elders in the local church. This is another protection for members, in that they have the assurance that the men appointed as elders, and whom they as members are to submit to (Hebrews 13:17), are indeed godly men whose character qualify them for the responsibility of leading God's people. Because the apostles have relationships with the elders, they can continue to father/mentor them in this role, bring wise perspective to them on difficult matters, and ultimately make sure that they remain faithful shepherds of God's flock. Where an elder abuses their authority, apostles are able to intervene and

hold the elder(s) to account, which is another safeguard for the members entrusted to the elders' care. Likewise, where an elder is in sin, the apostles will draw alongside the affected eldership team to give perspective and assist in the exercising of discipline in a biblical manner, that honours God. (The same that applies to a saint that is in unrepentant sin. In complex cases, it would be wise for the eldership to get apostolic input into the discipline process.)

All of these are "apostolic safeguards" to make sure that the local church is built in a healthy way; to protect believers against doctrinal error and drift; and to help the church be a beautiful expression of Jesus' body on the earth. The implication for a church that is not in apostolic partnership, and that do not have these safeguards in place, is that its leaders and members are exponentially more vulnerable to error and drift and potentially without recourse where things go really wrong.

We Partner Together to Disciple The Nations

As such, apostles create an opportunity for the local church to be part of something bigger and to reach not only their neighbourhoods, but the nations for Christ.

Apostles typically see "the bigger picture" of what God is doing. Because they work trans-locally, they have a sense of what God is doing, not just in the local context, but what He is doing in and through the body of Christ on a much broader platform.

While apostolic gifts come into the local church and help her build God's church God's way, they understand that God's plan was never for the local church to function in isolation. Instead, the New Testament model is for the local church to partner with

other local churches and for the churches to work together to make disciples of nations. As such, apostles create an opportunity for the local church to be part of something bigger, and to reach not only their neighbourhoods, but the nations for Christ.

The Great Commission to "*go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*" (Matthew 28:18-20, NIV) is for everyone who calls themselves a believer - not just for apostles, elders or leaders in the church. As such, it is not just the Ephesians 4 gifts or the leaders of the church who get to go - it is the privilege of every believer to partner with what God is doing across the globe, to minister into other churches for their strengthening and encouragement, and to be part of extending His Kingdom across the earth.

Ultimately, being part of a church that is joined to other churches in an apostolic partnership, means a linking in heart, mind and purpose with other churches around the world. Through this link, the relationships forged across partnering churches, and sharing what (gifts, resources, etc) we have with one another, strength and unity come. And where there is unity, God commands a blessing (Psalm 133).

Conclusion

In closing, we can see why it is so important to be part of a church that is in a healthy apostolic partnership. Apostolic partnership benefits not only the elders and the leaders of the church, but benefits and protects every saint who makes up the local church. Without this partnership, the church will never come into the fullness of what Christ intended her to be and neither will individual saints. Apostolic partnership, on the other hand, understands that not one (church, or individual) carries the fullness of Christ; and that it is only in our joining together, with each (church, and individual) needing and belonging to the other, that we can truly reflect what God is like.

APOSTOLIC PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS APOSTLES

CHAPTER 10

We have looked at what benefits the local churches get from an apostolic relationship, so we will now consider the benefits that apostles receive from partnering apostolically with the local church.

Resources

Apostles can receive resources from the churches. It is very clear that apostles will work amongst churches, whether they are supported or not. Paul worked hard amongst the Corinthians, in spite of the fact that they did not contribute financially to his ministry (2 Corinthians 11:8, NIV). To do this however, Paul tells us that he had, *“robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you.”* Jesus had commanded that apostles must be supported by the saints, but equally no apostle should serve for money. Churches that are able - and who understand God's principles of generosity and giving - should support apostolic ministry financially (2 Corinthians 11:8-9; 1 Corinthians 9; Philippians 4:10-19). These churches should take a portion of their income and *“put it at the apostles' feet ”* (Acts 4:35, NIV), sowing it into their ministry to help serve the wider churches and to support them as they send workers out (3 John 7-8).

Established Bases and Training Centers to Further the Work

Mature churches, in their partnership with apostles, are able to provide bases and springboards for the gospel to go forth. By making the facilities and people available, strong hubs are created, which can help break open new frontiers for the gospel by planting new churches and strengthening outlying weaker churches. Jerusalem serves Peter so that surrounding towns could be reached for the gospel (Acts 5:16; Acts 8:1; 4-5). Likewise, the churches of Antioch (Acts 13:1-4; 14:26), Macedonia (1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Corinthians 11:9), Philippi (Philippians 4:15) and Rome (Romans 15:24) all became bases that the churches and apostles could use to advance the Kingdom.

Help in Discipling Nations

Apostles are able to break open more than they can manage by themselves. This creates ministry opportunity for others. It is through the partnership of churches with apostles, and the subsequent equipping of each local saint for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:12), that an entire priesthood can be released to serve God and man. Each member of each church within the field, gives of themselves to their apostles (2 Corinthians 8:5) and their work. This results in every saint being a minister of the gospel and contributing to the plans of Christ according to their own individual destiny, serving Christ and His purposes, through the church, into the nations.

Partners for Increased Capacity

Partnership within the local church enables a far greater workload to be carried.

Apostles cannot work alone. However, when a partnership is created with a local church, both the priesthood and other Ephesians 4 gifts are released within an apostolic field. This partnership of people enables a far greater workload to be carried. Scripture is clear: *“two are better than one because they have a good return for their labour,”* (Ecclesiastes 4:9, NIV). *“How could one man chase a thousand or two put ten thousand to flight,”* (Deuteronomy 32:30, NIV). This union and partnership within an apostolic field breaks open

disproportionate blessing and grace, that then flows to all contributing partners, resulting in an exponentially enlarged effect and Kingdom breakthrough.

Emotional Help

The churches are also able to support the apostles in prayer (Colossians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:25) and love (Philippians 1:3-5; Galatians 4:14-15). At times, it is the churches that will minister to the apostles, as these men become weary or ill.

Giving an Account

Right alongside the local leaders, apostles will also give an account (Hebrews 13:17; Romans 14:12) for each local church entrusted to their care and within their field. Apostles will be rewarded for their labour (1 Corinthians 3:8), and the quality of how they build will be tested by the Lord on the Last Day (1 Corinthians 3:15). Apostles will also be judged most severely if they damage the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:17). The general rule in Scripture is that the greater the authority given, the greater the judgement will be, and for this reason, apostles will be judged most strictly within the body of Christ. The churches that they work with will be either their glory (Romans 15:17) or their shame. If their work fails, then they will lose their reward on the Last Day (1 Corinthians 3:15). For this reason, they work extra hard, with extra diligence, in the hope that they are not running their race in vain (Philippians 2:16; Galatians 4:11).

APOSTOLIC PARTNERSHIP AS A BIBLICAL MODEL

CHAPTER 11

The plain meaning of the word "partnership" is "what is shared" or "what is in common", and the concept of "community" springs from that. So then, churches that are in partnership with one another, obviously have a common area of love and a common area of service. And so we see churches, out of a deep love for the big picture of what God is doing in the nations, working together within a bigger sphere than their own local area.

The word "partnership" in the Bible, is the word *koinonia* in Greek. The Bible uses this word in a number of different ways, which are quite telling with regard to how churches should partner with one another, outside of their local contexts.

The first is obviously our unity with Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9). Then we also find a unity within the local church. For example, in Acts 2:42 we see the believers devoted themselves to the *koinonia*, to the local fellowship. There is thus a local aspect to community or unity. But then we also see that same word used within an apostolic field. The Bible speaks of local churches having *koinonia* - i.e. being in partnership, or in unity, with one another. (See, for example, 2 Corinthians 10:13-16, Philippians 1:5, and 1 John 1:3).

So, unity is a far greater thing than a loose federation, or a network of churches, that kind of come together to do things together on the odd occasion. God's intent is for a far deeper unity that really should reflect something of our relationship with Jesus, or even our relationship within the local church. The biblical model for this is apostolic partnership.

Apostolic Partnerships are not Church Networks

An apostolic partnership is not the same as a "church network". In an apostolic partnership, there is a genuine partnership between the apostolic and the partnering churches, and because of that, also between the partnering churches themselves - not just a loose association or connection with (the other churches in) a particular network. In an apostolic partnership, churches - with the guidance of the apostolic - share what they have (ministry gifts, resources, relational support, etc.) with one another towards a common goal, namely making disciples of nations (Matthew 28:18-20).

One of the major distinctions is that an apostolic partnership, the apostolic grace coming into the local church and working with the elders, can bring celebration for what is happening, as well as correction. Every letter that Paul writes, brings a correction of some kind to the churches, with the heart of an apostle to see the church be in good health and reflect the Lord Jesus well. So there needs to be a speaking into the local church, both for the purpose of encouraging, but also to bring correction. (This does not easily happen in networks).

It is essential that we build on the right foundations. There is nothing worse than building blindly within a local church, thinking you are doing well, and then finding out when you come before the Lord, that actually you did not build what He is looking for. For this reason,

we need to be seeking out correction to make sure that we can align ourselves back to the Scriptures and to the New Testament, and make sure that our building is not in vain.

As such, in an apostolic partnership, you do not see guest preachers traveling around doing a "Tupperware preach" (i.e. the same, or their best, preach in every context). Instead, they bring what is needed for that local church to try help the church move forward in health and wholeness. In our times, we need apostles who are brave enough to speak unpopular truths and to warn against heresies and popular fads that are dangerous for churches, rather than to only say things that will guarantee another invitation to speak at the next conference, as is so often the case in church networks.

In apostolic partnerships, churches should be carefully built into the cornerstone of Christ. The architecture of every part of the church should be tested against the blueprint of Scripture, as it is then subjected to the architecture of Christ (Hebrews 11:10). The goal of the apostolic is healthy people and healthy relationships between churches. As churches are built up, the questions of 'how? why? what? and when?' should be regarded as vitally important and not sacrificed upon the altar of 'growth at all costs. Health is the goal, because apostles know that healthy things will grow.

In my experience of church networks, as good ideas are shared and adopted, the measure of all things is often church growth (i.e. numbers growth). This is a dangerous way to build church, because it neglects the fact that the *quality* of our work will be tested by fire (1 Corinthians 3:13). These churches are building for short-term gain, without considering the long-term pain that this can bring. When growth is the highest end goal, and numbers are celebrated and imitated, the churches are often shallow, immature, carnal, lazy and eight miles wide, but only one inch deep. This is not what Jesus had in mind.

The second thing we see in an apostolic partnership, is that neighbourhoods as well as nations are affected. Apostles obviously help the local churches to reach their neighbourhood more effectively, but they also sweep the churches up into a big picture of discipling nations. We really do need to see the churches involved in the big mission of God, which is to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18).

Partnership helps churches to work together in unity to reach the world for the glory of God. Paul writes about this in many places. For example, in 2 Corinthians 10:15, we see him talking about wanting to use the local base of Corinth to preach the gospel beyond him, that they would come and increase into new regions through them. We need to see this happening in a much greater degree within the churches.

Thirdly, we see them raising up the priesthood of believers. In more traditional churches, and often also in church networks, you often see spectators coming and enjoying a great "show" on a Sunday, which does not really enable or equip the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:12). In a partnership of churches, the way God intends it, every single person is activated, everyone is devoted to the things of God. In this way, we see a glorious priesthood rising up with everyone being included in what God is doing.

Fourthly, it is also very important that there is genuine love - both coming to the church from the wider church, but also from the church to the wider field. People are joined to other people and the partnership that happens, tends to sweep everyone up in the big mission of what God is doing outside of just our local context. And so, as we are running together for the glory of God, people form genuine relationships outside of their local contexts, as well as apostolic love into the local context. This really helps the churches rise up to take nations as an inheritance.

A fifth point is this: there will always be new preachers/teachers with new focuses and new revelation, and very often they become the new wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). Unless these doctrines are properly rooted in biblical foundations, they become like a "virus" that is sweeping the churches and can do great harm. It requires apostolic input to bring the necessary "antibodies" to the church, that will immunise and protect her against false doctrines and bring her back to sound, biblical doctrine. An example of this in the New Testament, is when Gnosticism was starting to take root, we see the apostles coming in and not being swept up with the newest revelation, but bringing people back to the old revelation of what it is to properly love God and what He is about. (See, for example, Colossians 1:9; 1 Timothy 6:20). So, partnership helps churches to negotiate strong winds of doctrine, to hold their course, and to make sure that they are continually being rooted in Jesus Christ.

Another distinctive of partnership is that, because of their relationship to the churches, the apostles actually know the leaders in those churches. As such, they can help the local churches appoint elders and leaders that will effectively lead the churches forward in biblical health. We see this both in the instructions that Paul gives to Titus (Titus 1:5) and to Timothy (1 Timothy 5:22), but also in his own work with Barnabas as they come into the churches and appoint elders and leaders for the local churches (Acts 14:23). It helps the churches come into health.

Because of their relationship to the churches, the apostles actually know the leaders in those churches.

In contrast, in church networks, the tendency is for local leaders to choose, appoint and ordain elders without apostolic perspective. This will often result in poor choices: nepotism, favouritism and peer pressure - rather than God's choice. This can lead to destruction because when leaders fail, people are hurt and scatter. Jesus puts it like this, "*Strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered*" (Matthew 26:31, ESV).

A further distinctive between apostolic partnerships and other types of church structures or networks, turns on the issue of authority and how apostles and elders work together. How leadership works is one of the greatest wonders of the New Testament. Jesus established a very different pattern of leadership to anything seen before in His church. Sadly, the church has messed this up throughout history by either falling too far into centralised authority, or into having no authority at all.

In denominations, there is a tendency for too much authority to be placed within a central governing body. In this way, the authority of the local elders is overridden and they are kept subject to denominational control. Church networks, on the other hand, tend to swing the pendulum the other way, to the degree that apostles have no authority. Some local pastors live largely unaccountable to anyone, with no one addressing issues or holding anyone to account. Apostles in these circumstances are little more than guest preachers who are invited to fill pulpits and bless churches.

As already explained in Chapter 7, relating to the relationship between apostles and elders in apostolic partnerships, God's desire is that the authority of local elders (plural) are not to be forced, or controlled, externally. By recognising God's grace on the lives of individual apostles and by following the Spirit's leading, elders defer to the apostolic influence and accountability. They test those they believe to be apostles (Revelation 2:2), and yield as they discern Christ's grace, voice and truth within the apostles who pass their tests. By effectively working together, the balance of freedom and accountability can be properly lived out.

Apostles cannot “lord it over” anyone’s faith, but submission is given by local elders as long as they recognise the grace of Christ and the words of Christ flowing from the apostle with whom they are in partnership. Authority in the Kingdom is given, not taken.

Ultimately, partnership is not an issue of control, nor is it independence. Both of these are very far extremes that do not properly reflect what God intends, as He wants churches to work together within a field. But there is a mutual submission given by recognition of grace. Apostles come in by invitation, and they work with the faith of the local church and its leaders, to make sure that the churches are effectively moving forward in the things of God. As long as there is a recognition of grace flowing both ways, there is a partnership in the gospel that honours God, glorifies the church and helps it become what God intends it to be.

A final way in which true apostolic partnership is different to most church networks, is that there is actually accountability. Within a network, we do not generally see accountability. Denominations, on the other hand, are typically either heavy handed control; or again, to hold the denomination together, sometimes a very loose affiliation with everyone doing what they want to. In the New Testament however, we see one heart, one mind, one purpose within all the churches; and within the churches, we see a real accountability one to another.

There is a sense that it is easy for a lead elder or a pastor to go rogue, or to start ruling or lording it over the church. We see this, for example in 3 John where a man called Diotrephes has started to really go out of control in terms of his exercising of authority.

At the same time, apostles coming in and lording it over the churches is just as dangerous. As explained above, there has to be this middle ground where there is recognition of grace: for apostles to come in and work within the church, and with the elders, faith, and together in faith, in mutual submission to one another, find the mind of Christ.

The above distinctions make, I believe, a compelling case for why apostolic partnerships are the way God intends the churches to work, both individually and together, for His glory.

Our willingness to build within the bounds of God’s blueprint will determine whether our churches will enjoy ongoing fellowship with the Lord and each other, or not.

As it was in the Garden of Eden, our willingness to build within the bounds of God’s blueprint will determine whether our churches will enjoy ongoing fellowship with the Lord and each other, or not. It will determine whether we see God’s blessing, fruitfulness and multiplication upon the earth or not. Those who find themselves in apostolic relationships which resemble some of the “network mentality” detailed above, are using man-made materials, which are weak and will result in corrupted work.

I believe it is so important for the church to get it right. She is the hope of the nations and Jesus is coming back for a pure and spotless Bride. We just cannot afford to let one man, or even a small group of men, start to hijack the church and take her places she is not supposed to be. The church belongs to Jesus Christ, and He has given grace gifts in elders, deacons, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, to work together for the glory of God, to see the church grow up into maturity and health.

Wisdom says we need to go back to these foundations and make sure that all these things are properly in place, to best make sure that the churches will be able to come through beautiful like Jesus intends them to on that very last day, when He returns for His Bride!

Practical Partnership

Partnering with the apostolic and with other churches who have joined themselves to the partnership, is something we do in heart, but also in reality. It means we give our time, talent and treasure to the apostolic and to the bigger mission, that we believe God has called us to, as local churches partnering together for His glory.

We believe God has called us, as local churches, to partner together for His glory.

The church in Philippi is arguably the best model we have of a church that effectively partnered with Ephesians 4-gifts. In Philippians 1:4-5, Paul says that he prays with joy when he thinks of them, and of the partnership in the gospel, that he has with them.

One way in which the church partnered with Paul, is in prayer. In Philippians 1:19, Paul says that he is overjoyed, because he knows that the Philippians' prayers are going to lead not only for his support, but also for his deliverance in certain areas. It is important that the churches pray for the apostolic leadership, and for the other partnering churches, as we work into the nations.

But the Philippians did not only pray. They also partnered with Paul by sending their people to support him in his work. He specifically commends the church for sending Epaphroditus to him when he was in Rome (Philippians 2:25). In the same way, local churches can send their leaders to help other churches in the field to come into more. It is probably one of the greatest and quickest ways that leaders from local churches themselves will grow. As they are a blessing to others, they will find that God multiplies blessing back to them (and also to the local church from which they have been sent).

Another very important way in which the Philippian church partnered with Paul, is with personal financial support. In Philippians 4:10, Paul rejoices that the Philippians have again renewed their concern for him and are sending finances to help him on his mission. They were obviously very concerned about Paul and what he was doing, and so they wanted to partner with him financially.

In an apostolic partnership, partnering churches typically give a percentage of their tithes as local churches, to support the mission of what God has called the partnership of churches to do together in the nations. This money typically goes to help with church plants, administration and developing resources for churches, and it also helps to carry some of the full-time Ephesians 4 gifts as they work permanently into the churches around the world. We see this even being commanded by the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul says that Jesus actually commanded that those who preach the gospel, should get their living from the gospel.

The tithe (and/or offerings) contribution from partnering churches also helps to serve poorer churches in the field, many of whom do not have resources. Again, this illustrates what Paul meant when he speaks about there being equality in the churches (2 Corinthians 8:14). The local churches in Paul's field partnered financially with Paul, but also with other churches in the field. So, for example, Paul asks the Philippians specifically to help the church in Jerusalem, as it was struggling financially. And he tells us in Romans 15:26, that they did this even though they were at a time of severe affliction themselves. They begged and earnestly pleaded for the favour of taking part in this relief of the saints. So, there is a partnership into the wider field as churches help other churches.

Another way they partnered, is that they blessed ministries that came to them from within the field. We see examples of this in the New Testament. So, for instance, Paul argued that, as an apostle working into the churches, he had a right to receive financial support, even if he did not make use of these rights. In 1 Corinthians 9:4-6 (ESV), he says, "*Do we not have the right to eat and drink? Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?*". In 1 Corinthians 9:14-15 (ESV), he goes further to say: "*In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision.*" Also, the principle is mentioned in Philippians 4:15-16 (NKJV): "*Now you Philippians know also that at the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.*"

Obviously, no one should try to use the gospel to peddle money, but there just are practical realities to serving churches. For example, whenever somebody travels from one local church to serve another, it costs money to get there. In 2 Corinthians 11:7-8, Paul tells the Corinthians that he had preached the gospel to them free of charge, but he actually says it was not free and that he robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve the Corinthians. (He probably used the money from the Philippian churches to help the Corinthian church.) Now, our hope is that all the churches would willingly want to give to help others, rather than receive, and that the leaders would travel at their own expense, if needed, for the health of the churches. But it does seem that Paul really wanted the churches to help those who ministered to them, where possible.

God loves to see churches working together, alongside Ephesians 4-gifts, for the glory of His Son. The partnership between Paul and the Philippians is a wonderful model for such working together. We read in Philippians 4:18-20 (NIV), that the Philippians had given so much to Paul and what they gave, he said, was "*a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God*". The result of which Paul tells us, is that God would actually meet all their needs according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus (v19).

IN CLOSING

CHAPTER 12

Nobody possesses the whole truth; we all see in part (1 Corinthians 13:9), but I am convinced that what has been revealed in Scripture is God's plan for His church. If we submit to His ways, then she really will become a pure and spotless Bride (2 Corinthians 11:2) and the vehicle for making His manifold wisdom known (Ephesians 3:10).

I am passionate about helping the church become all she should be, and attaining what we read about in Ephesians 4:12-14 (ESV):

“to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.”

The best way to achieve this is for every local church to be part of a "field", joined in partnership with an apostolic team. It is true that many churches are doing many good things without this, but I feel that in doing so they are missing out on God's best.

Every eldership team should look to see who they recognise as an apostolic gift: a man of godly character and anointing, who has a deep and abiding love for Jesus and His church. Then they should, in humility and out of a reverent fear of God, join themselves with, and submit, to such a gift.

THE APOSTOLIC THROUGH THE AGES

ADDENDUM

By Mike Davies (Elder, Joshua Generation Church)

God has been doing a wonderful work in recent times, of restoring the gift of the apostolic. It is not as though this is a new office in the church (indeed it is as old as the church itself!), but it is one that has often been neglected, abused or misunderstood over the ages. Here we look at how God has faithfully used men throughout history to bring much needed correction and health to the church, even in its darkest hours. Master builders who have understood, at least to some degree, Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 3:10,

"According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it." (1 Corinthians 3:10, ESV)

We would argue then that the ministry of apostles is essential for the building of a healthy church. Yet if that is the case, why does there seem to be little or no trace of apostles for much of the history of the church? We must remember that even though a study of church history can be extremely helpful and informative, Scripture has primacy over church practice, tradition and history when it comes to establishing correct doctrine and practice. So let us take a brief look at church history and address this concern.

There is no doubt that after the apostolic era of the first century or so, the church drifted away from many scriptural foundations. Some of these foundations were only restored centuries later. For example: adult baptism, baptism in the Holy Spirit, the priesthood of all believers, salvation by faith alone, etc. The absence of such doctrines from most of the church during those centuries is not an argument against the importance of such doctrines, but rather an indictment on the state of the church. The same can be said of the role of the apostle. As the church drifted from God's pattern for governance, so it drifted further into ill health and, in some cases, death. The lack of understanding around this vital office within the church has served rather to emphasize its importance in promoting a healthy church. It is possible to see the existence and role of apostles throughout church history, even if the term "apostle" was not always used or properly understood. In order to recognise the influence of these apostles, it may be helpful to briefly describe what the role of an apostle is, as it is outlined in Scripture.

Apostles ensure that local churches are building on the foundation of Christ (Ephesians 2:20). They do this by assessing whether or not churches are lining up with the truth revealed in Scripture, both in their teaching and in their practice. We see the practical outworking of this in Scripture in the letters that the original apostles addressed to the local churches. In each one they are bringing correction to the building that local elders are doing, thus ensuring that the house being built is according to the biblical specification.

Throughout history, individuals and movements that have carried the true gospel (to a greater or lesser degree) have arisen and have fought against false doctrine and false practices. These men endeavoured to build the church on the foundation of Christ and in

accordance with Scripture, sometimes at the cost of their lives. Although the leaders of such movements were imperfect in their lifestyles and doctrines (as are all men, including the original apostle), we can easily recognise them as apostolic voices of their time.

With the death of the original apostles (the last being John in the early second century) came an issue of authority. The apostles had carried decisive authority, but they were no longer around. During this time, men of various calibres circulated writings of various standards. Such men as Clement (3rd bishop of Rome), Ignatius (bishop of Antioch) and Polycarp (disciple of John).

Whilst the original apostles had the authority that came with being hand-picked by Jesus (though we read in the New Testament that even their authority was questioned at times), the difficulty lay in passing on the baton to a second and third generation of apostles. Individuals arose claiming to be apostles, many teaching heresies such as Gnosticism. The debate at the time was not whether or not there were still apostles, but rather who the genuine apostles were. As it turned out, there were a number of genuine apostles.

Apart from the ones already mentioned, there were the likes of Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria and Origen. Between 180 and 250 AD in particular, they fought for doctrinal orthodoxy, for the recognition of the New Testament canon and, interestingly, the recognition of true apostles. In an attempt to identify who the true apostles were, Irenaeus made lists of the succession of the leaders of the most significant churches, including Rome. The thinking behind this was, at least in part, to defeat the Gnostics. The Gnostics taught that there was a secret knowledge that was required for salvation, which they held. Irenaeus countered this by arguing that if anyone held such knowledge, it would be the followers of Christ who would have passed it to their own followers. Unfortunately, this led to the doctrine of apostolic succession, whereby the Pope laid claim to be a direct spiritual successor to Peter. Whilst Protestants would reject this thinking, it is interesting that the Catholic Church has always believed in the existence and need for an apostle, embodied in the Pope.

Once Constantine made the church an organ of state, the lines between church and State became blurred. Secular and spiritual offices overlapped and the church began to be ruled not in line with Scripture, but in a manner which reflected the way in which the Roman Empire was ruled. Whereas previously Christian leaders could expect persecution, now they could expect to receive political as well as religious influence, power and wealth. Men of selfish ambition rather than godly character were attracted to such positions and the church lost a key component for health - humble, godly leaders qualified by character. These men began to jostle for positions of power. Larger churches began to exert power over smaller, less influential churches, which led to the primacy of the bishop of Rome, who later claimed the title of Pope.

We can see that once the church failed to recognise true apostolic gifts, she drifted into unbiblical practices of government and then quickly into doctrinal error. Yet there were always those who fought for truth. For example, Northern Italy and Southern France were a breeding ground for good scriptural teaching during the early centuries. The diocese of Milan was independent of the bishop of Rome until the 11th century. Such men as Ambrosius, Rufinus and Laurentius attempted to build the churches over which they had influence, according to Scripture. Claudius in the 9th century opposed the Pope, saying he could only call himself apostolic if he kept the apostolic teaching. However, whilst these men and many others, fought for reform within the church, they were on the whole unsuccessful in spreading their beliefs outside their immediate spheres of influence - a principle we see in Paul's writings where he talks about his own field of influence.

Groups outside of the Catholic Church also rose up from time to time, including the Waldenses, led by Peter Waldo in the 12th century. Though they were persecuted by the church and are little known today, they had a profound influence in Southern Europe and then into France and Eastern Europe, where they influenced the atmosphere in which the Reformation would begin.

Subsequent to this, arose men such as John Wycliffe (the so-called Morning Star of the English Reformation), who in turn was a profound influence on John Hus. Hus was martyred by the Catholic Church for his teachings, and it was he who prophesied the coming of another, 100 years later, who would complete the work that he could not. This was to be Martin Luther.

The many influences of the Reformation such as Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and others brought the church into greater health and restored essential doctrines that had been forsaken. Later still were the leaders of the Moravians, the Wesleys, Whitefield and many other heroes of the faith who helped shape the church in the West and/or to bring revival.

Over the centuries there have also been many missionaries, some better known than others, such as Hudson Taylor who travelled the world planting churches - apostles by another name surely. All of these men could be considered apostles, even if they did not use this phrase themselves. It is most likely that God raised them up in such times that the church was so unhealthy and so far from truth, that they were restoring revelation on a much more basic level.

There is not space to detail the many other individuals over the centuries that God used to bring health to the church. Yet, as the church experienced revivals and renewals over the last 100 years or so (from Azusa Street to the charismatic renewal of the 1970's and 80's), there has been an increasing awareness of biblical teachings on the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit. With this has come an understanding of the office and role of the apostle. This is not new - it is the restoration of an old truth. It is a truth that we have because of the work done by many heroes of the faith over the centuries.

As the saying goes, if we can see far, it is only because we stand on the shoulders of giants. I think it is quite clear, even from a brief overview of church history, that the church was built on the foundations of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20), and that apostles have been sent by Jesus ever since to help the church grow into maturity and unity (Ephesians 4:11-13). I believe it is fair to say that should you look into the times and places where the church has moved into greater health, you will find apostles. Conversely, where it has declined in health or fallen away from the biblical model, you will find the apostolic being rejected.

REFERENCES

My thoughts have been shaped through the years by much of Dudley Daniel's teaching and booklets, some of "Peoples of Destiny" booklets regarding Apostolicity and Terry Virgo of "New Frontiers", as well as Tom Tapping and Chris Wienand. Unfortunately, I cannot remember the exact what and where in order to give credit to whom credit is due. Suffice to say, I owe much of my foundational thinking to these apostolic men and movements.

- Charisma News: <https://www.charismanews.com/opinion/31851-the-new-apostolic-reformation-is-not-a-cult>)
- Sam Storms, <https://www.samstorms.org/enjoying-god-blog/post/are-signs--wonders--and-miracles-the--signs--of-an-apostle>

Greek definitions variously drawn from:

- *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001. Wheaton. Crossway Bibles. Electronic edition: Logos Bible Software, www.logos.com
- Swanson J 1997. *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek New Testament*. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems. Electronic edition: Logos Bible Software, www.logos.com
- Thomas RL 1998 [1981]. *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries: Updated Edition*. Lockman Foundation. Electronic edition: Logos Bible Software, www.logos.com
- Strong J 2001 [1995]. *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Woodside Bible Fellowship. Electronic edition: Logos Bible Software, www.logos.com
- Strong J 2009. *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible*. Oak Harbour: Logos Research Systems. Electronic edition: Logos Bible Software, www.logos.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew Selley is the founder and Visionary Lead Elder of Joshua Generation Church ("JoshGen"), a charismatic church that has multiple congregations located throughout Southern Africa and beyond (www.joshgen.co.za). He also leads an international apostolic partnership of churches known as Four12 Global (www.four12global.com).



Andrew first came to know the Lord when he was invited to attend a church in Port Elizabeth in 1991. Following his salvation, Andrew instantly turned his back on his old life and started living for Jesus, radically, passionately and without compromise – as he still does. From the beginning, Andrew understood that loving Jesus means loving His Bride, and that serving Christ means serving his church. Eager to love and serve Jesus as best he can, Andrew first devoted himself to the Assemblies of God (AOG) in Port Elizabeth. Later he felt God join him to The Storehouse Church in Port Elizabeth where he served faithfully, initially behind the coffee and tea counter, and eventually as an ordained Elder in the church. Having recognised the evangelistic and leadership call on their lives, The Storehouse Church sent Andrew and his wife Emma out to plant a church in Table View in the Western Cape in January 1999. This church plant, JoshGen (www.joshgen.co.za), began with four people in a lounge and quickly grew as God added to their numbers.

After being part of New Covenant Ministries International (NCMI) until 2007, Andrew felt led to establish JoshGen as a church relating to the wider body of Christ. Today, JoshGen is a multi-site church with many congregations meeting across RSA, and beyond - and still growing! As Visionary Lead Elder, Andrew brings vision and direction to JoshGen, and is recognised as a gifted preacher and teacher of God's Word, with a strong prophetic edge to discern the Lord's heart and mind for the times that we are living in. Over the years, he has had the privilege of leading thousands of people to Jesus.

In 2011, Andrew felt the Lord call him to help other churches live out authentic New Testament Christianity. God's heart for the church has never been that "the man of God" does all the ministry while the rest of the saints are looking on, as is sadly the case in so many churches around the world. Instead, God has always intended for the church to be a vibrant community of saints, a priesthood of believers, with each person becoming and doing what God intended them to do. With this in mind, Andrew initiated an apostolic field and partnership of churches who purpose, together and through the Ephesians 4 gifts that God gave to the church, to equip the saints for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:12). This international, apostolic movement of churches, known as Four12 Global, has grown quickly and at the time of publication, includes over 800 (at the time of publication of this book, but fast increasing in number) partnering congregations across 22 nations including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Fiji, India, Ireland, Isle of Man, Mauritius, New Zealand, Russia, South Africa, Taiwan, United Kingdom, the United States of America and various countries in Africa and in Europe. These churches have joined in modeling New Testament Christianity and, under Andrew's leadership, are working together to see the church of Jesus Christ reveal God's glory and Kingdom to the world.

Andrew currently lives in Melkbosstrand in the Western Cape with his wife Emma and daughter Enyah, with whom he enjoys spending time in the outdoors. Andrew is an accomplished surfer and enjoys extreme challenges such as surfing and motocross.