

The Call To BE An Apostle

The first mention of the disciples of Jesus being named Apostles is in Luke 6:13.

Luke 6:13 (New King James Version)

¹³ And when it was day, He called His disciples to *Himself*; and from them *He chose twelve whom He also named apostles:*

The word apostle simply means one who is sent. The Greek Word can also be translated a messenger.

There are only 15 men in the New Testament named apostles. Judas was numbered among them until his death. Then he was replaced by Matthias. Paul is called an apostle. Jesus was the first.

- An apostle had to be called.

Rom 1:1

1:1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

KJV

- An apostle had to be a witness to the resurrection of Jesus.

Acts 1:22

22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

KJV

- An apostle had to be gifted to perform signs and wonders.

2 Cor 12:12

12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

KJV

What were the apostles sent to do?

- Preach
- Plant new churches
- Pastor-until elders were appointed in each city

With regards to preaching, the apostles were the authority who determined the doctrines and practices of the church.

Jesus gave them this authority.

2 Cor 10:8

8 For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:

KJV

Therefore, the church was devoted to the Apostles Doctrine.

Acts 2:42

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

KJV

The apostles were very jealous for those they converted.

1 Tim 1:3

3 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, KJV

They were very direct about their authority to determine the beliefs and practices of the church.

Most of the New Testament was written by Apostles. Only two men have writings in the New Testament that were not apostles. Those two men were Mark and Luke. These two men's writings were included in the New Testament canon because these two men were eye witnesses of the ministry of Jesus and they worked closely with those who were apostles.

Eph 4:11-12

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

KJV

We know how Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers equipped the church. We know what they equipped the church to do.

Have you considered what the apostles equipped the saints to do?

They certainly equipped the church by giving the church the right doctrine. It is because of the apostles that we know what we should believe. That is why Paul said..

Eph 2:20

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

KJV

They gave the church a strategy for winning the world to Christ!

The apostles organized the early church.

They organized it into a living organism comprised of small cells of believers.

The goal was for these small cells to multiply as God added to the church those who were being saved.

Each small cell to have a Pastor.

Acts 14:23

23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

KJV

This why Paul told Timothy...

2 Tim 2:2

2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

KJV

The Pastors would work with the people to win and disciple others and to multiply the cells.

New cells were always being formed.

The apostles understood the principle that to advance the kingdom of God through out the world, you cannot just add to the church those who were being saved. You have to multiply pastors and multiply the cells!

The early church was more like the underground church of China then what we see today in American churches. There were called and gifted Pastors like Timothy that worked with Pastors to multiply the cells. Perhaps the largest gatherings in the early church were meetings for Pastors rather than meetings for all of the saints.

A home was the central meeting place for each church. Most homes could only host 10-20 people at one time. We need to see the admonitions about order of worship in the church in I Corinthians in the context of these small gatherings.

The cells were vitally connected because some of the epistles were written to the church in a city. These letters were passed from cell to cell and the letter themselves indicate there was some kind of accountability among the pastors to follow the admonitions in the letter.

The bible does not indicate that God is opposed to larger gatherings of the saints for worship. This certainly was the practice of the Jews. The bible does not indicate that God is opposed to general collections to fund special ministries. This was also encouraged by the apostles.

But there is no indication that God intended for these larger gatherings and general collections to displace the smaller gatherings in cells!

This strategy of church planting of the Apostles was replaced when large gatherings began to displace the smaller gatherings of believers in cells.

The responsibility for winning the lost, making disciples, and conducting worship services became the responsibility of a small number of men.

The large crowds in large ornament buildings could create a sense of awe in worship but the apostolic strategy for reaching the world was abandoned.

The saints who attended worship tended to become just consumers rather than a part of living organism!

Simple dividing into small groups in homes is not the total solution. That was only a part of the apostle's strategy.

Most home churches dissolve after a short period of time. I have not read very many stories about one cell that grew into hundreds. What has happened in China and South Korea would be the exception.

Too many home groups are started by a maverick in the church who is disgruntled with the church and its leadership.

In the New Testament church there were overseers, accountability, loyalty and extensive training among the Pastors. There were first among equals. There were overseers like Timothy and Titus even after the Peter's and Paul's were imprisoned or died.

For many years, I have believed Western Hills Church was to provide oversight, accountability, and training for those who wanted return to the apostolic strategy of smaller churches in homes in the New Testament. To some degree we have accomplished this by encouraging fathers to Pastor their families thru a Godly example and family devotions.

But this was obviously not all that the Apostles had in mind. A closed meeting for one family is important but that was not all that was happening in homes in the early church.

Those who were Godly fathers became the Pastor of others in their homes!

I believe that the first apostles were never to be replaced by other men after they lived and died. But I do believe that God intended for the apostolic strategy of church planting and advancing His kingdom to continue.

Why now and not 10 years ago? It takes time to process vision when it is so different from what you have known and experienced.

We attempted do this about 20 years ago and we had limited success. Perhaps as the senior Pastor, I was not committed enough to what it takes. Perhaps the church was not ready to make such a radical change. Perhaps we did not give the men that were home group leaders all the oversight, the authority, or the training they needed to fulfill the responsibility. Perhaps we were too committed to our worship services and what was happening in this building.

But, quite honestly, I have not seen a great passion in our church for Godly men to Pastor people other than their wife and children. This is the most vital ingredient.

I would assume that if you had a great passion for it, you would be doing it without the structure we could provide. Also, I have not seen a great passion in Godly women to be married to a Pastor or for their homes to be used for ministry.

For Western Hills to provide oversight we would first need to be a model. We would need to be willing to make the sacrifices that are necessary to return to the Apostolic strategy. To make those sacrifices, we would need to have a great passion.

God ignites passion in His people in various ways. He uses tragedy. He uses natural catastrophes. He used drought and famine and financial challenges. He uses our failures.

The church is losing the cultural war. The majority of the children of the church are abandoning the church by the time they are age 29. Those who continue in church do not have a belief system that distinguishes them from our culture. They join churches that support their faulty belief system.

Our goal is not to win the cultural war.

**But if the Kingdom of God was advancing and growing in our nation,
we would be winning the cultural war!**

We need a new strategy which is really an old strategy. We need a passion to make the sacrifices to make it work.

It only takes one spark to get a fire going.

Are we willing to be that spark?

