

God chooses people, nations, and local churches for special missions. He chose Abraham to be the father of Israel. He chose Jacob over Esau to be the father of the twelve tribes. He chose Joseph rather than his brothers to save Israel. He chose Moses rather than Aaron to deliver Israel. He chose David rather than his brothers to be the king of Israel. The Old Testament prophets all were chosen rather than others for a special mission. John the Baptist was chosen for his mission. Joseph and Mary were hand picked. The 12 disciples were chosen rather than others. The Apostle Paul was chosen rather than others for a special mission.

God also chose nations for special missions. He chose Israel over the other nations of the earth. He chose nations to help Israel and nations to chasten them.

God also chose local churches for special missions. There are only a few churches mentioned in the entire New Testament. There are seven churches chosen for a special mission in Asia in the book of Revelation.

Not every person, nation, or local church is equal. They all have missions but some are chosen to be the Special Forces for some specific mission that the others are not called to do.

Western Hills Church in OKC is one of those local churches with a special mission.

What is our special mission?

We are called to reach the south side of Oklahoma City with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But we also have another special mission that has been spoken over this church for as long as I have been here.

God has chosen us to be a model for other local churches to follow!

I know that seems erroneous in light of the conflicts that we have known. But it also explains them.

In the Scriptures, those that were chosen for a special mission experienced greater conflict!

We are not a contemporary model that is inventing the wheel for other churches.

We are a contemporary model that is reinventing the wheel within our modern culture.

The wheel is found in the first local church in Jerusalem and the New Testament churches.

For 25 years it has been our goal to reinvent the first church of Jerusalem and the New Testament Churches. We have sought to learn from what they did right and what they did wrong....

In their doctrine and beliefs

In their values

In their service

In their fellowship

In their communion

In their discipleship

In their prayer

In their outreach

In their organization

In their government

It has been our vision that by reinventing the wheel of the New Testament Church we would best serve the believers that attend our church and we would be a contemporary model for others to follow. We have never gotten it perfectly right and we never will. Neither did others who were chosen for a special mission.

The mission of the every local church is to fulfill the great commission of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

God knew that we would be much more effective if we cooperated with other believers rather than trying to fulfill the mission alone.

The mission of every local church is also to care for the material needs of believers who are unable to care for themselves.

God knew that we would be much more effective if we cooperated with other believers rather than trying to fulfill the mission alone.

The purpose of the institution and government is to foster and nurture this cooperation among the people!

In the New Testament church those who carried the greatest responsibility in making disciples was the elders.

1 Peter 5:1-2

5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

KJV

In the New Testament church those who carried the greatest responsibility for caring for the material needs of the people were the deacons.

The word means to run errands; an attendant or a waiter.

Discipleship begins with winning the lost and continues as we mentor those who believe. The elders in the New Testament Church were committed to be mentors to the sheep. While every father is entrusted with the responsibility of being a mentor to his family, the elder's job was to be a mentor to every father and to every believer in the local church.

Mentor is a contemporary word for Shepherd or Pastor.

As the Holy Spirit saved people thru the preaching of the gospel, the elder was the mentor, shepherd, or pastor to all who believed. The evangelist could win many people to Christ. But the elder was entrusted with the need of training or making disciples of those who were won.

For this reason, there was a need for many elders.

2 Tim 2:1-2

2:1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

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 Apostle Paul along with other men appointed and trained elders in every city and commissioned those elders to appoint and train more elders as people were saved and added to the body of Christ.

The apostle Paul understood the Kingdom principle that there would be a direct correlation between the appointment of elders and the expansion of the kingdom of God in any community.

100 elders who were committed to win others and be personal mentors to those they won would make a greater difference in a community than 10.

Eldership was the means for governing the church in the New Testament Church. They were entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining order in the assemblies.

But Eldership was and is the primary Kingdom principle for Kingdom Building by personal mentorship of those who are won to the Lord.

It is not possible for one elder to effectively shepherd and care for the needs of large flock even if he does not have another vocation.

If we are going to be a model of the New Testament church and provide eldership for all the believers in the church, there needs to be many more elders who are committed to win others and be a mentor to those who are won.

It is God's vision for Western Hills Church to reach the people on the south side of Oklahoma City with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This was why the church was founded.

But as they are won, who will disciple them? Who will be a personal shepherd to them? Who will be a personal mentor to them? Biblical eldership is also our mission.

The church has accepted a false premise that there only needs to be a few elders in any church. Traditionally the eldership has been limited to the professional pastors who are paid by the church. In some churches the eldership has been limited to the professional pastors and few other men who make major decisions for the church. In some churches the eldership has been limited to a few business men in the church who are the governing board of the church.

In the New Testament, the eldership was not limited by the ability of a church to pay them or by the limited size of a board. The eldership was available to any man who was called by God and who was qualified to be a spiritual mentor to those who believe. As groups multiplied from house to house, so did the elders. As elders multiplied, so did the groups that met from house to house. The multiplication of elders was the Kingdom principle that was essential to the expansion of the Kingdom.

Since I was first saved, I have read books and sat in meetings where leaders discussed the problem of winning souls and follow up. The modern church has come up with all kinds of plans from Sunday School, to youth groups, to the current home group movement. God has used these plans and others and still uses them to this day to help train believers.

But the solution to this problem of follow up in the New Testament was more elders!

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

It is still our solution today.

Are you called to be an elder? Has God spoken to you thru the scripture, thru others, and thru the circumstances of your life that you are called to be a personal shepherd to those receive Christ? Every father is called to be this shepherd to his family. In every father there is an innate desire to shepherd his children.

But has God called you to be a mentor to others who are won to Christ? Do you have a passion to be involved in winning others to the Lord and then to shepherd those who believe? This passion is the primary way you know that you are called to be an elder or be involved in the elder's ministry.

1 Tim 3:1

3:1 This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

KJV

The word desire means to covet, to long for, and to stretch out after. It is the same word that is used in I Timothy 6:10.

1 Tim 6:10

10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some *coveted after*, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.
KJV

It is the same word that is used in Hebrews 11:16 to describe the heroes of faith who longed for heaven.

Heb 11:16

16 But now they *desire a better country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.
KJV

Do you have that kind of passion to be a shepherd to those who believe?

Not all elders will be equal because they do not all have the same spiritual gifts. You do not have to have the gift of teaching large groups to be an elder. You have to be able to teach. You do not have to have the gift of administrating or organizing large groups to be an elder. Most elders in the New Testament only had a few people in their flock. You do not have to have the five fold ministry gift of being a Pastor to be an elder. You do need to have the scriptural qualifications to be an elder. But even if you do not have the scriptural qualifications, you can still be involved in mentoring and shepherding by assisting those who do.

Are you called to be an elder at Western Hills? If you think that you may be called, I and our A/C would like to meet with you. Attending this meeting is not a commitment to be an elder and it is not a commitment on our part to make you one. It is simply an opportunity to make further inquiry into this calling and this ministry. If you are interested, please express your interest on one of the blue cards or guest cards and put it in the offering. There will be an announcement in the near future about when and where this meeting will be held.

Our mission at Western Hills is to win as many people as possible to Jesus on the south side of Oklahoma City.

Our mission at Western Hills is to be a model of the New Testament church for other churches to follow. We are called by God to provide biblical eldership to those who we win.

(Picture of church in Muleba, Tanzania.)

Are you called to be a part of this mission as member? As an elder? Then join us. Do not let the enemy detour you if you are called? Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

