

# TRUE

## Leadership



Colin Urquhart

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**Colin Urquhart**

# Stating The Problems

For many years, while teaching extensively in nations around the world, I asked myself again and again: "How is it possible to make leaders lead?" It was apparent that Churches often lacked decisive, anointed, visionary leadership. And without visionary leadership God's people cannot prosper spiritually, and His purposes for the Church cannot be fulfilled.

The question became a cry of desperation in prayer, for I soon learned that it was possible to visit a congregation, see a strong move of the Spirit take place within a few days of ministry and the people encouraged and motivated to move ahead in God's purposes. Yet on a return visit, a year or so later, I would often discover that the people had not moved on at all; lacking positive leadership that would have enabled them to grow and develop, the people were in need of similar ministry to that received on the previous visit. Once again they needed to be lifted, inspired and motivated. But to what end? The blessings received would not become fruitful in their lives without the appropriate local leadership.

If this was an occasional experience, one could put it down to a lack of leadership in that particular situation. But when I saw how frequently this was the case, it made my prayer that much more urgent.

One day the Lord answered my question, but not in the way I had anticipated. **He showed me that it is not possible to make a leader lead; that if he is not leading he is not a leader!**

This was so simple and yet obviously true! However, it faced me with a real dilemma. It was obvious that in the Church generally there are many in positions of leadership who are not leaders!

God is not foolish; He is infinitely wise. One of two things must be true. Either He did not call some in positions of leadership to those particular ministries, for He never calls anyone without making it possible for them to fulfill their call effectively, or if called, those in leadership were not being obedient to the Lord in leading His people in the way He wanted.

It is inconceivable that Jesus as Head of the Church would want His people to be without true direction and purpose. Surely He would choose men and women who would be faithful, obedient and dependent on Him! Surely among all those who could rightly be called Jesus' disciples there would be many that fulfilled those criteria!

If those in positions of leadership do not lead, then presumably either they raised themselves into leadership, or they were appointed by others rather than being specifically chosen and called by God to those particular ministries.

However there is such a widespread lack of true spiritual leadership, perhaps there are other factors to take into account. It could be that the leadership structures are wrong; that there are leaders with the anointing and ability to lead, but they are prevented from doing so by the structure of which they are a part.

This would certainly seem to be the case with some. But this raises a further question: would true leaders allow themselves to be restricted by a system? Would they not have sufficient influence to change the system? Would they not choose to move out of a system that was impossible to change, so that their call to leadership was not stifled?

It seems there are several non-biblical forms of leadership in local Churches, systems that seem immovable and intransigent. God has given scripture for our learning. However it is possible to take such biblical titles as 'elder', 'pastor', 'bishop', 'deacon', and make them mean something they certainly did not mean in the New Testament. Even at that time there were those who called themselves 'apostles', but were not!

Is the answer, then, to seek out some more biblical form of Church government? As laudable as that seems, men have sought to do just that for centuries, and they always end up having to face the same issues that I am raising now. It seems that there is no system that can provide the answer. Structures seem to increase the problems of control and legalism that have often beset the Church.

Why are there many leaders in the world of business and industry who, when put in a position of spiritual leadership, cease to lead? Can they not apply the principle of man management that they learned in the work-place, to their leadership of people in the Body of Christ? Do the same principles not apply? Even if a person has a natural flair for leadership, does this mean he has no

spiritual charisma to lead God's people?

Perhaps there is another factor to consider. Are Christians far more difficult to lead than people who belong to the world? Do they actually want to be led? Are they concerned to fulfill God's purposes for His Church? Or is each his own oracle believing only in personal direction from the Lord, without any regard for the Body of Christ? **The Lord needs good Leaders, but also people who are willing to be led!**

Certainly a person in business, a soldier in the army, or even a student at college, would not be a candidate for acclaim or promotion if he or she continually obstructed those over them, refusing to obey orders, saying instead that they only obeyed personal revelation from God!

So many questions! But where are the answers? It seems so difficult to encourage leaders to work together, even when they do emerge as true leaders! And yet Jesus prays for unity that the world might believe! It is a wonder that the Church continues to have the world-wide impact that it does when we consider how many leadership problems that seem to exist.

# We Need Answers

The only place to look for answers is in the Bible. This is always the ultimate authority for those who are true believers in Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives! Does the New Testament give us any definitions of leadership? If not definitions, certainly there are essential clues.

*Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (Heb. 13:7-8)*

This is, perhaps, the nearest we have to a definition of spiritual leadership in the New Testament. The statement that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever, is readily quoted by Christians, but not the context within which that truth is revealed. The previous verse points to three essential elements of spiritual leadership.

## **1. Leaders speak the Word of God.**

We can understand this in two ways, both of which are true. True spiritual leaders are men or women of God's Word; they hold to the authority and truth of scripture. This does not mean they have a legalistic application of biblical principles. Rather, they focus on the heart reality of God's Word, the Spirit and life contained in the inspired scriptures.

They do not want to impress people with their own ideas or opinions, but with what God has revealed of Himself and His purposes in His Word. Whenever there is good, strong leadership in the Church, there is always this strong dependence on the truth of scripture. **The course and direction of events and the decisions that are made, are an outworking of clear, biblical principles. Certainly nothing will be countenanced that flies in the face of the clear teaching of scripture.** In this sense spiritual leaders will not compromise, neither will they be pragmatists. Even when it is difficult to do so, they will "hold fast to the word of God with an honest and good heart" as those who bear hundred-fold fruit! (See Luke 8:15)

To speak the word of God suggests that a true leader will also be prophetic. He is not concerned about any Word from God, but *the* Word that is the right word for the people He leads at that particular time.

This will influence him in what he preaches, his choice of priorities for the congregation, and the vision he imparts to others. His concern is to know what God is saying to His people in that place at that time, knowing that the Holy Spirit of truth and the Word of truth always work together in God's purposes and are never at variance.

## **2. His life reflects what he teaches from God's Word.**

A true leader is not a hypocrite who preaches one thing (from the pulpit or in conversation) and lives another. He gives the example of a godly life to others, even though he is aware of his own personal weakness.

This brings us to **a cardinal principle of leadership in the New Testament: it is principally by example. People follow what they see in their leaders, rather than a series of instructions.**

It is so important for leaders to appreciate this. I have spent much of my life living in community with as many as twelve to twenty people in my home with my family and myself. You have to be seen to live out what you preach in the home, especially when there are very sensitive and hurting people living with you. Such people are quick to seize on any failures in others because they are so conscious of their own failings.

For twenty years we have had a residential Bible College as part of Kingdom Faith. Students are quick to seize on any inconsistencies they see in the lives of those who teach them. They can see whether they live the teaching they give, and they see much more of their leaders than most congregations ever see of their leaders.

I made an agreement with the Lord when a young man, that I would not preach anything that I was not seeking to live myself. This does not mean that I was able to hold myself up as a person of virtue or someone who was always successful in pleasing God. It did mean, however, that I have genuinely sought to live what I preach. If I was not seeking to live it, I would not have any freedom to preach it! Sadly, I can think too readily of my own failures. I have sought to be honest about these, and have not preached to others until I have found my

way through to victory first.

People need role models in the Church, as in any other walk of life. This is what leaders are to be. It is sad when their lives do not reflect what they teach or expect of others. It is even more sad when leaders have a low expectation of others because they have such a low expectation of themselves! This hardly seems a recipe for what God intends for his people!

### **3. Imitate their faith.**

Just as the leader's life-style is to be an example, so is his faith. Leaders are to be men and women of such faith that others can see *how* to live by faith not only from listening to them, but also by watching their actions and reactions to circumstances, demonstrating that their actions are based on faith principles. In other words, **leaders are to have a living faith, not simply an academic or theoretical faith. They are to have a faith that works so that in their lives it is possible to see the works of faith.** A vital element of their leadership will be to inspire others to trust God, to depend on Him, to believe His Word and obey the leading of His Spirit.

It is clear that all three of these principles can only be born out of a genuine love for God. Such people do not lead because they want position, prestige or prominence. The very opposite is the case, for it is the humble that God raises up! He resists the proud.

*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. (1 Pet. 5:5-6)*

Jesus described Himself as having a 'humble and gentle' heart, and He was the greatest leader of all time! He fulfilled all these principles! He spoke the Word of God – not His own words, but the words the Father gave Him to speak. He lived His message, which brought Him into direct conflict with the religious leaders of His time, who spoke one thing but lived another because of the nature of their hearts.

Jesus had a faith to be imitated, not only through what He taught but the actions He performed. It was clearly His expectation that *all* who believe in Him should do the same things as He did. He showed the disciples what to believe and to do, and then sent them out to do those same things. And they did!

**If true leadership depends on love for God, a living, vital relationship with Jesus Christ is essential!** Even though Son of God, He knew His total dependence on His Father in His earthly ministry. He was a Man of prayer and no matter how busy in His ministry, He would not allow anything to disrupt that prayer relationship with His Father. He would pray all night if necessary. And it is clear that He made no decisions without prayer.

Jesus said clearly that He could do nothing of Himself; everything had to be done in dependence on His Father; hence His focus on prayer. For it is in prayer that we express our dependence on our Heavenly Father.

If the statistics are correct that on average pastors spend less than five minutes a day on personal prayer, is it any wonder there are so many leadership problems in God's Church? Where is love for God expressed in such neglect of fellowship with Him? Is it not a matter of pride, rather than humility, to attempt to fulfill the purposes of God without prayerful dependence on Him?

Jesus wanted to glorify His Father, not Himself. We are warned: *'Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.'* (Philip. 2:3) Selfish ambition is seen in scripture as a work of the flesh and therefore in opposition to God's Spirit. James says it is *'earthly, unspiritual, of the devil.'* (James 3:15)

The idea of anyone seeking leadership out of selfish ambition is clearly a recipe for disaster and is totally the opposite to the principles of servanthood and humility that characterised Jesus' ministry!

This has to be true of *anybody* seeking position at *any* level in the Church, not only of those in the five-fold ministry. To seek *any* position out of selfish motives is clearly of the flesh and not the Spirit. There needs to be a clear call from God, and He raises up the humble!

# The Good Shepherd

There can be no greater model of leadership than Jesus Himself! How did He lead the disciples? What did He teach about leadership? He came as the Good shepherd and made clear that the Shepherd or pastor is a leadership ministry.

*I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me. (Jn. 10:14)*

There is to be personal relationship between the Shepherd and sheep, who are to listen to His voice. He is prepared to lay down His life for the sheep. He is not like the hired hand who runs off when the sheep are in danger. No, the Good Shepherd owns the sheep and will actually be prepared to die for them! There is a sense in which all those called to leadership are to reflect the principles of shepherding God's people in the right way, even if they are not called specifically to the ministry of a pastor.

*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. (Jn. 10:27-28)*

A shepherd in Israel would lead his sheep several miles a day to enable them to have sufficient pasture. They would recognise his voice and follow him. Jesus says His 'sheep' are like that. They will recognise His voice, obey Him and He will lead them to rich pastures, ensuring their safety and that they receive the fullness of God's life! In his well-known Psalm, David speaks of the Lord as his Shepherd:

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. (Ps. 23:1)*

This divine Shepherd supplies all the needs of His sheep. He causes them to lie down in rich pastures; and He leads them 'beside quiet waters.' He leads them in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. He leads them through the darkest valley so that they fear no evil.

This is a wonderful portrait of Jesus: concerned for the sheep, even to the point of being prepared to die for them. Concerned about their welfare, protecting them from attack from the wolves that would come in among them. He *leads*

them in rich pastures, ensuring they are provided for amply. He *leads* them to a place of peace. He *leads* them in right ways. He *leads* them through the valley of deepest darkness, freeing them from fear. He ensures goodness and mercy will follow them all their days.

All leadership ministries are to take their lead from Jesus. No one should seek to be a shepherd of God's people simply because he has the security of a house and income that goes with the job. That is to be a hireling, who will inevitably feel that he has to please the people in order to retain his job! A true shepherd or leader loves people, rather than his ministry!

Jesus says we are to love one another as He has loved us; that this means laying down our lives for our friends. **The true leader gives an example of what it means to live for others rather than himself.** In that sense he is ready to lay down his life for the sheep. He is concerned more for their welfare than his own. He recognises he has the responsibility to feed them bountifully with the best of spiritual food, feeding them with the Bread of Life that came down from heaven, Jesus! In other words, he ensures they are well taught from God's Word.

No matter what their personal circumstances, the leader is to lead God's people to the place where they can be at peace with Him, with one another and each with himself or herself.

The leader is there for the sheep, even when people pass through the valleys of deepest darkness, through temptation, failure, affliction, sickness or whatever tribulation they have to face. He guides them through these times of intense difficulty, seeing them set free from their fears and coming out into the light of God's love for them in a fresh way! He recognises He is there to strengthen the people and lead them in paths of personal righteousness, and in the purposes God has for His people corporately!

Such a ministry is a great privilege and very rewarding, but will be demanding. We see at once that the shepherd or leader is not problem-centred, although he will help to see people through their problems. **He is purpose centred. He is leading the people in the right way, in the way Jesus wants them to go. The sheep are to be absorbed, not with their own needs, but with following Jesus! They are called to be disciples!**

The leader follows Jesus, indicating to the congregation, the way in which they

are to go as a congregation in order to obey Him and fulfill His plan for their lives. He wants to obey the Lord, rather than please the people!

Here is the dilemma of leadership in God's Church. The Holy Spirit indicates the way in which His people are to go, and supplies all they need to enable their obedience! However, the flesh, the natural self, does not want to obey the Lord. The pastor therefore has a dilemma: Does he please the Lord in leading the people in the way the Holy Spirit is indicating, in which case he will certainly be leading the people in the way they would not naturally choose to go? Or does he seek to please the people, by pandering to their desires, or by reducing God's demands to what they consider an acceptable level? In which case, he will displease the Lord by compromising His will!

To put this briefly: **A leader can either please the Lord and inevitably at times displease people; or he can please the people and inevitably displease the Lord!**

The true leader will choose the first option. He recognises the call on his life (indeed, on *all* Christian's lives!) is to please the Lord, no matter what the cost. If this proves to be unpopular he must be prepared to face the consequences.

The anointed leader will be able to inspire people and motivate them to obey the Lord, even when costly to them. He will not compromise God's purpose which is always obedience to His Word and Spirit! God's purpose can never be disobedience, or even to compromise His will!

Clearly a leader has to be surrounded by other leaders who will cooperate with him in leading the people in the ways God intends, and not obstruct that purpose out of a desire to control or manipulate the congregation by their own ideas or opinions.

The Church is a spiritual body, and can only be led truly by spiritual men and women. However, it is clear that so far we have been talking of individual leaders. Should there not be corporate leadership in the local Church?

**No matter what the structure of leadership in a particular congregation, there always has to be a leader of the leaders. The Church is not a democracy and God's will cannot be subject to a vote; it can only be known by revelation from the Holy Spirit, and then obeyed by His people.**

The leader of the leaders will need a stronger anointing on his life than the other leaders, and has to be a person of vision, who has the ability to envision and inspire the others in leadership positions.

It is never God's purpose to have a board of elders or deacons that stifle the anointing, or seek to exercise control over the one whom God has chosen to anoint with particular grace to lead His people. Many congregations have been robbed of God's purposes and have been subjected to frustration by the controlling antics of such boards, some of whom are jealous of their power and influence.

The corporate leadership should see their task as supporting the leader of the leaders in his desire to lead the people forward in God's purposes. They need to be those who encourage the leader and pray for him, not seek to control him!

The true leader of the leaders is just that because of the anointing God has placed on his life, not because he is power hungry!

# Qualities of the True Leader

**First, he will be a person of prayer,** for everyone ministers and leads out of his relationship with God. This should be true of leaders at every level, not only the leader of the leaders. If he neglects his personal relationship with God, his ministry will suffer and so will the people he has the responsibility to lead.

**He will need to be a person of vision.** Without vision he will be the blind leading the blind, and all will fall into a ditch! He cannot envision the people concerning God's purposes unless he has vision himself. Without vision the people perish, or cast off restraint!

**He will be a man of action.** You cannot follow a stationary car! He has to keep moving in God's purposes himself, so that others will follow him.

**He will be obedient to the Holy Spirit.** He will not allow himself to be manipulated by those in the congregation who do not want to move in God's purposes. To go at the pace of the slowest is a tragic mistake, and is not a sign of true leadership. There is always someone or a small group, who do not want to go anywhere, but simply desire to maintain the status quo. To obey the desire of such people is to allow the whole congregation to be manipulated into disobedience to the Lord. His purposes are always change. The only congregation not to need change would be the perfect Church; that does not exist anywhere!

**He will be a man of the Word,** for he will test whatever revelation he received against the revelation of scripture, for he appreciates that the Holy Spirit of truth is never at odds with the Word of truth!

**He will be able to teach the Word,** one of the Biblical requirements of a leader. He has to be able to communicate God's vision to other leaders and the people generally. He has to lead the people in the faith that will enable them to fulfill the vision; and faith comes from hearing the Word proclaimed under the anointing of the Holy Spirit that becomes revelation in the hearts of the people. He will express faith in love, for the people can only obey God's purpose out of love for

Him and for one another.

**His personal life, and that of his family, will be a good example.**

*If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's Church? (1 Tim. 3:5)*

This is said of the overseer, someone regarded as the leader of leaders! Other qualities mentioned are:

*The husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (1 Tim. 3:2-4)*

Paul says similar things about those who are elders (see Titus. 1:6-8). To these qualities is added another important dimension.

*He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. (v.9)*

Those today who advocate the Church adopting worldly standards of behaviour instead of holding first to the revelation of biblical truth, disqualify themselves from leadership, biblically speaking! Paul describes such people as "mere talkers and deceivers"! He says:

*They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach. (Titus 1:11)*

He says further that 'both their minds and consciences are corrupted.' (v. 15)

It is obvious that if leaders adopt the corrupt standards of the world, they are truly encouraging others to do likewise, thus seriously undermining the witness of the Church, whose call is to impact the world with the values of God's Kingdom! So we can also say **the true spiritual leader will hold firm to the truth in the face of worldly pressures to compromising the faith!**

There is another important element in his leadership. The local leader will need to be in submission to someone of great spiritual experience and anointing. **Every leader needs to be under proper covering from a true apostle, who**

**will both care for him and encourage him on the one hand, but will also hold him accountable for his own personal life and the way in which he leads God's people.** A person can only exercise spiritual authority by being under authority.

We shall speak of the nature of true apostolic authority later. Here we must simply say that God has ordained a five-fold leadership for His Church:

*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers. (Eph. 4:11)*

These are not self-appointed people but those whom God has Himself raised up and made gifts to His Church. These ministries are not so much positions as distinct anointings. The anointing on a pastor is very different from that of the evangelist, for example. It is for this reason that few pastors make good evangelists and few evangelists make good pastors! **Their callings are distinctive and so are their anointings!**

However, it is also important that these five different ministries all combine for a common purpose:

*To prepare God's 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. (Eph. 4:12-13)*

This is God's intended purpose for His Church everywhere. He knows that all five of these anointings are necessary to fulfill such great objectives. If a local congregation tries to function with only two or three of these anointings, it will inevitably fall far short of the great purpose God has for His people. It is trying to fulfill His purpose in a way He never intended!

Many Church people are spectators rather than participators in ministry, because there is not the combination of ministries able 'to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up' (Eph. 4:12). Instead of dynamic faith and spiritual maturity, there is often little revelation of the biblical truth of our inheritance in Christ. And sadly, there are congregations where there is little emphasis on evangelism, on needing to reach out to the world with the gospel of salvation.

The leadership in the local Church has to relate in some meaningful way to something bigger than itself, for not many Churches will have a true apostle. The leader needs to be submitted to such a person and to encourage the whole congregation to receive the input that the apostle can bring from his anointing!

*And in the Church God has appointed first of all apostles (1 Cor. 12:28)*

To be in relationship with an apostolic ministry will enrich the leadership capacity of the local pastor and elders and will be a blessing to the entire congregation. However, we must make clear that true apostles are *not* control freaks. They have a spiritual authority that is readily recognised. Those who get into authoritarian ways lack true spiritual authority! **True authority gives direction without control!**

The spiritual principle is important: to be in authority you must be under authority. Jesus Himself recognised how important it was for everyone to understand that He was under His Father's authority throughout His earthly ministry. Even His opponents questioned Him as to where He obtained His authority.

All true authority is God-given. It does not come from promotion to a position, but by being submitted to God's authority! Those who claim authority from their position will not be able to lead God's people in His ways. As soon as you hear someone say: "As an elder..." or "As your pastor..."; you know he has lost the plot! Do the people not know that he is their pastor or an elder? The question is whether they recognise that he has true spiritual authority, in which case he will speak and act with divine authority, truly 'in the name of the Lord.'

Such authority is God-given and comes from a relationship of love and submission to Him. **The more a leader is submitted to the Lord, the greater the spiritual authority that will be evident in his ministry.**

# Biblical Leadership Positions

In the modern Church there is much confusion because of the different interpretations that people have placed on the various words used in the New Testament to describe leadership ministries. We now want to see what these terms actually mean in the New Testament.

## **Apostles:**

We have seen that it is important that every leader is under apostolic authority and in a relationship where he can be held accountable for his personal life-style and ministry. What is a true apostle? Even in New Testament times there were some who were calling themselves apostles but were not. This is certainly the case today. It seems that if someone plants one or two Churches or oversees a small group of Churches he regards himself as an apostle, and may even have the title placed on his business card!

If a person is a true apostle, he will be generally recognised as such because of his spiritual stature and anointing, not because of some claim of his own or some function that he performs. An apostle is more than an overseer.

Obviously there was a uniqueness about the original apostles who were Jesus' disciples during His earthly ministry, but it is clear that other apostles were raised up during the New Testament period, of whom Paul and Barnabas are the most prominent!

An apostle is literally one sent by God with a particular mission. The sending comes out of direct knowledge of the Lord Jesus and a personal commissioning from Him. Paul says that through Jesus and for His sake:

*We received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. (Rom. 1:5)*

This is the heart of true apostleship: to assure that the Church of Jesus Christ is moving with faith in obedience to Gods call and plan. Apostles have a care for the wider Church, not just for their own ministries and spheres of influence. So

their remit is beyond simply planting Churches.

An apostle is a 'father' to other pastors and leaders. The stature of his anointing is seen in the nature of the signs and wonders that accompany his ministry. God gives him the ability to lead people to experience breakthrough in the purposes of God, breakthrough that is then consolidated by the local pastoral leadership. Clearly not every congregation will have an apostle in residence.

An apostolic congregation is a focal point for other Churches and ministries that draw from the apostolic authority and anointing on such a congregation. The people are not only taught; they receive training to be effective in ministry.

Even among the original apostles there were significant differences both of lifestyle and stature. Peter was very different from John, yet both showed the same apostolic life and power. As the Church has developed, we can see that there are apostles in local areas, national and international apostles, not because they claim to be such, but because they are widely recognised as such.

Because Paul spoke of this as being the first of the ministries, many want to consider themselves apostles. Those who seek position and prominence do not have the kind of father heart required of an apostle! God raises up the humble, but resists the proud!

### **Bishop or Overseer:**

The Greek word 'episokopos' means literally an 'overseer' and is also translated by the term 'bishop.' The overseer is simply that, one who oversees a Church or group of Churches.

In the New Testament there is no concept of a bishop having authority over a great number of Churches. He would have overseen Churches (some of which he may have helped to plant) over a relatively small geographical area. He would have sufficient on-going contact and input with each Church and would have been truly involved in the affairs of these Churches. He was not regarded as some princely overlord who was a somewhat remote figure.

When addressing the elders from Ephesus, Paul calls them overseers, suggesting that the terms elder and overseer were interchangeable. He addresses his letter to the Philippians to *"the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons."* Again the local eldership were seen as the overseers. So

the Churches in Philippi would have had a group of ‘bishops’, not one!

Timothy was being schooled by Paul as a young apostle with the authority to appoint overseers (elders) and deacons. We have already seen the qualities that Timothy was told to look for in such leaders. Paul gives similar instructions to Titus.

Peter refers to Jesus as *‘the Shepherd and Overseer of your soul.’* (1 Peter 2:25) Just as Jesus is our chief Apostle, so he is our Shepherd (Pastor) and Overseer (bishop). All human ministry is a reflection of the overall ministry of Christ Himself.

So the modern concept of a bishop has strayed far away from its biblical origins. If we see this office as being that of an elder, there would be several ‘overseers’ in every local Church! If there is to be some distinction between an elder and bishop, the bishop would only have authority over a small number of congregations in a local area. Those who pastor three or four Churches are really overseers of these Churches, not apostles. Paul says:

*If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task (1Tim. 3:1)*

However, he does have to fulfill the requirements of life-style and ministry to be eligible for such a position. **Remember, apostles, overseers, elders need to receive their authority by their submission to the Lord’s authority, not simply by virtue of their position.**

Desiring a noble task is very different from seeking advancement for the sake of your career, or because you desire greater status and recognition in the Church. All those leadership terms in the New Testament refer to ministers, not to offices. It is totally outside biblical teaching to assume that a leader has status because of his office. **He is to command respect and even honour, not because of his office, but because he is found to be worthy of honour through the way in which he discharges his ministry and exercises the responsibility given by the Lord!**

### **Elders:**

The Greek word ‘presbuteros’ is commonly translated as ‘elder.’ We have seen that he is regarded as an overseer, one equipped by the Holy Spirit for oversight in the local Church or Churches. (There may have been a number of

congregations in a city, but they were regarded as part of the one Church of Jesus Christ in that city. Elders (or overseers) may have had responsibility for one or more than one congregation in that city.)

**The word ‘overseer’ speaks of the responsibility to oversee the Church, while ‘elder’ indicates the spiritual maturity and experience needed to exercise such responsibility.**

It is these qualifications that Timothy and Titus are to look for when appointing overseers or elders, an apostolic function. The idea of electing people to such offices seem foreign to the New Testament.

After the election of Matthias to replace Judas there is no further evidence of leaders being elected. Matthias was chosen *before* the coming of the Holy Spirit. Since then **the stature of the anointing on a person should determine the nature of his ministry.** And this anointing will be seen and appreciated generally. It will become obvious that they have been raised up by God, not men. They have not sought recognition. They have the anointing and character that will enable them to be used for the Lord’s glory and the good of His Church.

### **Priests:**

The Greek word ‘hiereos’ is translated as ‘*priest.*’ This is another much misunderstood and misused word in the Church today. The New Testament speaks of what is usually referred to as ‘*the priesthood of all believers.*’ All believers are called to be a ‘*kingdom of priests*’ (Rev. 1:6), a ‘*holy priesthood.*’ (1 Pet. 2:5), a ‘*royal priesthood.*’ (1 Pet. 2:9)

In the New Testament there is no specific office of the priest or appointment of specific people to a priesthood! A priest is one who offers sacrifice to God, and all believers are to offer their bodies ‘*as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.*’ (Rom. 12:1) This is regarded as the believers ‘*spiritual act of worship.*’ **Believers are not called upon to repeat the sacrifice that Jesus made once and for all on the cross. Their sacrifice is to be offering of their own bodies and lives to the Lord, a living sacrifice, a continuous giving to God for His Kingdom purposes!**

Paul speaks of ‘*the sacrifice and service coming from your faith.*’ (Phil. 2:17). He receives the gifts sent to him by the Church as ‘*a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.*’ (Phil. 4:18). The writer to Hebrews

encourages all believers:

*Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – The fruit of lips that confess his name. (Heb. 13:15)*

Clearly this again refers to all believers, not some priestly class. With such sacrifices God is pleased.

Peter says that all believers are like living stones *‘being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.’ (1 Pet. 2:5)*. These sacrifices are the offerings of our bodies and lives to serve the Lord, and the offering of our worship to glorify Him.

As Jesus is our High Priest, all who love Him, all who are born of His Spirit, are called to be a royal and holy priesthood. So where does the idea of a priesthood of specifically appointed individuals come from? Certainly not the New Testament! In fact it was nearly two hundred years after the beginning of the Church before there are references in historic documents to such a position.

The idea of the priest came to replace the concept of the presbyter or elder in the Church. One of the corrections brought about through the teaching of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century was to seek to restore the biblical concepts of leadership in the Church. Literally for hundreds of years the Church was marked by a historical structure of bishops and priests that cannot truly be justified from scripture. Such a structure helped turn the Christian faith into a religion, something Jesus never intended. He came with the good news of the Kingdom, not to start yet another religion! He came to offer His life on the cross as a unique sacrifice on our behalf, to make it possible for us to become part of that Kingdom.

Historically, the priesthood became particular people set apart to offer the sacrifice of the Mass! To evangelical Christians this is a denial of the true meaning of both the cross and the Lord’s supper or Holy Communion. The sacrifice of Jesus need never be repeated. Communion is not offering the sacrifice again, but thanking the Lord for all the benefits we have received for the one sacrifice already made for us by Jesus Christ.

The non-biblical views of priesthood led to many unsavoury practices, such as paying priests to say masses for the dead, implying that it was possible to offer

the sacrifice of Jesus afresh on behalf of the dead. Such denials of the teaching of scripture became prime causes for the Reformation.

The term 'priest' does not signify the above in all denominations. Nevertheless, the term does generally signify a class of people set apart, but on a non-biblical foundation. All believers form the priesthood under the New Covenant.

When the term 'priest' is used today to signify one who performs the function of a presbyter or elder, then the biblical requirements for fulfilling such a position should be fulfilled. And we have seen that Paul instructs both Timothy and Titus as to what these requirements are!

### **Deacons:**

The Greek word 'diakonos' is usually translated 'deacon' and in the New Testament refers to a servant ministry. Deacons are appointed to serve the Church in particular ways. Jesus said:

*Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant. (Matt. 20:26)*

Here Jesus uses the word for 'deacon'. He says further that *'the greatest among you will be your servant.'* (Matt. 23:11) Jesus was himself happy to fulfill that ministry during His manhood. Again we see that all ministry is a reflection of His ministry. He is an Apostle, our Shepherd, our High Priest – and our Deacon! He emphasized the need of servanthood to His disciples:

*Sitting down, Jesus called the twelve and said, 'If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.'* (Mark. 9:35)

Jesus' attitude towards deacons is certainly not that they are people seeking office for their own prestige or advancement. Far from it, they are to be 'the servants of all'!

What was the nature of the deacon's service in the New Testament Church? Paul refers to apostles as *'servants, through whom you came to believe – as the Lord has assigned to each his task.'* (1 Cor. 3:5). Even if someone is raised up by the Lord to be an apostle, he never ceases to be a deacon!

*Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance, in troubles, hardships and distress; in beatings and imprisonments*

*and riots, in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and the left; through glory and dishonour, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as imposters; known yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything. (2 Cor. 6:4-10)*

What a description of the basic Christian ministry and of the servant of Christ! I wonder how many who aspire to recognition as deacons would be prepared to accept their appointment in the light of this passage! **Clearly a servant or deacon is one set apart in a leadership role because of his example in faith, perseverance, in demonstrating the life and qualities of the Holy Spirit. He is not concerned about cost, if only he might be found faithful to whatever God asks of Him, or whatever he might have to face as a witness to the truth.** Paul says:

*I became a servant of the gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. (Eph. 3:7)*

Here is a truth for all servants or deacons. God will give both the grace and power necessary for the servant to remain faithful to the Lord and fulfill his call. He will be one who will continue in his faith *'established and firm, not moved from the hope held out on the gospel.'* (Col. 1:23)

Phoebe, a woman, is referred to as *'a servant of the Church'*, one who *'has been a great help to many people, including me.'* (Rom. 16: 1-2)

Obviously all believers are to serve the Lord, but some are set apart for particular ministries as servants or deacons. Because this is the basic ministry, we could say that all apostles, overseers or bishops, presbyters or elders are all called to be deacons! So what are the requirements for this basic ministry.

*Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. (1 Tim. 3:8-10)*

This is a far cry from the elected board of deacons in some Churches! Biblically, even the wives of deacons are to fulfill certain criteria:

*In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. (1 Tim. 3:11)*

The deacon's home and family life are to be a good example for the Church as well. He must 'be the husband of but one wife.' So he is not expected to be divorced! *'He must manage his children and his household well'* (1 Tim. 3:12), for if he cannot manage his household how will he be able to manage the Church?

It seems the standard required for this basic ministry is high! However, Paul commands those who serve well as deacons:

*Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 3:13)*

### **Pastor:**

The term 'pastor' is one of the ministries mentioned by Paul in Ephesians 4:11. As we have seen, the pastor or shepherd of God's people reflects something of the nature of Jesus' ministry, the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep.

The pastor is not to be like the hireling who runs away at the sign of danger. He guards the sheep, cares for them and protects them. However, the shepherd in scripture is also one who *leads* the sheep in the right way, in the way God wants them to go! Regardless of the cost to himself!

He is not a paid ecclesiastical functionary! He is one who out of love for the people will put their welfare first. The hired man, who sees his pastorate simply as a job, runs and protects himself at the sign of advancing trouble!

The pastor should not live in fear of losing people, for if he feeds the sheep well they will not want to leave. If he feeds them with the word of truth in the power of the Holy Spirit, the people will prosper spiritually and in every other way!

**So to be a pastor or shepherd is not to feed the people with what they want, but with what the Lord wants for them, for only then will they prosper truly.**

The pastor is one of the ministries given to the Church by God *'to prepare God's*

*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.’ (Eph. 4:12-13)*

Elders are not even mentioned in that list of ministries that have these objectives! Nor are they mentioned in the complementary list of ministries in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12.

Certainly God does not want any tensions between, the pastor and other elders. So, how can we best understand what the scripture intends?

The pastor is raised up by God with the ministry to lead God’s people in the way God wants them to go and to care for the people God places in his care. We have seen that he, and the whole of the local Church, needs to operate under apostolic authority. Organisationally the pastor would be the senior elder, the leader of the leaders. The rest of the eldership is there to support him in his shepherding capacity and to share the burden of responsibility for the welfare of the entire congregation.

There should be mutual submission to one another within the eldership, the pastor not lording it over the others, and the others not trying to control the pastor. They should seek to be of one heart and mind.

Prophetically, the pastor should be responsible for the direction in which the Church is to be led. First he should share his prophetic vision with the other elders and in this way they can pray together and help to sharpen the vision and see best how to support the pastor in its implementation!

Where such unity exists the local body of Christ can continue to grow, develop and move ahead in God’s purposes. Where the pastor wants to lord it over the others, there is usually resentment, division, or the elders stifle the vision, creating frustration and a lack of progress in God’s purposes.

The pastor is not first among equals, for none of the other elders is usually called to the five-fold ministry. He is the leader of the leaders. In other words, with a right spirit of submission, the other elders want to follow the prophetic vision of the pastor.

As always, it is a matter of the heart! **When the elders have a right heart towards God and towards one another there is unity; and where there is unity the Lord commands the blessing.**

## **Prophets:**

Strictly speaking, the role of the prophet is not in itself a leadership ministry. The local Church is not led by a prophet; yet the leadership needs to be prophetic!

The role of prophecy is to bring to the local congregation a word from God. This is always to be tested, not by the person who brings the word, but by the leadership. It is certainly out of God's order for a congregation to be manipulated by so-called 'prophetic' voices from the members, especially on a Sunday morning!

The leader of the leaders will be prophetic in that he will spend time listening to the Lord, rather than his own soul. As he shares what he believes to be the Lord's direction with the other elders, they can together weigh and test this prophetic direction. It may be confirmed by other voices in the congregation, **but the Lord will not pass the prophetic leadership of his people over to someone He has not Himself raised up in leadership! He is a God of order!**

True apostles are prophetic and so the local congregation will be blessed and strengthened by the apostolic covering it enjoys. The apostle will help the local leadership to discern God's will and direction for the congregation.

It is good for local congregations to be visited occasionally by those with *accredited* prophetic ministries, for they can speak a word into the life of the local congregation, free from any personal involvement or influence. A true prophet can be far more objective and less likely to be influenced by soulish attitudes. However, no matter how high the standing of the prophet, everything is to be tested as ordered by scripture.

What is definitely to be discouraged are those claiming to be 'prophets', who suddenly appear at a service suggesting God has sent them with a prophetic word for that congregation. Upon examination you will usually find that such men or women are travelling mavericks. They are not built into any particular congregation, are accountable to no one and are therefore not to be trusted. **If they are not submitted to authority, they cannot speak with the Lord's authority.**

Of course they will claim that they have been sent directly by the Lord to 'help' the Church. If allowed to speak they inevitably cause confusion and even division. If asked what word they would bring to the congregation, they usually

refuse to answer saying that the 'revelation' must only be given to the whole congregation.

**Good leaders will never allow such a person to speak.** Should he do so spontaneously, he should be interrupted by the leader of the meeting for being out of order. The leader will probably be accused of grieving the Spirit and suppressing God's will, whereas in fact he is guarding the flock entrusted to him from false and deceiving voices, who usually speak with much criticism and judgment. God's Word is clear; it is to encourage His people, not condemn or devastate them!

True prophetic words, on the other hand will be a blessing, which is why Paul says:

*Do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold onto the good. Avoid every kind of evil. (1 Thess. 5:20-22)*

### **Teacher:**

Some believe that the office of pastor and teacher belong together. This is sometimes the case, but by no means always. Some pastors are good teachers of God's Word, others are not. Some are anointed preachers, others are not!

In many congregations the pastor is expected to teach and preach whether gifted in these areas, or not! Sometimes there are more gifted teachers and preachers among the elders or even in the congregation! In many places, the pastor would feel threatened to allow others into the pulpit! Such an attitude displays his own lack of confidence in his leadership ability and authority, and his unwillingness to allow those with speaking gifts to use them, thus depriving the people of blessing.

This is often an overhang from the completely non-Biblical type of leadership that still persists in some denominational systems. A man (or woman) undergoes a course of teaching and then is expected to do everything! Such a system can even be supported by the attitudes of the people, who think he (or she) is paid to do everything!

God wants to run His Church by anointing rather than appointing! Men can appoint people to positions of leadership, but they cannot anoint them. This is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit alone. Nothing is worse than seeing someone

struggling in a leadership position because he has been appointed to that position, or has even appointed himself, but without displaying the necessary anointing for such an appointment.

Most people are a great blessing to the Body of Christ when flowing in their anointing, but a great menace when they are dependent on their natural strength rather than on God's enabling! Every congregation needs anointed preaching and teaching.

An overseer or elder must be '*able to teach*'; so this is considered a pre-requisite to leadership. They '*must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.*' (1 Tim. 3:9) '*He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.*' (Titus. 1:9)

So any leader must obviously be well versed in the scriptures, and not someone who is easily swayed by the latest spiritual '*fashion*'! Christians are not free to believe whatever they like; they are to remain true to the revelation of truth found in God's Word. The Holy Spirit will never act in conflict to God's Word!

### **Evangelist:**

The evangelist is not usually in a leadership position in the local Church, as his ministry is to reach the world with the gospel. He needs to be free to do this rather than be concerned about the internal workings of the congregation. However, the work of the evangelist is essential to the purpose of every congregation, for this is one of the ministries God has brought into the body to build up the Body of Christ, and to enable the Church to fulfill God's commission to make disciples of all nations.

In the Body of Christ every believer is to have a care and concern for other believers. In this way many can share in the pastoral work of the Church, without being pastors themselves. In the same way, every believer is called to be a witness, without necessarily being an evangelist. So it is not a matter of leaving all the pastoring to the pastor or all the evangelistic work to an evangelist.

Sadly in many Churches there is little evangelistic activity and what there is centres around itinerant evangelists being brought in for a mission or crusade. As valuable as these can be, they are not a substitute for the ongoing evangelistic work that needs to be happening in the local Church.

If the pastor is left to lead everything as a one man show, then it is understandable that there is little evangelistic activity. The callings of a pastor and an evangelist are very different. Seldom are these two combined satisfactorily in one person. The true evangelist is leading people to the Lord continually, and often is confrontational and even aggressive in doing so. **The pastor does not catch the fish; he processes them. He does not produce the sheep; he cares for them. This requires sensitivity and gentleness and that is not always obvious in an evangelist! The evangelist is to lead people to the Lord; the pastor is to make disciples of them. Both ministries are vital and complimentary. Pastors and evangelists need to have a healthy respect for one another.**

When a Church is led by an evangelist, as sometimes happens, it usually has a big front door as people are regularly brought into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. But it will also have a large back door. The people are not necessarily pastored well, because their pastor is more interested in winning new people for Christ.

We can see the wisdom of God in calling all five ministries of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to work together in teams, each bringing their distinctive anointings and giftings. However, for such teams to exist a radical change of thinking is needed in many churches, where individuals and even independence has become the norm.

In any Church there are those who will take initiative and those who need to be led. Just as most people will need help to develop pastoral skills, so they need encouragement to develop evangelistically in learning how to lead people to the Lord and begin the process of discipling them. For this reason it is a great asset to have someone who will lead the evangelistic aspect of the work – someone anointed and gifted in that ministry.

**If people are only led to the Lord in a superficial way, only superficial disciples will result.** Sadly this is often the case. People are only truly born again through repentance and faith. Repentance involves more than the forgiveness of sins. It includes a wholehearted surrender of one's life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. People need to have revelation of the truth of who God is and what he has accomplished for us in Christ before they can turn to Him in a meaningful way. **For a person is only truly evangelised if he or she is drawn into the life of the Church, becomes a disciple, fruitful in ministry in his or**

**her own right.** Both the evangelist and pastor need to work together with this common aim.

Evangelists usually cannot understand why everyone is not an evangelist. Leading people to Christ is so natural to them because of their anointing that they do not see why it is not natural to all who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. They fail to appreciate fully that there are different anointings, different workings but all of the same Spirit.

*Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? (1 Cor. 12:29-30)*

To be used by God in a particular way on occasions does not make that person a pastor, prophet, evangelist or healer. The pastor is caring for people continually. The evangelist is always leading people to the Lord. The healer constantly sees people healed and set free through the faith that operates in and through him.

To see Church members develop in these particular giftings, leadership is necessary. This cannot always be given by the pastor, for he can only develop others out of the anointing he has himself. **It needs an *anointed* pastor to develop pastoral gifts in others; an *anointed* evangelist to develop others evangelistically. It needs someone who is used consistently to heal in the name of Jesus to develop the healing ministry in others.**

As a Church grows there is a need for departmental leaders to encourage the different ministries which need to operate within the local Church. These leaders will grow spiritually themselves by having to teach, motivate and disciple others in this way!

### **Group Leaders:**

There has to be leadership at various levels in a congregation. Most Churches will have a system of groups which may be called house groups, cell groups, fellowship groups, covenant groups, healing groups, ministry groups – depending on their particular emphasis. Leadership of such groups is the greatest contributing factor to their success or otherwise. To put it bluntly, a group (or a congregation for that matter) is only as good as its leadership! Here we can touch on only some of the essential principles for leading such groups.

- Those leading should have an anointing to lead in the particular kind of

group envisaged. Without such anointing the people will not prosper as it will be led then by the soulish endeavour of the leader: by self, rather than the Spirit.

- The leader of a Church group is not necessarily the ‘best’ person to lead. Often the more able people have the busiest work schedules and are not free to give themselves to the members of the group in the way necessary to develop them. Availability is essential for successfully leading a group of people.
- The group does not exist for the ‘ministry’ of the leader. The leader is there to serve the group.
- The leader should not be free to do his ‘own thing’. Divisions are easily caused in congregations where groups are left to their own devices, and they are placed at the mercy of the one appointed to lead the group.
- Every group needs to be part of the one vision of the congregation, and its activities part of that vision. The pastor, as the one in central leadership, needs to meet regularly with the group leaders, both to encourage them and hold them accountable for what is happening in the groups.
- The purpose of the group is not to have a mini Sunday service. This is the opportunity for people to interact, to love one another, relate together and work together for the purposes of God’s Kingdom.
- If teaching is deemed necessary it should relate to what the Holy Spirit is doing with the whole congregation at that time.
- Where groups pray together, proper supervision and accountability needs to be exercised regarding prophetic words, ensuring that no one is deceived by false utterances that have not been properly verified and tested.

Sometimes groups are led by frustrated people who have an unrealistic estimate of their anointing, ministry, giftings and abilities. Such people can cause much damage in the lives of the group members. The frustrated leader will produce a frustrated group!

This is something we have seen again and again in this short book: **leaders reproduce themselves in those they lead.** Ideally, the leader who allows the Holy Spirit to have prime place in the way the group is led, will produce a truly spiritual group. By contrast, the one who depends on his personality and soulish gifting and knowledge, can only produce a group that admires him rather than the Lord, something to be avoided at all cost.

It is also important for every group to have a clear understanding of how its

activities (whatever they are) relate to the vision of the Church and its call to make disciples of all nations!

# The Place of Women

The place of women in ministry and particularly in teaching is a very contentious subject in some circles.

Pragmatically my attitude is simple: 'look at the anointing rather than the sex.' Better to have an anointed woman than a man who obviously lacks anointing! After all, only the Holy Spirit can impart anointing, and when He chooses to anoint a woman, I am sure that He is aware that it is a woman He is anointing!

However, we have a serious question to consider: Does such an attitude conflict with the teaching of scripture? After all, Paul says:

*A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. (1 Tim. 2:11-12)*

There are a number of things we need to take note of here if we are to understand the apostle:

- Paul is not anti-feminist! There are many places where he and other New Testament writers refer to the *ministry* of women.
- We have to remember the context into which Paul was speaking. The early Church was modeled on synagogue practice because of its Jewish roots. Women did not have to attend synagogue and played no part in the services. They sat totally apart from the men and were screened from them; out of sight, so that they would not be a distraction to the men.
- The women were, therefore, only observers rather than participants. It would have been considered scandalous for a woman to interrupt the service!
- Paul is always concerned to keep good order. Remember that, although he was the apostle to the gentiles, he had a passion to see his fellow Jews come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. He would not want to encourage anything that Jewish worshippers would consider scandalous. It took many years for the Church to transition into a body relatively free from Jewish culture.

- For these reasons Paul was adamant that women should not be allowed to teach or even speak. However, elsewhere we hear of female prophetesses, who must have spoken in some context.
- Paul always makes a clear distinction in his letters between revelation he has received from God, and that which Paul himself deems to be the best course of action in the circumstances. When giving his own views, he uses the pronoun "I", as here: "I do not permit..." He does not say that the Lord does not permit!
- In Paul's writings generally, there is a clear distinction between the unchanging word of truth (logos) and the practical word for the moment (rhema). These verses, I believe, fall into the latter category.

Today there are a number of anointed, gifted women who are powerful teachers and preachers of the Word. Only in very legalistic situations are their ministries not permitted. Remember, the Holy Spirit must have anointed them and so God must have chosen them!

The position of women in *leadership* is more complex, for throughout scripture women are to function under the authority of men. This goes right back to the fall of man. Because Adam deliberately sinned, we speak of the sin of Adam rather than the sin of Eve, although she was the first one to taste of the forbidden fruit. However, God's judgment on Eve for allowing herself to be deceived by the devil was that man would rule over her!

Of course the effects of the fall have been cancelled out by the cross. However, even in the New Testament, man is the head over the woman. So is it right for a woman to be in leadership?

Some would say they can accept the *ministry* of women, but not the *leadership* of women. Others accept that woman can be in leadership positions, but not in *ultimate* leadership; they must always operate under the covering of a man.

Those who use women extensively in leadership, usually insist that they have the consent of their husbands before being allowed to accept positions of responsibility. Certainly it would seem difficult from a biblical perspective to see a woman in the position of ultimate authority in a congregation unless she is under apostolic authority of a man and is therefore accountable. But we have seen that a male pastor or elder should also be subject to such apostolic covering!

Jesus said that people (male or female) will be recognised by their fruit. It is this that determines whether a person is called, anointed and used of God. Let us look for the anointing and praise God for every anointed man and woman of God!

# Recognising Spiritual Leaders

The best spiritual leaders, at whatever level, are men and women of the Spirit rather than those who depend on their natural giftings and abilities. Having taught Bible College students for many years, I have learned that those who will develop into true leaders are those who process rapidly the revelation God gives them through the Holy Spirit.

True leaders want to raise up others in leadership. If they are confident in their relationship with the Lord and their own anointing, this need not be a threat to them. Yet they need to know how to recognise potential spiritual leaders, as opposed to those who are naturally gifted with leadership qualities. The way people process revelation indicates their spiritual leadership potential.

God speaks to His people by His Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, through preaching or reading, through conversation and through the lessons learned from daily experience. This process is called revelation. This is different from information or knowledge that is acquired with experience.

Leaders process revelation very quickly. Those in lower levels of leadership process revelation more slowly, while those who are led often need considerable encouragement to process revelation at all. Here are some principles that need to operate in the way leaders process revelation, that which God speaks to them directly or indirectly through others.

## 1. The heart

The condition of the leader's heart towards God is the most important factor. The Lord *always* speaks to the heart of the believer. A stubbornhearted person will not be moved by what is said, even though the revelation came from God. The unbelieving heart will neglect what is said, believing it to be wrong or impossible to accomplish.

God raises up the humble in heart. They readily hear and receive what He says. They have a right respect for whatever the Lord says and want to obey readily. They recognise that **He does not give advice; He commands, but without**

**forcing people to obey. Such obedience has to come from a loving, submissive heart.**

## **2. The believer's walk**

Even though he may have basically a good heart towards God, the leader's current relationship to the Lord and his daily walk with Him will affect the way he responds to revelation. The closer he is to the Lord the easier to hear his voice, and the greater his will to respond to whatever the Lord says. This should be an encouragement to help keep his prayer life in a vital condition.

## **3. Outstanding issues**

Sometimes issues arise in the leaders experience that can cause tension between the Lord and himself, even though his heart might be basically good and his walk close to the Lord. A good example would be resenting the circumstances in which he finds himself. Such resentment will cause difficulties until he makes the decision to forgive, regardless of the nature of the offence, against him, if this is the cause of his disquiet. He may have to come to a fresh place of submission to God, if He asks him to go where he does not want to be!

We are told to rejoice always and give thanks in all circumstances, as this is the Lord's will for us. These scriptural directions are revelation and need to be outworked irrespective of circumstances! Remember the leader is one who gives an example of faith to others that can be imitated. Grumbling, complaining and dissatisfaction are sin and disobedience, and give a poor example. Revelation cannot be outworked through such attitudes. Such outstanding issues are best dealt with rapidly as they are a hindrance, not only to the leaders personal walk with the Lord, but with his ability to lead others.

## **4. The soul exposes the revelation of the spirit**

When God gives revelation to the spirit it has to be expressed in the believer's soul or self life, his natural being. This involves submitting his soul life to the spirit; 'losing' his soul, as Jesus puts it – dying to himself! Without such submission, the leader will express his own life, rather than the life of the Holy Spirit within him. There is little point in receiving revelation from God and then trying to fulfill what He is saying in your own strength and ability. The Spirit who gives revelation also empowers you to obey it!

## **5. The leaders response**

This is twofold: Faith in the word that God has spoken and obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Immediately this relates to the first point, the nature of the heart. A seeking and loving heart is needed to process revelation readily. Jesus says that if we love Him, we will obey what He commands.

These five points relate to the way every believer needs to process revelation. However, there are an additional two points that are of particular relevance to leaders.

## **6. Desire to pass on revelation**

The leader realises that whatever God reveals to him is not for him alone. Having 'seen the light' concerning a particular aspect of truth, he wants to pass that truth onto others. It is a common experience to find that, once you have received revelation concerning a certain matter, within days a number of people will cross your path who would benefit from receiving precisely that revelation. You thus realise that God has not shown you something just for yourself, but to use that revelation for the benefit of others.

## **7. Immediate application to ministry**

Even while he is receiving revelation, the true leader sees the immediate implications of this for his ministry as a leader, for the way in which he is to lead other people. He sees how the revelation will affect his personal life and witness, but also how it will enable him to develop others and see them liberated by the truth.

The above is an analysis of something that needs to happen spontaneously. The faster this process of revelation from hearing to action, the more God is able to use a person. A leader needs to understand readily the relevance of what God is saying, not only for himself, but also for all those for whom he is responsible.

Although God gives revelation to all believers, many depend on their leaders to hear clearly what God is saying because their hearts are not in the same place and they do not walk as closely to the Lord. Their leaders can help them to apply the revelation to their lives, so that they can see and understand clearly what they are to do in response to His voice. As they grow and develop spiritually they will be able to process revelation for themselves.

**Leaders are quick to hear what the Lord is saying and to translate it into action.** They listen to the Spirit, are led by the Spirit; they walk in the Spirit and bear fruit through the activity of the Spirit. The more they develop their spiritual lives, the greater their capacity for leadership!

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