

7 PARADIGM SHIFTS TO APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

“As you sent (apostello) me into the world, I have sent (apostello) them into the world.”

- John 17:18.

INTRODUCTION: WHY CHURCH AS WE ONCE KNEW IT IS OVER

Are you aware that recent studies conclude that somewhere between 20% - 30% of those that attended church regularly before COVID-19 are not planning on returning - EVER?

In the meantime, the decline of Christianity is an ongoing trend in North America and West and North Europe. Developed countries with modern, secular educational facilities have shifted towards post-Christian, secular, globalized, multicultural and multifaith societies.

Though there is clearly a widespread aversion toward institutional Christianity, i.e., the church and denominationalism today, there are still many who are open to spirituality and even the person and message of Jesus Christ. Most of our cities and nations have thousands of souls waiting to be harvested.

So, what is the way forward? How do we respond in an increasingly godless and secular society? How can we become relevant without compromising the Gospel?

Some would advocate that the message is not needing adapted, only our methodologies. It is my contention that both our theology and mission must change. We need to go back so we can move forward. In other words, we need to recalibrate to the original message and mandate of Christ.

When we read the Book of Acts, it is apparent that the First Century followers of Jesus made a profound impact on their culture. Acts 17:6 states of the apostles, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.”

The Bible is clear that the traditions of men are a great impediment to the advancement of the Kingdom of God on the earth. Jesus said of the Pharisees, “...making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down” Mark 7:13.

“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you shut the door of the Kingdom of Heaven in people’s faces. You won’t go in yourselves, and you don’t let others enter either” Matthew 23:13, NLT

We must discard religious traditions and build on the foundation and revelation of Christ and His mission.

- *And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14 ESV)*

- *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20, ESV).*

An apostolic model when fully embraced will result in incredible growth and great effectiveness. “And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33).

Q. How close would you say your current church life is compared to what we see in the Book of Acts?

THE 7 ELEMENTS OF THE APOSTOLIC

A. APOSTOLIC FOUNDATION

The current model of “doing” church must change or face extinction. It is built on the foundation of pastors rather than on the foundation of apostles and prophets. Ephesians 2:20; 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28.

Apostles and pastors have very different functions relative to advancing the Kingdom and building up the Body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12:28, Paul said apostles are “first.” The Greek word is *proton* which means “firstly in time, place, order, or importance.”

- Priority vs Authority.
- Foundational vs Hierarchical
- Paternal vs. Dictatorial

“According to the grace of God, which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it” (1 Corinthians 3:10, NKJV).

Apostles pioneer. They establish and lay foundation: they go first; take territory, break new ground, start new works, lay foundation that others will build upon. They also build and establish the church in foundational truths of the Gospel (Acts 2:42; Eph. 3:9-11).

B. APOSTOLIC MESSAGE

In the New Testament, apostolic centers are often strategically located in large metropolitan areas. E.g., Corinth, Antioch, and Ephesus and have a mandate to advance the Kingdom and transform regions. See Matt 24:14; Acts 18-9-11; 19:8, 10.

When Jesus was on the earth He went around proclaiming and demonstrating the Gospel of the Kingdom (Luke 8:1). His apostles were commissioned to do the same. “Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. ² He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:1-2).

When asked what the sign of His coming and of the end of the age would be, Jesus unequivocally referred to the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom to all the nations of the world as the fulfillment (Matthew 24:3, 14).

C. APOSTOLIC MISSION

Apostolic Centers espouse and enact the culture and values of the Kingdom. Acts 20:20.

In Matthew 28:19-20, which word is the verbal imperative command, and which words are the participles? In other words, what is Jesus telling us to do and how are we supposed to get it done?

1. Go (participle)
2. Make disciples (verbal imperative)
3. Baptizing (participle)
4. Teaching (participle)

The Great Commission, therefore, is making disciples of the nations, not merely winning the lost. Consider Jesus' example: "As he was saying these things, many believed in him. ³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (See John 8:30-32).

Panta Ta Ethne

- Disciple the ethnic or people groups of the world – Matthew 28:19
- Currently, the UN has designated 195 countries in the world. There are 206 Olympic nations. The term ethnic represents approximately 16K people groups. 7K are considered Unreached People Groups. 3K are Unengaged Unreached People Groups.

THE NEW METRICS

Church attendance, tithing, building size, etc., is irrelevant in the apostolic paradigm. Instead, we measure the following:

- Christlikeness - Luke 6:40; Ro. 8:29.
- Walking Like Jesus Did – 1 John 2:6.
- Doing His Mighty Works – John 14:12.
- Equipping and releasing others into the ministry – 2 Timothy 2:2
- Reaching the nations – Matthew 24:14.

D. APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY

The **apostle** is distinguished by the supernatural. See Acts 5:12; 19:11; 2 Cor. 12:12. Apostles carry a breaker anointing to bind the powers of darkness, destroy the works of the devil, and take territory in cities and nations. Apostles and apostolic centers are deal a blow to principalities and powers in regions. Acts 8:14-24; Acts 13:9-12; 16:16-24; 19:11-20. Note: Apostolic demonstration is predicated upon apostolic devotion. See Acts 6:4. Therefore, prayer and consecration are indispensable in the life of an apostolic people.

E. APOSTOLIC IMPARTATION AND RELEASE

Apostles equip, train, and send out the saints to advance the Kingdom of God and make disciples. See Acts 13:1; 19:10.

There is a special 'release for increase' that is experienced through the impartation of the ministry of an apostle. See Romans 1:11; Acts 6:6, Acts 13:3; and 1 Timothy 4:14.

F. APOSTOLIC ALIGNMENT AND COVERING

In the New Testament, apostolic centers and churches were always connected to an apostle even when led by local elders. See Acts 14:21-23; 15:36. All churches and believers should be connected to an apostle for covering. Apostolic centers and churches when linked to apostolic networks create synergy and cohesion for greater ministry effectiveness. See Acts 11:29; 15:36.

G. APOSTOLIC GOVERNANCE

In the New Testament, an apostle typically traveled with a team. An apostolic center was established and led by an apostle and served by his apostolic team. We see this clearly in Paul's ministry.

Apostolic churches on the other hand, were governed by local elders that had been appointed by an apostle or his representative. Such churches often remained under the oversight and leadership of an apostle. See Acts 14:21-23; 15:36; 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5. In the Church in Jerusalem, we see elders working with the apostles in the early days. Acts 15:6, 22.

H. DISCUSSION: THINGS TO CONSIDER

The two most critical components in shifting to the apostolic is understanding the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Great Commission. How clearly do those you are responsible for discipling understand these? _____

Which of the 7 paradigms have you already embraced? What areas are lacking or missing? _____

_____.

List 3 ways you can begin to shift to the apostolic model of mission and ministry? _____

_____.