

# Church Leadership: Part 1

## Eph 4:11-16

General Eisenhower, speaking of leadership by example, demonstrated the art of leading people with a simple piece of string. He'd put it on a table and say, "Pull it and it will follow wherever you wish. Push it and it will go nowhere at all. It's just that way when it comes to leading people. A leader leads by example." The person who can't lead and won't follow makes a great road block!

Paul spoke of leadership in Eph 4:11-16. *<sup>11</sup>And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, <sup>14</sup>so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. <sup>15</sup>Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

Here at West Side we have a great deal of talent and we must continually develop men to be leaders. Therefore, today I begin what will be a 4-part study of church leadership. We should always be looking for more Elders and Deacons, so it is wise to study this series together.

### I. The People of Church Leadership

Verse 11 says, *<sup>11</sup>And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,* Paul includes four distinct positions of church leadership in this verse: **Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers.**

#### A. Apostles

Jesus originally chose twelve men whom he named apostles. We read in Luke 6:13-16, *"And when day came, He called His disciples to Him; and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew; and Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot; Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor."*

These twelve men were with Him from the baptism of John until he was taken up into heaven. An "apostle" is someone sent on a special mission. He is a messenger. Though Jesus had many disciples who followed Him, it was for the twelve alone that he reserved the name Apostles. Before the day of Pentecost, Mathias was chosen to replace the traitor, Judas, as described in Acts 1. There we see that the qualification is that they had to have been with Jesus during his entire public ministry. Someone who was not with Him during that time was not qualified. Had to be with Him till He ascended back to heaven.

Apostles occupied a unique office. They carried on the work and teaching of Jesus after he left. Jesus promised that they would be guided into *"all truth"* by the Spirit (John 16:13). He gave them the authority to bind further teaching upon the church. Their words were considered equal in authority to the teaching of Christ and their writings were inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches that only a few men alive at the time of Jesus could serve in this office. Therefore, there are NO Apostles alive today nor have there been since the first century. Later, as the story of the church unfolds in Acts, we see Paul added to the Apostles and is spoken of as one *"untimely born"* into the office (1 Cor. 15:58).

## **B. Prophets.**

The NT prophets were inspired men who spoke for God by special revelation. By "revelation" I mean God revealed things to them directly. He spoke to them. These men were preachers. Since the entire NT was not completed until near the close of the first century, God spoke His word directly to them and they spoke to the church.

Sometimes their message contained information about the future (Acts 11:28) but usually their function was to exhort and encourage the church (1 Cor. 14:3). These men were prophets due to the presence of the gift of prophecy, one of the nine miraculous gifts of the Spirit mentioned in I Corinthians 12 imparted through the laying on of Apostles' hands. Like apostles, prophets also occupied a temporary office. In Ephesians 2:20 we're told that the church is *"built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets..."* You do not continue building the foundation of a building, just as you do not continue laying the Cornerstone. Once it is laid, it is done. Therefore, we have **no living prophets in the NT sense today**. I say that for several reasons. First, the gift was passed on through the laying on of Apostles' hands. We have no living Apostles to do that. Second, Paul said in I Corinthians 13:8 that the gift was destined to cease when the perfect came. A strong case can be built for that term perfect referring to the completed NT, finished by the close of the first century.

Some of our written NT is the work of first century prophets. Mark and Luke, for instance, were not Apostles, but were prophets. As such they were inspired to write Scripture. Today when we square our teaching up with the NT we are squaring up with the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets. The 3rd position mentioned is that of

### **C. Evangelists**

Evangelists were preachers in the early church. They evangelized individuals and cities of people. The word "evangelist" means *"proclaimer of the good news."* We read in Acts 8:5 that Philip, an evangelist (Acts 21:8) went down to Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. In 2 Tim 4:5 Paul gives the work of a preacher *"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves*

Unlike Apostles and Prophets, Evangelists are still with us today. The office is never spoken of as ceasing. It was never called "foundational" like the apostles and prophets. It also did not require the miraculous element like the offices of apostle and prophet. The authority of evangelists today is derived from the written Scriptures, not direct revelation. Evangelists today are not inspired like apostles and prophets were in the first century. The gift of prophecy ceased with the completion of the New Testament. Finally in this passage, Paul mentions

#### **D. Pastors and teachers.**

This last category of leadership at first sounds like two offices rather than one. However, the words "*pastors and teachers*" are bound together with a co-ordinate conjunction. In Greek this links them together. A better translation might be "pastors who are teachers." I need you to follow me closely on what I am about to say, because there is confusion today about the word "pastor." This confusion causes some problems in the church. Notice first that pastors **were not evangelists. The offices are separate and distinct.** Evangelists concerned themselves primarily with preaching the word. Yes, they had an initial shepherding role in a congregation that had no pastors, but as men developed who could be pastors, the shepherding role was transferred to them. Once a church was "*set in order,*" the pastors were the shepherds.

That is what the word "pastor" means. If you study Scripture closely, you find that pastors were also called elders, overseers, bishops, and shepherds. The words are used interchangeably. In any congregation where there are Elders, they are also the Pastors. While we generally call them elders, calling them pastors would be just as correct. For that matter you could call them "bishops" and "overseers" too. All the words refer to the same office.

## **II. The Purpose of Church Leadership**

The purpose of God's giving these leaders to the church is seen in verses 12-14.

According to these verses, God gave the people who fill these four leadership roles *"for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ."*

According to verse 12 then, the leaders of the church (evangelists and pastor/teachers) are to

### **A. Equip the saints for the work of service.**

The work of service is the work of the church. It takes in everything we are called to do. Visiting the sick, taking care of widows, teaching, outreach, it's all involved. The work of the church is far too large for only the leaders. When leaders are expected to do it all, or consider that they alone are qualified to do it, it isn't long before they are bogged down in an impossible task. God doesn't intend for that to happen. He intends for those leaders to make it their business, as they serve, to equip the members of the church to serve as well.

I recently found an interesting definition of leadership. **"Leadership is moving people up."** That definition surely fits here. Drop down to verse 15 and 16 of our text. Speaking of the growth of the body, it says it is *"being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the working of each individual part..."* This teaches that there is a work for every member of the church to be involved in.

In my years of preaching I believe the single biggest hindrance to the church's mission today is that there are so few willing to serve and so many wanting to be served. Many American church-goers approach the church like they would the local smorgasbord. They're looking for the one where they can get the most for their time and effort. Few are seeking a place where they can serve. God wants church leaders to equip the saints to do the work of service.