

Resources by P-J Smyth

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

By yourself

You can read this book by yourself as it works well as a stand-alone read.

Together in a small group

Reading this book in small groups and discussing and applying what is read is a great way to use this booklet. Read a section, discuss things, pray for each other, and generally fire each other!

Mix with radical faith

Hebrews 4v2 speaks about two groups of people who heard the same message – one group were changed forever and the other group dozed off. The difference was that the first group mixed what they heard with faith, and the other group didn't. So when you read, be like the first group believing that what you read is true and possible for you to do in God's strength.

And then take action...

Winston Churchill once said, "*Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened*". Don't do that. Seize hold of the truth in each chapter and never let it go.

CHAPTER 1

WHY THE WORLD NEEDS MORE APOSTLES

Here is the math....

God desires the world to be saved
(Jn 3v16-17)

Local churches are the means to this end
(1 Pet 2v19)

Apostles are crucial to local churches
(Eph 2v20, Eph 4v11f, 1 Cor 12v28)

Apostles have the foundation-laying role in churches. Without this gift churches will never be all that God intends for them to be. Therefore, without apostles, our gospel witness to the world will never be all that God intends it to be. *Therefore, the world needs more apostles.*

Why not “the church” needs more apostles?

I recently received an email from someone who had just read my book *The World Needs More Elders*. After a paragraph of thanks and encouragement, the writer moved to suggest that a better title would have been *The Church Needs More Elders*. I have replied to him saying that I cannot fault his logic in that elders do indeed lead the church, but the thing that I am desperate to stress is that the church does not exist for itself, but for the nations of the **world**. God said to Abraham that he was forming a people for himself in order to bless the **nations of the world** (Gen 12v1-3). And Jesus commissioned the church is go to the **peoples of the world** (Mt 28v19, Acts 1v8). Two thirds of God’s name is **Go!**

So *mighty elders make mighty churches make mighty impact on the world.* Similarly,

mighty apostles
make
mighty churches and mighty elders
make
mighty impact on the world.

A high view of church

Apostles are church builders, so to get excited about apostles we need to get excited about Church. The Church is the most important thing in the world. It is the reason for all creation. The only thing that will last forever are the souls of people, and for all eternity the community of God will be in heaven with Jesus¹.

Terry Virgo, who leads the New Frontiers movement of churches, speaks of a local church as *“a spirit-filled community of believers who are deeply excited about Jesus, and determined not only to love the Lord and one another, but also to reach out to the community and win the lost.”*

Bill Hybels, who leads the Willow Creek Association of Churches, speaks of a local church as *“a community of people who are radically devoted to Christ, irrevocably committed to each other, and relentlessly dedicated to reaching those outside God’s family with the gospel of Christ. The church is an unstoppable force for good in the community and a testimony to God’s unfailing grace.”*

The Church: God’s agent to advance his kingdom

In Acts 1, Jesus met with his disciples and spoke about the kingdom. Throughout the gospels he had spoken mostly about extending the kingdom. But the big question was *how was it going to happen in an on-going, sustainable, healthy manner?* The answer? Wham! ... Acts 2 and THE FIRST LOCAL CHURCH is born in Jerusalem. From that moment on, history is the story of the establishment and multiplication of vibrant local churches that become lamp-stands in communities. This is how the kingdom is advanced!

Church: The fullness of Christ to fill the earth (Eph 1v22)

Christ fills the church, and through the church will fill the earth, one person and one community at a time. In Romans 15, Paul declared that from Jerusalem around to Illyricum he had ‘fully preached’ the gospel of Christ. How could he say this? Because he had *planted churches* in every region that would ‘fully reach’ their regions. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said that God intends the Church to *not merely escape hell, but to be a people that will astound the world*”. Churches are designed to astound the world with the glory of Jesus!

¹ Rev 21v1-4

The Church: A cause to live and die for

Martin Luther King said *if a man has not found a cause to die for, he is not fit to live*. Jesus lived and died for the church². Will you? He laid down his life for the church. Will you?

Conclusion

Because of God's high view of the Church we have a high view of the Church, and consequentially a high view of apostles.

A final thing: are apostles more important than the other gifts?

No. The apostle is just one of the ministry gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4 that are all essential for the church to become all that God intends for her to be, but the role of the apostle is unique in it's "firstness" (1 Cor 12v28 and Eph 2v20). It is not better, but it comes first. It doesn't come first because it is better, but because of its foundation-laying role: ever tried to put the foundations in after the building is up? Never an easy business! The Greek word for 'master builder' here gives us the English word 'architect'. An architect is concerned with the **total design of the building**. Apostles are anointed with wisdom regarding the overall programme of God, not merely certain bits and pieces of the strategy.

² Eph 5v25

CHAPTER 2

DEFINING THE APOSTOLIC GIFT

We start by asking what the apostolic gift looks like. We will consider this question under two sections:

- What is he like?
- What does he do?

What is he like?

1. He might not be what you might expect!

Is he a famous conference speaker? Does he lead a large church? Is he a guy with lots of air miles? Barney Coombes says this: *“Let me give you a biblical picture of an apostle: he is a weak little chap with a poor voice (2 Corinthians 10:10), a jailbird (Acts 16:23). He looks under-nourished and his clothing is disreputable (1 Corinthians 4:11). If you look at his hands, they are stained and cracked by the hard work of softening skins and sewing them into tents, for that is his livelihood (Acts 18:3). At times he is very ill, even despairing of life (2 Corinthians 1:8-11; Galatians 4:13; 2 Corinthians 11:30). Perhaps these infirmities have come from the terrible sufferings which he has undergone (2 Corinthians 11:23-28)”.* (Barney Coombes; Introduction in his book *Apostles Today*).

2. He will be divinely called, anointed and gifted

‘Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle’ (Rms 1v1)
‘Paul, an apostle – sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ’
(Gal 1v1)

‘It was he (Jesus) who gave some to be apostles’ (Eph 4v11)

Whilst other people will confirm an apostolic gift, an apostle will have a supernatural sense that he is commissioned by God. You see, the apostolic gift has a **firstness** about it (1 Cor 12v28 and Eph 2v20), a **foundation-laying** element to it (1 Cor 3v10), and a **pioneering** facet to it (Acts 13v1-3, Rms 15v23-24, 2 Cor 10v16f) and sometimes a **correcting** nature to it (Gal 3v1, 2 Cor 13v10, 1 Cor 4). This means that the apostle often has to hear from God and initiate, rather than merely respond to another man’s foundation. Thank God for excellent administration and modern advertizing, but it is only the anointing on you that will accomplish the task.

When I feel radical stirrings for new initiatives, or when I find that I don't get excited about something that everyone else is excited about, I try to quietly test the will of God, but if I can't shake my conviction on a matter then despite what others think I press ahead – not in a pig-headed way, but I simply trust the gift of God at work inside me. We need to trust in the grace of God: there is grace for apostleship (Rms 1v5); there is grace to be a wise master builder (1 Cor 3v10); there is grace to help churches (Eph 3v2); there is grace to preach and teach (Eph 3v8). Hallelujah!

3. He will be an elder of a local church

Peter states categorically that he was an elder (1 Peter 5v1), and Paul was obviously one of the founding elders of the Antioch church (Acts 11 & 13). It is hard to imagine a scenario where an apostle would not be on the eldership team of a credible base-church *in* which and *out* of which he works. His concern is for *all* the churches (2 Cor 11v28) but he will always be rooted in a local church.

4. He will have concern for all the churches

Some years ago Simon Pettit laid hands on me for apostolic responsibility. I can now only remember one part of his powerful prayer: *“And Lord, might PJ grow in his capacity love churches – 100's of them Lord.”* Since then, my small and often selfish heart has steadily enlarged to increasingly burn for churches everywhere. Of course I am passionate about my own church, but I am equally desperate for Christ to be fully formed in the other churches that we are involved with. Concern for the churches is not something that you can work up in the flesh, rather it is a gift from God necessary for sustained, fervant labour across the churches, even across denominations and flows of churches.

5. He will be fatherly and relational

*‘I am not writing this to shame you but to warn you, as **my dear children**. Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I have become your **father** through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me’ (1 Corinthians 4:14-16)*

‘You are our glory, our hope, our crown, our joy’ (1 Thess 2v19)

I can still remember the time that, to my joy, I heard Terry preach about the warm, tender relationship that Paul clearly enjoyed with his churches. Terry preached from Philippians where Paul talks about the Philippian church as *his joy, his longed for and his crown!* And Paul spoke about the Corinthians as his *dear children*. And he spoke of his *intense longing* for the

Thessalonians (1 Thess 2v17) who *he loved so much that he was delighted to share not only the gospel but his life as well because they had become so dear to him (1 Thess 2v8)*. Paul felt for his churches as:

- *A father for children (1 Cor 4v14-16)*
- *A mother for children (1 Thess 2v7)*
- *A husband to his wife (2 Cor 11v2)*

And as for friends, F.F. Bruce says: *'Paul attracted friends around him as a magnet attracts iron filings. His genius for friendship has been spoken of so often that it has become proverbial – almost cliché, in fact. There are about seventy people mentioned by name in the New Testament of whom we would never have heard were it not for association with Paul, and over and above these, there is a host of unnamed friends' (Barney Coombes, Chapter 3, Apostles Today).*

6. He will be a servant

Romans 1v1 says, *'Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle.'* Dave Holden once said, *"So there you have it: servant and apostle in the same sentence"*. My favourite summary of what apostolic ministry is all about is this:

*"My purpose is **that they** may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so **that they** may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order **that they** may know the mystery of God" (Col 2v2)*

True apostles are not in it for themselves but rather to serve their precious people. Servanthood will ooze from them. Paul was desperate to avoid being a burden in anyway to those that he served (2 Corinthians 11 & 12 and 1 Thessalonians 2):

"I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so" (2 Cor 11v9)

7. He will be single-minded, hard working & persevering

*But we were as gentle among you as a mother feeding and caring for her own children. We love you dearly – so dearly that we gave you not only God's message, but **our own dear lives** as well. Don't you remember dear brothers, how hard we worked among you? **Night and day we toiled and sweated** to earn enough to live on so that our expenses would not be a burden to anyone there, as we preached God's good news among you (1 Thess 2:7-9, The living bible)*

***I consider everything a loss** compared to knowing Christ (Phil 3v8)*

I worked harder than all of them (1 Cor 15v10)

I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith (Phil 1v25)

The things that mark an apostle – signs and wonders and miracles – were done among you with great perseverance (2 Cor 12:12)

My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you (Gal 4v19)

Paul was beaten so many times he lost count and received the ominous 39 lashes on five occasions. He was stoned, often in prison, and endured three shipwrecks. His life was constantly at risk, yet he pressed on!

8. He will be prayerful

The Jerusalem apostles reorganized their leadership structure to allow them to devote themselves to **prayer** and ministry of the word (Acts 6v4). Paul exhibits a truly amazing commitment to prayer throughout his epistles – just look at all his prayers in the final chapter of this booklet! Apostles live out the scripture from Isaiah 62v6-7 which says, “***You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.***”

9. He will bear apostolic fruit

‘You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry’ (2 Cor 3v2-3).

An apostle is not a title – it is a description of one who has born apostolic fruit. No apples, no apple tree! Our people are our credentials. They are our crown. I know that Simon Pettit felt that an essential fruit of apostleship was the raising up of new sons and new churches. This is because the apostolic gift is a break-through gift – it produces good fruit out of nothing! It advances the kingdom, not reshuffles the kingdom.

What does he do?

1. He equips the saints to be apostolic

The primary aim of every Ephesians 4 ministry is to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. Evangelists equip the saints to be evangelistic, prophets equip the saints to be prophetic, pastors and teachers equip the saints to pastor and to teach, and apostles equip the saints to be apostolic – to think and act in an apostolic manner. So, the following things that an apostle does are the very things that he will also equip the saints to do.

2. He brings big, compelling, outwardly looking vision

Apostles are expert vision bearers and casters. They leave people full of a passionate involvement in the bigger picture of world mission through church planting. The cry of the apostle is always to reach out further with the gospel. Without constant provocation to reach out, local churches so easily become introspective. Paul was shameless in his recruitment of churches to join him in reaching out (see Rms 15v23-29 and 2 Cor 10v15-16).

In Chapter 4 of his book *Apostles Today*, Barney Coombes writes: *A genuine prophetic vision has tremendous power: it touches us in the depths of our being and gnaws away at our insides; it focuses our attention; it produces singleness of purpose; it aligns the saints; it harnesses untapped resources; it obliterates festering aggravations; it motivates people to action. While prophets are an essential part of prophetic vision in the church, apostles have been gifted by God to help us to:*

- *Define the vision*
- *Prepare for its implementation*
- *Divide it up into its various components, defining the vision for each part*
- *Carefully select those who should govern each part (not leaving it all to the volunteers)*
- *Imitate and organize the training and preparation of the new leaders for the future. As someone said, 'The future belongs to those who have prepared for it'.*

3. He lays foundations

The apostle Paul spoke of his role as that of a “wise master builder” (1 Cor 10v3). God has given modern-day apostles the special ability to lay excellent foundations in individuals and churches (Eph 2v20; 1 Cor 12v28; 1 Cor 3v10). The apostle is just one of the ministry gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4 that are all essential for the church to become all that God intends for her to be, but the role of the apostle is unique in it’s “firstness” (1

Cor 12v28 and Eph 2v20). It is not better, but it comes first. It doesn't come first because it is better, but because of its foundation-laying role: ever tried to put the foundations in after the building is up? Never an easy business! The Greek word for 'master builder' here gives us the English word 'architect'. An architect is concerned with the **total design of the building**. Apostles are anointed with wisdom regarding the overall programme of God, not merely certain bits and pieces of the strategy.

Laying foundations is not just a role they play at the outset of a church (although they will probably need to be more 'hands-on' in that season), but it is also an on-going role. Foundations are key elements that keep a church on course in matters of doctrine, leadership and activity.

4. He lays leadership foundations

Apostles are gifted in confirming the rightness and readiness of a man for eldership in a church, and called by God to set him in place through the laying on of hands. On their first apostolic trip the apostles Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church (Acts 14v23), and we may assume that the Jerusalem apostles did the same in their region of churches (Acts 11v30). Paul commissioned Titus to appoint elders in every town in Crete (Titus 1v5), and he told Timothy and Titus the characteristics that would qualify leaders for oversight of local churches (1 Tim 3 and Titus 1). By extension, this implies the on-going role apostles have of input into the elders.

5. He lays doctrinal foundations

The key element of foundations is that of completeness or wholeness. Left to themselves, churches will not attain the breadth of revelation and operation that God intends. This is where apostles are especially gifted to help: Paul told the Ephesian elders that he did not hesitate to declare to them the "**whole will of God**" (Acts 20v27). Apostles have the ability to cope with the **breadth of doctrine in scripture**. The heartfelt desire of an apostle is "*that you may be filled to the measure of **all the fullness of God***" (Eph 3v19). Apostles will be passionate for doctrinal wholeness and truth:

*'...constantly nourished on the words of faith and the sound of doctrine which you have been following... Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.... Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the Word of truth'
(1 Tim 4v6 & 13 and 2 Tim 2v15)*

'Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.' (2 Tim 4v1-3)

6. He will bring correction where necessary

Many of the epistles were written in response to heresy of some sort (e.g. Galatians and Corinthians and Titus' commission to Crete. Paul's command to elders is that they show *integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech in their preaching (Titus 2v7-8)*, and that they hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so they can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it (Titus 1v9).

7. He will also be willing to speak into the detail of church life

As well as teaching the broad apostolic doctrines, Paul also gave input into the detail of church life. He was concerned with marriages, matters of discipline, obedience to civil authorities, and everything else that was believed and practiced in the churches. These areas of detail are obviously 'elder areas' but Paul and Peter, as fellow elders and apostles, wanted to help shape every aspect of life in the church.

8. He plants churches and he helps others to plant churches

Apostles are convinced of the primacy of local churches in the affection and plan of God. Taking the gospel to a place is synonymous with planting a church, because local churches are the agents of God's kingdom on earth. 'Apostle' means 'sent one' and so apostles are gifted to open up new territory to the gospel. Jesus, our great apostle, was always eager to move on to unreached regions (Mk 1v35-38), and Paul was also relentless in moving ahead to new towns and cities. Apostles will start churches, either themselves or via an appointed delegate.

9. He is a talent spotter

Apostles seem to have a God-given ability to see potential in people. For example, Timothy is not a very impressive character at first sight: he is young, frequently ill, and shy! But Paul saw his potential in that he was already a disciple, and he was spoken well of, and he had already proved himself (Acts 16v1-3).

10. He will make room for other gifts

Part of the firstness of the apostolic gift is that he sets up a foundation that releases all the other gifts. He is a catalyst for other ministries. Once an apostle has opened up the vision of a church, there is more than enough for everyone else to do! Infact, there will be too much to do!

11. He envisions and equips elders in an on-going manner

Paul and Peter evidently saw a very major part of their role as giving ongoing care and input to elders. Some of the epistles are addressed to the *elders* and the church, and in Acts 20 Paul gathers the elders of the region of Ephesus together to deliver some mighty parting instruction to them, and 1 Peter 5 is of course one of the prime apostolic exhortations to elders.

12. He brings ongoing care & encouragement to churches

John Wimber once said that to plant lots of churches and then not to care for them is irresponsible parenting! Simon Pettit used to teach that ‘apostles return’. Like Paul, we will not always be able to visit our churches with the frequency that we would like, but we must be responsible in setting up local leadership to help apostle the churches, and we need to send teams when we cannot go.

“Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing’” (Acts 15v36)

But brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time, out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you (1 Thess 2v17)

13. He will be known by the church, not just by the elders

Just like Jesus divided his ministry between his core of leaders and the crowd, so also did Paul. He lived amongst the people and was known by them (1 Thess 1v5 and 2v8) and he addressed most of his epistles to the church. It is not always possible for an apostle to spend all the time that he would like getting to know the people of the church, but it is essential for the people to feel that they know him. A mutual ‘knowing’ is especially important in a case where the apostle has to bring correction or rebuke to an elder or the church as a whole.

14. He often works via teams and delegates

This is not just because he is too busy, or too lazy – it is actually how a family should function. Paul worked effectively through faithful delegates whom he asked the churches to receive as they would receive him. Look at these beautiful verses:

Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church (1 Cor 4v17)

Some good examples of this include Paul's sending Timothy and Titus to Corinth (1 Cor 4v17f and 2 Cor 8), and Timothy to Thessalonica (1 Thess 3v1f) and Titus to Crete (Titus).

15. He brings unity within the local church and beyond

Apostles, along with the other Ephesian 4 ministries, will lead the charge in unifying local bodies of believers (Phil 2v1-2, Phil 4v2) and indeed helping the world-wide body of Christ come to unity in the faith (Eph 4v13). Although an apostle will be based in a local church and in a particular flow or family or denomination of churches, his passion is for world-wide Bride of Christ.

16. He has a super-natural dimension to his ministry

“The things that mark an apostle – signs and wonders and miracles – were done among you with great perseverance” (2 Cor 12:12)

‘For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.’ (Romans 15:18-19)

CHAPTER 3

HOW WILL I KNOW IF I HAVE AN APOSTOLIC GIFT?

Relax - it will emerge

The first thing I want to say to you is this: **don't panic about what your gifts are**. If you are faithful in serving with all your heart, in whatever situation that you find yourself in, then the gifts that God has given you will soon emerge.

Others will recognize the gift

Do beware being a self-proclaimed apostle! Keep a sober assessment of yourself! Allow others to say, "I think that you have this gift", but you must feel free to ask them. People with a proven apostolic gift are especially good at spotting it in others.

Remember that there are different shapes and capacities of any gift

Like any gift, the apostolic gift will vary in 'grace' from person to person, although there will be some consistent traits that define it as apostolic rather than something else. The previous chapter outlines some of the marks of an apostle.

You will produce apostolic fruit

By their fruit you shall know them... An apple tree produces apples. An apostle produces apostolic fruit. The previous chapter outlines some of the 'fruit' of an apostle.

And finally...

If you **desire** an apostolic gift, if you **understand** it, and if you are **excited** by the gift, then the chances are that you are on the right track!

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPING AN APOSTOLIC GIFT

1. Eagerly desire it

The bible not only permits you to be eager for spiritual gifts, it commands you to be (see 1 Cor 12v31, 1 Tim 3v1). Be eager in study and lifestyle. Be eager in prayer. I regularly contend with God for the development of the apostolic gift in many others and myself. I call on God to enlarge our capacities and gifts. I pray prayers like this: *“Father, you said that the church will only reach maturity through the Ephesians 4 gifts, and Lord you spoke of the primary role of apostles (1 Cor 12v28). Therefore Lord, you must raise up more apostles. Help your church Jesus! Give of yourself to us. You are the Great Apostle! More Jesus!”*

2. Follow the ‘Titus progression’

Titus’ journey into apostolic responsibility seemed to have the following 4 phases that are unpacked in the following chapter.

Phase 1: Tag-on team member to Jerusalem (Gal 2v1-6)

Phase 2: Postman to Corinth (2 Cor 8)

Phase 3: Corinth reloaded (2 Cor 8)

Phase 4: Full responsibility on Crete (Titus 1-3)

A summary of Titus’ development could also be Lk 16v10-12 – he proved faithful with the little, the natural and another man’s.

3. Observe and receive from those with an apostolic gift

Like most things in God, much has to *caught* and not only *taught*. Close proximity to a mentor is an essential part of discipleship. Think of Elijah and Elisha, of Jesus and the 12, and of Paul and his protégés. So, you need to spend time in the presence of those with an apostolic gift. Sometimes you will be soaking up things that they are saying in the presence of many others (2 Tim 2v2) such as in a big conference context, and hopefully you will also have some more intimate time with them. Note their *preaching themes*, their *passions revealed through their prayers*, and how they *relate to people and churches*. Be humble. Learn. Drink.

4. Immerse yourself in biblical apostolic prayers

Immersing yourself in apostolic prayers from the bible will help you to think, act and pray in an apostolic fashion ...and be very blessed along the way! See the final chapter of this booklet for many of these wonderful prayers.

5. Immerse yourself in apostolic articles & books

Broad background reading of relevant material is imperative if you want to grow in apostolic understanding and capacity. There do not seem to be many books around currently that are devoted to the apostolic gift. Consequently, I have collected a selection of articles and various extracts from books that deal with the apostolic gift and have put them into a booklet for my personal use, and for training small groups.

Recommended articles and books:

1. Newfrontiers magazine Autumn 2000: Theme 'Apostles'

- Apostles Terry Virgo
- Starting Apostolic Churches Colin Baron
- An apostle comes to town Dave Holden

2. Newfrontiers magazine Sept-Nov 2003

- Local churches under apostolic authority Terry Virgo

3. A People Prepared (Terry Virgo; Kingsway, 1996)

- Pg 90: The Church through an apostle's eyes
- Pg 145: A Prophetic People
- Pg 156: And Some Apostles

4. 2 articles by Terry Virgo available via www.newfrontiers.xtn.org

- Apostolic Ministry; Spiritual Authority

5. Various resources available via office@godfirst.co.za

- How does the local church interface with Newfrontiers? T. Virgo
- Establishing bases and using teams Ian McKellar
- Things Apostles do Simon Pettit
- Men on the Spot and Men on the Move Arthur Wallis
- Apostles today – for tomorrows church Bryn Jones

6. Apostles Today (Barney Coombes; Sovereign World Trust, PO Box 777, Tonbridge, Kent TN11 9XT, UK)

7. What is the Ministry of an apostle all about? (Rob Rufus, 1994, Coastlands International Christian Centre, 40 Kingston Avenue, Richmond, South Australia, 5033)

8. Various resources by Dudley Daniel available via etr@ncmi.net

9. Immerse yourself in the epistles: reading through an apostolic lens

The remaining chapters of this booklet are mostly surrendered to helping the reader see the apostolic gift at work in the epistles. Scripture is obviously the premier place that we should look for instruction in all things, and I want to urge you to work your way carefully through the following chapters. Once you learn how to see the apostolic structure and nature of the epistles, you will never lack for instruction in the apostolic because the bible will be your bottomless reservoir of stimulation and instruction. You won't need to wait for the next book or article on the apostolic because you will always have God's timeless, peerless bestseller. Hallelujah!

CHAPTER 5

TITUS' DEVELOPMENT INTO AN APOSTOLIC MAN

Phase 1: Tag-on team member to Jerusalem

It all began for Titus because Paul took him along on a ministry trip to Jerusalem. The tone of the following scripture suggests that he was a bit of a tag-on team member just coming along to gain some experience and exposure, and frankly, to serve as 'Exhibit A' for the apostles in Jerusalem. Paul was probably bringing him along as living proof of his gospel to the gentiles, knowing that it would be much harder to make a rule that '*Gentile believers must be circumcised*' if there is one right there in front of you!! ***Many people's journey into leadership starts in a similar way to Titus, when an older leader bothers to take an interest in you and invites you along even though you may have little clue why you have been invited!***

*Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain. **Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek.** This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. (Gal 2v1-6) (Paul actually did end up circumcising Timothy as a concession to the demands of mission, but the issue here with Titus is one of principle not policy).*

Phase 2: Postman to Corinth

After his trip to Jerusalem, it is likely that Titus accompanied Paul on some of his missionary journeys, but he came to prominence in relation to the Corinthian church. Paul entrusted him with a letter to the Corinthians, neither 1 Corinthians nor 2 Corinthians, but with another letter that scholars refer to as 'the severe letter' in which Paul rebukes them for rejecting his authority. ***Phase 2 is when we are entrusted with a small responsibility that might appear to be menial and practical, such as running errands or delivering letters.***

Phase 3: Corinth reloaded

As a result of whole-heartedly serving in Phase 2, Titus began to develop in his own calling, in confidence, in gifting, and initiative and enthusiasm:

*I thank God, who put into the **heart of Titus the same concern I have for you**. For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but **he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative** (2 Cor 8v16)*

Titus has now caught some of Paul's concern for the Corinthians, and is returning to Corinth as more than just a postman, with Paul's obvious delight and encouragement. Titus is mentioned 9 times in 2 Corinthians, always with affection and confidence:

*As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you (2 Cor 8v22)
Titus did not exploit you, did he? Did we not act in the same spirit and follow the same course? (2 Cor 12v17-18)*

Phase 4: Full responsibility on Crete

After winning his 'stripes' at Corinth, Paul entrusts Titus with his most responsible apostolic assignment to date – to straighten out and complete the work on Crete. His commission is to:

1. Appoint Elders
2. Silence rebels
3. Teach Christian conduct in the church to various groups (2v1f)
4. Teach Christian conduct in the world (Chap 3)
5. Teach doctrines of Grace & the Second Coming (Chap 2b)

Summary

Titus' journey could be summarized with these words of Jesus:

*Whoever can be trusted with very **little** can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling **worldly wealth**, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with **someone else's property**, who will give you property of your own? (Lk 16v10-12)*

Timothy had a similar journey into apostolic responsibility, with his primary passport being that he was proved faithful, reliable and content to represent Paul rather than doing his own thing.

Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church (1 Cor 4v17)

CHAPTER 6

WHAT JOINS APOSTLES & CHURCHES TOGETHER?

1 CORINTHIANS 4

In this passage, we find Paul contending for his apostolic, fatherly involvement with the Corinthians. It reveals 3 ways that Paul felt he was joined to the Corinthians:

1. They need him! (V8 – V13)

- They had become proud thinking that they had attained maturity without him; they felt they were 'rich & kingly' ... and that without Paul's input!! They made Paul feel despised, placed at the end of the line, even the scum of the earth. This is not Paul feeling sorry for himself, rather he is contending for the worth and need of the apostolic gift that he embodied.
- Application: when a church becomes involved with an apostle and his team, their primary motive should be that they really believe that they need the blessing of the gifts that the apostle and his wider team can bring to them. In line with Rms 1v11-12 and 1 Thess 1v2-10, this church will gradually contribute to the wider apostolic mission as well: 2-way traffic will begin to flow – Hallelujah!

2. A sense of sonship, fathering, family (V14-16)

- Paul now contends for the difference between guardians and fathers. Guardians are not bad, but they are not the same as a father.
- Application: An apostolic movement will have a father, and as time goes by *fathers*. This implies a relationship of mutual love, affection, loyalty and family resemblance. It also implies the *priority* of the relationship which means our diaries and our money will prioritize family matters!
- How many fathers? Many of us will feel that we know, or have known several fathers in our lives. Some consider the person who won them to Christ as their 'father'. Others will feel they have a father in one who has had a season of real impact in their lives. In the apostolic movement that I am part of, *newfrontiers*, Terry Virgo is our 'founding father' (*primary influencer*), but now that the work is growing and growing there are many amongst the nations who represent Terry, to whom many people look to as 'fathers'.

3. A body of teaching

- Flowing from this sense of family is obviously some family resemblance. Paul felt that he had a body of teaching - an irreducible minimum – pertaining to both life & doctrine, that he wanted to see all ‘his’ churches abiding in.
- Application: Any apostolic movement should strive for a ‘body of doctrine’ (and values) that is synonymous with those of the New Testament. But due to the family dynamic, followers seem to take on a way of life in Christ that resembles their leaders – a family resemblance!

CHAPTER 7

APOSTOLIC GEMS FROM ACTS & PHILIPPIANS

Here are some phrases from Philippians & Acts that describe in broad terms what apostolic ministry is all about:

From Philippians

- 1v6 Burn with **faith for them**
- 1v9-11 **Pray for them** (for love, knowledge, maturity, holiness, fruitfulness)
- 1V25 Help them **make progress with joy** in their faith
- 2V19-24 Show a **genuine interest** in their welfare (ask questions; show empathy; help solve problems; pray warm, zealous prayers for them)
- 3V1 Safeguard them through **repetitive foundational teaching**.
See also 2 Pet1v12-15
- 4V1 Help them to **stand firm**. They are our love & longing & joy & crown.
- 4V9 Allow them to **learn, receive, hear, and see** so they can then put into practice.

From Acts

- 14v21f "... won a large number of disciples, **strengthening and encouraging** them to remain true to the faith"
- 15v41 "He went through Syria and Cicilia, **strengthening the churches**"
- 16v5 "So the churches were **strengthened in the faith and grew** daily in numbers"
- 16v40 "... they met with the brothers and **encouraged them**"
- 18v11 "So Paul stayed a year and a half, **teaching them** the word of God"
- 18v23 "Paul travelled from place to place **strengthening all the disciples**"
- 18v27 "On arriving, he (Apollos) was **a great help** to those who by grace had
believed"
- 20v20 "I have not hesitated to preach **anything that would be helpful to you**, but have taught you **publicly and from house to house**"
- 20v27 "I have not hesitated to **proclaim to you the whole will of God**"

My flagship verse on apostolic purpose

*"My purpose is **that they** may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so **that they** may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order **that they** may know the mystery of God" (Col 2v2)*

We could summarise apostolic ministry by the phrase "**that they**". We pray & love & teach & live so **that they** might be presented complete and mature.

CHAPTER 8

THE APOSTOLIC REVEALED IN PHILIPPIANS

Here are 8 things that the Apostle Paul 'does' in his letter to the Philippians. These eight things that we can learn from & apply to help churches:

1. He built an awareness of being part of wider family & mission

- Team news 1v1; 2v19-30; Paul & Timothy & Epaphroditus
- Family news 2v19; 4v21-22
- We love you 1v3-9; 4v1
- We pray for you 1v3-11
- We give to you 2v19-29
- You pray for us 1v19
- You give to us 4v10-19

2. He built in robustness

- 1v12-14 Persecution is happening to me
- 1v29 Warnings of persecution
- 3v2 Warnings of legalist persecution

3. He built in maturity & non-dependence

- 1v27 Go for it *with or without me*
- 2v12-13 Go for it *without me* – God will help you!

4. He built in unity & togetherness

- 1v27-28 One spirit, one man: secure wall!
- 2v1-4 One mind, love, spirit, purpose
- 4v2-3 Women squabbles

5. He urged them to imitate Jesus

- 2v5-11 Humility and serving
- 3v4-11 All else is rubbish!

6. He urged them to imitate himself

- 1v12f General update about recent events in his life
- 1v14 Imitate my bold evangelism
- 3v17 Imitate my perseverance (pressing on & laying hold)
- 4v9 Imitate all you have learned, received, heard, seen in me

7. He promoted prayer

Paul mentions *prayer*, directly or indirectly, so many times in this letter. In his book on prayer, E M Bounds said, "*What the church needs today is not more or better machinery, not new organisations or more novel methods. She needs men who the Holy Spirit can use - men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods but men. He does not anoint plans, but men of prayer.*"

8. He taught sound doctrine

In this letter, as in any of his letters, Paul does not try and teach in depth on everything, but rather focuses on a couple of areas. A visit to a church will be like that. Don't try and cover too much! Some principles that we can learn from this letter are:

The importance of repetitious teaching. Phil 3v1 and 2 Pet 1v12-15 both stress the need for repetitious instruction of the basics so to safeguard the people. Keep things simple, but not boring! Don't feel that just because you are the 'visiting team' that you can't talk about foundational truths such as bible reading and prayer and baptism of the Spirit.

The importance of giving them a persuasive theological reason for doing things. Phil 2v12 and 4v1 both say "Therefore..." and proceed to say what their practical response should be to the theological truths he has just presented. We must always start with theology and work from there to application. This is the most powerful and God-honouring way to motivate people to action.

The importance of preaching the Far and the Near. Paul preaches “far” truths such as the sweep of God’s plan for mankind (Phil 2v5-11) and the doctrine of the end times (1V20-26 and 3v19-21), but also gives attention to “near” matters such as matters of daily lifestyle (1v27; 2v12-16; 4v8-9). Preaching the ‘far and the near’ captures something of *“I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God”* (Acts 20v27).

The importance of taking every opportunity to hammer in a nail for Grace. Have a look at Phil 3v9. Paul simply cannot resist taking opportunity, in fact *making* opportunity, to bang in another nail for Grace!

The importance of preaching Christ Jesus. Phil 2v5-9 is one of the flagship passages about Jesus in the entire canon of scripture. All of Paul’s teaching is laced through with ‘Jesus’ but in most of his letters he cannot resist launching into a section pure “Jesusness”. Another fine example is Col 1v15-20. Let’s not just allude to Jesus; let us present him in his majesty!

The importance of preaching for radical commitment. There is a great deal of ‘fighting talk’ in this letter. Paul is clearly provoking them to radical, ‘pressing on’, whole-hearted commitment to Christ. In his book *Preaching*, James Stewart says to preachers, *“This is no time to be offering a reduced, milk-and-water religion. Far too often the world has been presented with a mild and undemanding half-Christianity. If you are wise, you will not in your preaching mask or minimize the overwhelming, absolute nature of Christ’s demand. Men are ready for a leader who will unhesitatingly claim the last ounce of His followers’ courage and fidelity.”*

One final thing to encourage us: Grace & Fruit! *If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith (Phil 1v22 & 25).* We will be fruitful! We have grace gifting to help churches! Paul was very conscious of this wonderful fact. Look at what he says that he has received grace for:

Grace for apostleship (Rms 1v5)
Grace to be a wise master builder (1 Cor 3v10)
Grace to help churches (Eph 3v2)
Grace to me to preach (Eph 3v8)

CHAPTER 9

THE APOSTOLIC REVEALED IN THESSALONIANS

Paul's extraordinary 3 weeks in Thessalonica, followed by the excellent way that they grew in God and became established, make Thessalonica a model of **apostolic mission, response, and follow-up**.

Background

Thessalonica was an established city founded 400yrs BC by Cassander, one Alexander the Great's officers, who named the city after his wife called Thessalonica who was one of Alexander's half-sisters. It was a good natural harbour occupying a strategic position on the route from Rome to the East. Lightfoot described it as 'the key to the whole of Macedonia'.

Paul, Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy first visited Thessalonica in AD49 during Paul's second journey, after a highly successful time in Philippi. After making a number of converts and planting a church in the city of Thessalonica, the team had to make a hasty departure due to persecution, leaving a relatively untaught and vulnerable church. At the earliest opportunity Paul sent Timothy back to them, and Timothy returned to Paul in Corinth in Acts 18v5 reporting that they were being steadfast and zealous in sharing the gospel, but that they were wrestling with ethical (sexual) and eschatological matters. Paul immediately wrote to them expressing joy at Timothy's report, explaining that his hasty departure was not of his own making or liking (seems some of his opponents were using the circumstances of his departure to undermine Paul), and instructing them on chastity, the importance of diligence, and end time theology. (*Credit to John Stott, Pg 17, The Message of Thessalonians, 1991, Inter-Varsity Press*).

Paul's Team Mission

Mission account from Acts 17v1-10

Synagogue:	Preached three Sunday's running in the Jewish Synagogue that Jesus was Lord.
Converts:	Some Jews & Greeks & prominent women joined them.
Opposition:	Mob attacked Jason's house.
Departure:	They had to flee by night to Berea.

Mission account from 1 Thessalonians

- 1 Thess 1v5 & 2v8 He came with (1) Word (2) Spirit's power (3) Lifestyle
- 1 Thess 2v2 He came with daring and proclaimed the new life of the gospel in the face of strong opposition
- 1 Thess 4v1-2 He came with instruction on new lifestyle
- 1 Thess 2v3-6 He came with pure motives (not for \$, or self congratulation, & he spoke the truth in love)
- 1 Thess 2v6b He came not as a burden in any way (not a financial burden, & his whole spirit was to be 'a help')
- 1 Thess 2v7 He came as a gentle mother
- 1 Thess 2v11-12 He came as an encouraging father
- 1 Thess 3v10 He came to 'supply what was lacking in their faith'

Thessalonian Response

- 1 Thess 1v6b They welcomed the gospel with joy, despite severe suffering.
- 1 Thess 1v9 They turned from idols to serve God
- 1 Thess 1v3 They did (1) *'work produced by faith* (2) *labour prompted by love* (3) *endurance inspired by hope*'
- 1 Thess 1v6&2v14 They imitated *'us & the Lord'* & the *'churches in Judea'*
- 1 Thess 1v8 The message *'rang out'* from them into Macedonia, Achaia, and beyond.
- 2 Thess 3v1 The gospel spread amongst them rapidly, and was honoured.

Timothy's follow-up visit & report

- 3v2 & 3v5 The purpose of Timothy's visit was to strengthen & encourage, & find out how they are.
- 3v6 He reported that they were full of faith, love, pleasant memories, and longing to see them again. Note the importance Paul places on a relationship of love & voluntarily desiring the friendship & ministry of the other party, as opposed to pushing himself on them.

Paul's Follow-up Letters

1 Thessalonians: This letter is it! After a very relational first 3 chapters, no doubt necessary to reassure them of his love and commitment after his abrupt departure (Acts 17v10), he closes with some exhortation and instruction in chapters 4 & 5 about sexually purity, brotherly love, working hard to attain self-sufficiency and to win the respect of outsiders; the return of the Lord; respect for church leaders, and other matters.

2 Thessalonians: This second letter serves to express Paul's on-going love and prayer for them, and continues on with two themes of teaching from the first letter: (a) events of lawlessness leading up to the return of the Lord, and (b) warnings against idleness.

Here are some things that Paul does in his letters to the Thessalonians that we can learn from & apply to help churches:

1. He expressed apostolic love

- *“Out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you” (1 Thess 2v17)*
- *You are “...our hope, our joy, our crown” (1 Thess 2v19)*
- *“For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith” (1 Thess 3v8-10)*

2. He expressed apostolic team

- Although Paul is the writer, he associates himself and the letter with his two team members, Timothy and Silas, who had recently shared his missionary work in Thessalonica.
- A beautiful dynamic of team is shown in (a) all three doing the initial trip, then (b) Timothy doing the return trip and reporting back to Paul, then (c) Paul writing two follow-up letters.

3. He expressed apostolic faith

- *“We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance” (2 Thess 3v4-5)*

4. He expressed apostolic prayer

- *“We always thank God for all of you mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, labour prompted by love, your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 1v2-3)*
- *“Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. “May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy” (1 Thess 3v10-13)*
- *“We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing” (2 Thess 1v3)*

- *“We constantly pray for you that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfil every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him” (2 Thess 1v11-12)*
- *“May our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word” (2 Thess 2v16-18)*

5. He requested for them to pray for him too

- *“Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith” (2 Thess 3v1)*

6. He issued some apostolic warnings

- Hard times and persecution 1 Thess 3v3
- Temptations 1 Thess 3v5
- Idleness and idle people 2 Thess 3v6f

WORK SHEET FOR THESSALONIANS: A MODEL OF MISSION, RESPONSE & FOLLOW-UP

Paul's Mission

Mission Account from Acts 17v1-10

Synagogue: How many Sunday's running did he preach there?
 Converts: Who was converted?
 Opposition: Was there opposition?
 Departure: What time of day did they flee? Where to?

Mission Account from 1 Thess

1 Thess 1v5&2v8	He came with (1)	(2)	(3)
1 Thess 2v2	He came with		
1 Thess 4v1-2	He came with		
1 Thess 2v3-6	He came with		
1 Thess 2v6b	He came not as a		
1 Thess 2v7	He came as a		
1 Thess 2v11-12	He came as a		
1 Thess 3v10	He came to		

Thessalonian response

1 Thess 1v6b	They welcomed the gospel with		
1 Thess 1v9	They turned		
1 Thess 1v3	They did (1)	(2)	(3)
1 Thess 1v6&2v14	They imitated (1)	(2)	(3)
1 Thess 1v8	The message rang out from them into		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
2 Thess 3v1	The gospel.....		

Timothy's follow-up visit & report

1 Thess 3v2 & 3v5	The purpose of Tim's visit was to
1 Thess 3v6	He reported back to Paul that they were

CHAPTER 10

TITUS' APOSTOLIC MANDATE TO CRETE

The book of Titus is a fabulously helpful letter for apostolic teams to learn from, because it is a commission from Paul to Titus that clearly instructs him what he must set in place & 'download' to produce a healthy church on Crete. Although situations that you work into will not be identical to Crete, there is much to learn from Paul's commission to Titus. This 'package deal' for Crete is obviously not to be considered as the 'be all & end all' of apostolic input to a church, but it is what Paul felt Crete needed at this time, and what he felt that Titus could deliver. It was currently within Titus' gift capacity.

His general commission (v5a)

It was to *straighten out and complete the work* that Paul began. Although Paul is mixing his metaphors we get a vivid picture! The RSV says "amend what is defective" and the REB says "to deal with outstanding matters".

His specific commission (v5b)

- Appoint Elders
- Silence rebels
- Teach Christian conduct in the church to various
- Teach Christian conduct in the world (Chap 3)
- Teach the doctrines of Grace & 2nd Coming (Chap 2b)

1. Appoint elders (1V5-9)

"The main way to regulate and consolidate the life of a church is to secure for it gifted and conscientious pastoral oversight" (John Stott; BST commentary on Titus)

The appointment of elders is clearly an apostolic initiative, but many are involved in the process:

- Acts 20 The **Holy Spirit** made you overseers
- Acts 14 **Apostles** (Paul & Barnabas) ordained elders
- 1 Tim 4 The company of **elders**
- 1 Tim 3 & Titus 1 Due to the emphasis on good reputation & respect, clearly the **local church** itself plays a key role in affirming the appointment.

Characteristics of elders are laid out here in Titus, and in 1 Tim 3, and 1 Pet 5. These lists are not to be regarded as exclusive or exhaustive, but they give some very helpful indicators of the trends that the life of an elder should display. The traits mentioned in Titus 1 include:

- | | | |
|--|------|----------------|
| • Marriage & Family Life | V6 | Sound Family |
| • Character & Conduct | V7-8 | Sound Self |
| • Doctrinally sound & able to instruct | V9 | Sound Doctrine |

Application: By implication therefore, a vital role of apostolic ministry is to teach, equip & impart these 3 elements **of family life, personal character & sound doctrine**. For example, this opens the door for those amongst us who have special grace in these areas. Let's involve them! Let's be imaginative how we do it! For example, you could do three trips in a year to a church, each one bearing one of these themes. Or, outside of your visits you could send in a 'marriage team' or a 'doctrine team'! How exciting!

2. Silence rebels (1v10-16) (3v9-10)

Note the "For/Because" at the beginning of V10 which indicates that assisted by apostles, a key responsibility of elders is to guard the church from troublemakers. We must take action against difficult people if possible before they cause trouble. We must not put our heads in the sand and hope for the best – the best won't happen! Watch out for those who are:

- Rebellious: *Anypotaktos* meaning 'insubordinate'.
- Mere talkers: No substance. No fruit.
- Deceivers: Speak untruths. Lead others astray.
- Legalists: Beware nit-picking people.
- Dishonest: Pedalling the gospel for improper gain is bad, bad news.
- Lazy: Laziness usually ends up in trouble making & cynicism.
- Divisive: 3v9f. With these be firm but loving. Take action.

3. Christian conduct in the church (2v1-10)

I believe that these 10 verses are amongst the most crucial for a healthy church. At their essence is the doctrine of the royal priesthood of all believers. We are a body with everyone participating. Every group is vital. These verses give such worth and hope to everyone in the church. Part of our apostolic commission is to equip & mobilise the saints to works of service and these verses are mighty tools in our hands. Often churches can get locked into 20% of the people doing 80% of the work. This might be due to a controlling leadership or poor delegation. Whatever the reason, the way to break it is to preach these ten verses imparting knowledge and truth.

Each season of life carries with it unique fears and insecurities that a vibrant young eldership may be unaware of: where do I fit in now? Am I being put out to pasture? Is there life after kids? Every group in the church needs to be valued, given identity, and helped to see the mighty contribution that they can make. These verses are mighty to do that!

4. Christian conduct in the world (3v1-2)

Although not a long passage, it is a weighty passage. The application for apostolic teams and elders is that we must preach a Kingdom perspective on life; there is more to following Jesus than church meetings! We are to be socially responsible citizens who work hard and are law-abiding, who have a relevant and exciting witness in the market place. We are to preach **DUTY as well as DOCTRINE** just like is done in Rms 13; 1 Thess 4v11f, 1 Thess 3v6f, Titus 2v9, James 5. Preaching such truths creates an outward-looking, confident and evangelistic church.

5. Two important doctrines: Grace & Second Coming (2v11-15) (3v3-7)

Although Paul does not have time to properly unpack either of these doctrines in this letter to Titus, the frequency with which he refers to them throughout his epistles leave us in no doubt as to their importance. They are both foundational doctrines that radically shape a Christian and a church, and an apostolic team should take every chance to hammer home another nail for each of these doctrines.

Grace: In our church we do a preaching series on Grace once per year, and outside of that I hope that all we do is laced with grace! The family of churches that I am part of is called Newfrontiers which is led by Terry Virgo. Terry has a wonderful revelation on grace and I want to refer the reader to the Newfrontiers website where these resources are available. Titus 3v3-7 (rather like the early verses of Eph 2), is one of the most concise portraits of the gospel of grace. It stresses 3 elements are the shape of the gospel, and we want the churches that we serve to be soaked in them:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ○ Our deadly past | Dead in Sin |
| ○ How we were rescued from it | An act of God. We did nothing. |
| ○ Our amazing future | Heirs of God. Eternal life. |

The Second Coming: I have included an appendix at the end all about *Heaven & Hell* and how an understanding of these significantly effect the way we live – get teaching it and watch the change in people’s lives!

CHAPTER 11

ELDERS & APOSTLES: WHO'S IN CHARGE?

It seems that the bible gives some guiding principles about how elders and apostles relate, but we are left with reasonable scope (and challenges!) in terms of implementation.

The relationship between apostles and their churches

I feel that the most accurate description of the wider New Testament church scene is something like this:

“Local churches that are governed by their local elders, who relate to / are involved with apostles and their teams.”

In view of their involvement with apostles and their teams, these churches develop a corporate sense of *family* and *mission*.

Godly authority structures

Fallen man is naturally denominational, hierarchical, ‘lording it over’, and generally two-dimensional in his understanding of authority. Fallen man likes to know exactly who is No. 1 and who is No. 2 and so on. Despite his whining about red tape, it makes fallen man feel secure, and sadly eliminates the need for many of the crucial godly components intended to be part of our relationships. Fallen man likes to have a crystal clear pyramid diagram on the wall that removes all doubt as to who is in charge of whom. This corporate view of authority has influenced much of the church, possibly illustrated by our departure from biblical titles such as *elders and apostles and deacons*, to worldly titles with worldly connotations such as *presidents, chief executives, and treasurers*. This ‘corporate’ 2-D model of authority is a lesser wineskin that cannot sustain and contain the intended glory of God in the church, and not easily allow for successful relationships between apostles and elders – both of whom the New Testament presents as having significant authority over local churches.

But God’s ways are higher than our ways, and his authority structures are multi-dimensional:

Think of the trinity: this is the leadership team of the universe that is both 1 in 3 and 3 in 1. The father is the leader, but the father has given Jesus the name that is above every name, but Jesus defers to the father, and the Spirit seeks to glorify Jesus! Try and work that one out!

Think of David's team of mighty men in 1 Chronicles 11: here is another authority structure that is impossible to understand through a corporate lens. One of the most vivid portrayals of this is verse 24:

“Such were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada; he too was as famous as the three mighty men. He was held in greater honor than any of the Thirty, but he was not included among the Three. And David put him in charge of his bodyguard.”

Fallen man complains, *“So if he was as famous as The Three then he should be placed on the same level as The Three, but you are telling me that he wasn't even included among The Three? This is not fair! And tell me, is his new position of head of the body guard lesser or more important than the other thirty chiefs?”*

Application

Whilst not suggesting that the bible is void of clarity in terms of roles and responsibilities, least of all when it comes to elders and apostles, there is more to authority structures in the church than can ever be represented on paper. ***They require a maturity, authority, humility, mutual submission and inter-dependence that are only possible to achieve through the mighty power of God working within all concerned.*** God refuses to allow us to become automatons – he wants us to rely daily on his spirit to walk in peace and effectiveness together.

How then can we conclude?

We conclude that apostolic men and ministry are a gift to elders and their churches, given to equip and mature the church. Elders should acknowledge and welcome genuine apostolic authority, and should soften themselves to receive the imprint of God through these men. Elders should understand their autonomy within the context of their apostolic covering. They and their churches are caught up with other churches on apostolic mission! Hallelujah! Attitudes of mutual respect and acknowledgement of gifting and calling, under-girded by genuine affection and friendship, will pave the way for a beautiful and effective partnership between elders and apostles.

CHAPTER 12

CHOOSING A TEAM FOR AN APOSTOLIC TRIP

*Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I **took Titus along also**. I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain. **Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek.** This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. (Gal 2v1-6)*

Barnabas and Titus were both his friends and disciples, but the choice of these two guys for this trip is interesting. Barnabas was a Jew who had worked with Paul into Gentile regions who already had the trust of the Jerusalem leaders, and Titus was the ‘new kid’ who was a Greek gentile – living proof of Paul’s ministry to the gentiles.

Why bother to take people with you on apostolic trips?

- You need companionship & support
- They need exposure and experience
- To develop a web of trans-local relationships that goes beyond you
- So they can help serve those you are visiting

How do you know who to take on a particular trip?

Choosing who goes when and where must be a prayerfully made strategic decision. Good questions to ask are:

- Who do I have faith for and would enjoy being with?
- Who would benefit from coming along?
- Who/what does this church especially need at the moment, and who could help serve them in this area?
- Is there anyone who I think may end up having a long-term relationship with the church we are visiting?

CHAPTER 13

HELP! I HAVE BEEN ASKED TO LAY FOUNDATIONS!

To get you thinking...

- If you had to choose one topic/doctrine to teach a church, what would it be?
- What do you regard as the top 10 topics/doctrines that you feel a new church needs to receive? List them in order of priority.

There are, of course, no right answers to these questions, but it is a good exercise to get us **thinking foundationally, like wise master builders** (1 Cor 3v10). The beauty of the Body, and of apostolic teams is that we all have personal strengths and gifts that when pooled, coordinated and mobilised can form a mighty building team. When different craftsmen work together, under the oversight of an architect, the house gets built and built well.

Foundations in a church can be solid, or non-existent, or shallow or not broad enough, or faulty. Without wanting to be prescriptive in *how* the foundations are laid, it seems that there was a **certain body of truth** that Paul felt compelled to lay down in every church:

*“Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I am sending you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with **what I teach everywhere in every church**” (1 Cor 4v16-17)*

Paul’s essential body of truth necessary for every church

What *did* Paul teach everywhere in every church? Major clues are of course to be found in his epistles. The following table represents a survey that I have done of the epistles. The aim was to get a **general feel** of the main themes that Paul and other apostles covered. Please note that it is a *general* survey: my approach has been to chronicle themes that warrant a significant amount of **space or weight** in the epistles. I have been especially generous in what I classify as *grace* teachings. I am sure there are some omissions, but if I have succeeded in highlighting the top few foundational themes then the exercise has been a success.

The penultimate row adds up the total number of ‘major sightings’ of each theme. **The final row** in the table pays tribute to other vitally important themes that don’t really have decent ‘block bookings’ but which are heavily laced through the letters, for example the matter of *prayer*. It is also good to remember the diversity of epistles - some are reacting to specific issues in the life of a church (e.g. 1 & 2 Corinthians & 1 Thessalonians & Galatians), and other letters are more proactive in laying out truth without the pressure of having to bring correction to specific issues such as Romans and Ephesians.

	Grace	Lifestyle	L'ship	Church	Spirit	End Times	Family	God	Giving	Poor
Rms	1-11; 14	13		9-11	12					
1 Cor	1-2; 8		3-4; 9		2v6f; 12-14	3v11f; 15	7			
2 Cor			10-11						8-9	
Gal	1-4; 6v11f				5					2v10
Eph	1-2	4v17- 5v21		2-4			5v22-6v9			
Phil						3v12f		2	4v10f	
Col	2	3					3v18f	1		
1 Thess		4	2	1		4-5				
2 Thess		3								
1 Tim	1v12f		3						6	5
2 Tim	1v9f		2; 3v10f							
Titus	2v11f	2-3	1v5-16							
Phil			1							
Heb	1-10		13							
James	1-5									
1 Pet		1v15f	5	2			3			
2 Pet						3				
1 Jn	1-5	2-5						1		
Tot chap	46	13	11	9	6	6	5	4	4	2

Prayer: Col 4v2; 2 Thess 3v1; Eph 1v15f; 3v14f; 6v18-20; everywhere!

Instructions on worship: 1 Cor 12-14 & 1 Tim 2

Warnings of hardship: Many

Warnings against heresy: Many

Personal greetings & affection: Many

To get us thinking even more...

Imagine that you have been asked to work into a church. You have been asked to take the lead in bringing this church to a place of health – rather like Titus was commissioned to do on Crete.

Imagine that due to the constraints of geography and time you can only manage 3 X 3-day trips to this church over the next year. The question is....

WHAT STUFF SHOULD YOU TEACH THEM???????

There are several factors to consider right off: for example, if they have a particularly pressing ‘now’ need, you would probably need to scratch them where they are desperately itching. But, to keep it simple, let’s just imagine that this is a standard church that is actually quite far off the New Testament ideal.

As an initial game plan I would recommend the following that may be modified as you get to know the church better. I would try and devote most of each day to **teaching times**, punctuated by times of **fun & fellowship & prayer**. I would ensure that the **elders & wives and other key leaders** were present, along with as much of the church as possible, and I would lay foundations by teaching into the following themes. I would **take a team along** with me on each trip.

Trip 1	Trip 2	Trip 3
Grace The Spirit The Church	Leadership Prayer & Faith Family Life Sunday & Cell	The End Times The Kingdom The Word Preaching & Evangelism
I think these are the 3 most important foundational doctrines . Together they form the template on which the rest of church-life happens. They are also incredibly moving, freeing & invigorating doctrines that will cause their hearts to open wide to you!	On the next visit, I would veer away from teaching direct doctrines, and would give attention to their application in how we actually <i>do church</i> . This would involve teaching into & helping structure the essentials of church life.	On the next visit, I would probably return to a mixture of key doctrines & key aspects of “doing church”.

On a short trip, whom should the team input into?

It will vary from visit to visit, but valid groups to receive apostolic input include the elders (Acts 20), small groups in homes (Acts 13v43), and preaching to the whole body (Acts 13v16f).

What about a new church plant?

Although laying foundations is an ongoing process throughout the life of a church, the opening months are especially important because it is then that core community becomes established in their vision and values. At the time of writing, I am several months into planting a new church in Johannesburg, South Africa. In these opening months, on Sundays we have done a 5-week series on **Grace**, a 3-week series on the **Church**, 3-weeks on the **Holy Spirit**, and at least one decent message on nearly all the other above-mentioned themes/doctrines.

CHAPTER 14

RECEIVING & SENDING APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

New Testament churches **received** and also helped “**send on their way**” apostolic teams. How can we do these two things?

Receiving:

1. Welcome them warmly. Acts 15v4 says, “*When Paul & Barnabas came to Jerusalem, they were **welcomed** by the church and the apostles and elders to whom they reported everything God had done through them*”. Acts 21v17 says, “*When we arrived at Jerusalem the brothers **received us warmly***”. And Acts 28v15 says, “*The brothers there had heard that we were coming, and they travelled as far as 3 Taverns to meet us. At the sight of these men Paul thanked God and was encouraged.*”

2. Receive them as Friends First. Acts 15v25 says, “*So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our **dear friends** Barnabas and Paul.*” Acts 27v3 says, “*The next day we landed at Sidon, and Julius, in kindness to Paul, allowed him to go to his **friends** so they might provide for his needs*”. Paul knew their kids and wives and daily struggles. How wonderful! The atmosphere of the New Testament churches and apostolic teams is one of warm, loving relationship.

3. But also receive their authority over you. I am a firm believer in genuine apostolic authority. I feel that in accordance with the tone of the epistles, and notably Philemon V8-9, that in Christ apostles have genuine authority. Welcome it!

4. Listen carefully to what they say. Acts 2v14 says “.... Listen carefully to what I say”. Ask lots of questions. Listen with your inner ears. Sometimes their language is so grace-filled that unless we are listening carefully we will miss what is actually being said! As they speak, the Holy Spirit will give us ideas and thoughts and impressions. Hold onto these.

5. Have great expectancy for their ministry amongst you. Mt 10v41 says, *“Anyone who receives a prophet as a prophet will receive an apostles reward”*. Acts 10v33 says, *“Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us”*. The principle is if we receive them as God-given apostolic ministry into our lives, families and church, then that is the blessing that we will get! They will reproduce after their kind amongst you, so expect impartation from them. In Acts 13v1 we read that in the young church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers, which was surely a result of prophets and teachers visiting their church in Acts 11v25 and Acts 11v27.

6. Be a blessing and encouragement to them as well. Rms 1v11 says, *“I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong; that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith”*. You have things in God to give to them, and be an example to them in. Go for it!

Sending:

1. Send them off with love and prayer. Acts 15v34 says, *“After spending some time there, they were sent off by the brothers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them”*. Acts 20v36 says, *“When he had said this, he knelt down with them all and prayed. They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship. After we had torn ourselves away from them, we put out to sea...”*(Acts 20v5).

2. Whole-heartedly and consistently supporting their apostolic vision and strategy. Apostles help churches to get on and remain on mission together with other churches. Their vision is now your vision. You can do more together than you can apart.

- **Support through prayer.** As a church consistently lift up the wider apostolic in prayer.
- **Support through the giving of finances** (1 Cor 16, 2 Cor 8, Phil 4) and encouragement. In addition to a regular monthly ‘tithe’ from your church income (I suggest 10% to 20% of your church income), also take up offerings at their request or on your own initiative for the apostolic mission.
- **Support by imitating them** and their churches, and thus passing it all on to other churches (1 Thess 1v5 and 2v14).

3. Devote yourselves to their teaching (Acts 2v42). Take heed of and immediately apply the things that they have taught. So if they say to you that they think that you should leave more room for the Holy Spirit in your meetings, then do that!

CHAPTER 15

MIGHTY APOSTOLIC PRAYERS

Immersing yourself in these apostolic prayers will help you to think, act and pray in an apostolic fashion ...and be very blessed along the way! I have underlined text concerning our motivation to pray, and **bolded text that deals with what to actually pray**.

“God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.” (Rms 1v9-10)

“I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there.” (Rms 15v30-31)

“Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.” (Col 4v12-13)

*“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. **Pray that I may proclaim it clearly**, as I should.” (Col 4v2-4)*

*“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and **asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will** through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may **live a life worthy of the Lord** and may **please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God**, being **strengthened with all power** according to his glorious might so that you may have **great endurance and patience**, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (Col 1v9-14)*

“Now to him who is able to **establish you by my gospel** and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,” (Rms 16v25)

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may **strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being**, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being **rooted and established in love**, may have power, together with all the saints, to **grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ**, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be **filled to the measure of all the fullness of God**. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” (Eph 3v16-21)

“May the God who gives **endurance and encouragement** give you a **spirit of unity** among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with **one heart and mouth** you may **glorify the God** and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Accept one another**, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” (Rms 15v5-7)

“May the God of hope fill you with all **joy and peace** as you **trust in him**, so that you may **overflow with hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit.”
(Rms 15v13)

“I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been **enriched in every way**-in all your speaking and in all your knowledge-because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do **not lack any spiritual gift** as you eagerly await for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you **strong until the end**, so that you will be **blameless** on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.” (1 Cor 1v4-9)

“I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of **wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better**. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may **know the hope to which he has called you**, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and **his incomparably great power for us** who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms” (Eph 1v16-20)

*“And this is my prayer: that **your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight**, so that you may be able to **discern what is best** and may be **pure and blameless** until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God.” (Phil 1v9-11)*

*“With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power **he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith**. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
(2 Thess 1v11-12)*

“In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Phil 1v4-6)

“He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.” (2 Cor 1v10-11)

*“**My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one**. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. **Sanctify them by the truth**; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, **that all of them may be one**, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. **May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know** that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (Jn 17v15-23)*

*“Finally, brothers, pray for us that the **message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored**, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be **delivered from wicked and evil men**, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.”
(2 Thess 3v1-3)*

APPENDIX A

ARE APOSTLES VALID TODAY?

I feel that the best way to answer this question is to allow Terry Virgo to speak to it. To this end, this chapter consists of two writings by Terry:

Section 1: I have taken several paragraphs of his from the chapter entitled *And Some Apostles in his book A People Prepared, Kingsway, 1996*. It is a brilliant book and I do hope that the following extract will wet your appetite to get the book. Terry writes:

Three classes

We can distinguish three classes of apostle in the New Testament. First of all there is Jesus, 'the Apostle and High Priest of our confession' (Heb 3:1, NASH).

Next there are 'the twelve'. Some feel that this is the end of the story, and that Paul was raised up by God to replace Judas. It is argued that we never hear of the hastily appointed Matthias again; but actually we never hear of many of the twelve again, and the Bible nowhere states that Paul was one of the twelve. He clearly distinguishes himself from them in 1 Corinthians 15:5—8. The twelve were 'apostles of the Lamb' (Rev 21:14), called by Jesus during his earthly ministry. The replacement for Judas had to be one who had accompanied them from the beginning.

It could almost be argued that Paul is in a category of his own as 'one untimely born' (1 Cor 15:8, NASB). He was certainly given an extraordinary amount of revelation to contribute to the Scriptures. He was, nevertheless, commissioned by the ascended Christ, and must therefore be regarded as generally belonging to the category referred to in Ephesians 4:8—11, where we read that 'He ascended on high ... and He gave some as apostles'.

Special pleading might also be made for James, the brother of Jesus (Gal 1:19), who emerged as a leading apostle even though he seems to have been an unbeliever during Jesus' earthly ministry. In the council at Jerusalem, he seems to have obtained an even more influential place than Paul or even Peter (Acts 15:13—21). Barnabas is also called an apostle (Acts 14:14), and his apostleship was recognised by the church at the same time as Paul's. Paul also speaks of Andronicus and Junias as being 'outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was' (Rom 16:7).

Only twelve?

Many have argued that there were only twelve apostles, but as Bishop Lightfoot points out in his commentary on Galatians, 'Neither the canonical scriptures nor the early Christian writings afford sufficient ground for any such limitations of the apostolate.' Others have accepted that Paul, Barnabas and James were apostles, but still claim that the apostolic ministry is a thing of the past. Howard Snyder writes: 'Some have argued that apostles no longer exist today, but this conclusion runs counter to Biblical evidence. Nothing in Paul's treatment of spiritual gifts suggests that he was describing a pattern for the early church only. Quite the opposite. For Paul, the church is a growing, grace-filled body, and apostles are a permanent part of that body's life.' (Howard A. Snyder, *Community of the King*, InterVarsity Press, 1977). Many who have reluctantly conceded that the gift of tongues might still be with us have continued to dismiss it by saying it is only the least of the gifts. The apostolic gift, if it is for today, certainly cannot be similarly shrugged off. After Jesus ascended, he gave apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor/teachers to equip the saints until the church is brought to full maturity (Eph 4:12—13). We must not miss the vital word 'until'. Few would argue that the church has reached its full stature, and if any of these grace gifts are missing we will not reach God's intended goal.

We have epistles, who needs apostles?

It has been suggested that apostles are no longer needed today because we have the Bible. The New Testament letters of the original apostles are enough. Any Bible teacher can expound these great truths. Some of our greatest teachers have indeed expounded the epistles with extraordinary life and power. However, the tragic fact is that instead of producing a mature church, held together by joints of supply with each part working properly (Eph 4:16), they have produced preaching centres with huge congregations that disintegrate when the gifted preacher is removed from the scene. That does not mean we should despise great Bible teachers. Far from it! But what is our goal in building the church? Surely it is that in the end we have a mature expression of the body of Christ. The saints are not only to know sound doctrine, but are also to be equipped for works of service. They have to find their particular gifts and contributions to church life and should be encouraged to function in them. All the gifts of the ascended Christ are needed to reach this maturity. The apostles of the early church did not fulfil only the role of writing the inspired New Testament. (Only a few of the apostles actually wrote our New Testament, helped by others such as Luke, who claimed no apostolic calling.) Just as in the Old Testament there were prophets who contributed nothing to Scripture, yet fulfilled a genuine prophetic ministry, so there were New Testament apostles who never gave us a line of Scripture, yet had a vital role to fulfil among the churches of their day.

Section 2: We now move to an article by Terry Virgo that was initially published in the Newfrontiers magazine (volume 2, issue 04, September-November 2003) under the title “*Local churches loosely federated under apostolic authority*”. It further argues for the legitimacy of apostles today, and along the way teaches us lots of other excellent truths:

Simple Biblical Structures

Commenting on the opening verses of Philippians, Alec Motyer, the outstanding Anglican scholar and commentator, says, “*The impression we receive of the New Testament is of local churches loosely federated under apostolic authority, with each church managing its own affairs under the leadership of overseers and deacons.*” He continues describing the simple life-giving structures of the New Testament churches by saying, “When we add Paul the apostle and Timothy the apostle's delegate, we have a remarkably full summary of the constitution of the New Testament church; the body of believers, the local church officers, the over-arching apostolic work of Paul, and the occasional ministry of a person like Timothy coming into the local situation from outside” (Alec Motyer, *The Message of Philippians*, IVP, 1984).

As John Stott says, “*The New Testament never contemplates the grotesque situation in which the church commissions and authorises people to exercise a ministry for which they both lack the divine call and the divine equipment*” (John R W Stott, *God's New Society*, IVP, 1979).

In contrast, the church of the New Testament was served by those gifted by the ascended Christ. Throughout the Old Testament, God chose whom He would to lead His people. God apprehended people and gave His word to them so that, because of their relationship with Him, they became His representatives. Their gift gave them their sphere of operation.

The same principle applies in the New Testament church. Jesus, our ascended Christ, gave gifts. We cannot make people into leaders. We cannot simply vote them into office. We can observe and note the grace of God on people. We can see the anointing and respect the gift of God. A church that honours God's gifts honours God, and experiences God's ongoing favour. Our privilege and responsibility is to observe where God's gifts are in operation in people and to follow those whom God has anointed to lead. The ascended Christ has given diverse gifts and ministries with a goal in view. He wants a glorious church, a mature body growing to the fullness of the stature of Christ, to a mature man. Our passion is to see a glorious church attaining to the maturity that the Bible describes. While others may be in doubt, God has certainly not given up on His church.

Temporary or permanent?

When Jesus ascended on high, He gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers. Many evangelical teachers have supposed that some of the ministries listed in Ephesians 4 were temporary and existed only in the early church, while others were permanent. Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, for instance, said, "In the first group, the extraordinary and temporary, we have apostles and prophets and evangelists; and in the second permanent group we have pastors and teachers" (D Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Christian Unity*, Banner of Truth, 1980).

Dr Lloyd-Jones argued that apostles must have:

- seen the risen Lord
- been called and commissioned to do His work by the risen Lord himself in person
- been given a supernatural revelation of the truth
- been given power to speak not only with authority but also with infallibility
- power to work miracles.

Many, to one degree or another, will take a similar stance. They usually continue their argument by saying that the Scriptures are now complete. That is nearly always their immediate application. Since we have an authoritative canon of Scripture, including the writings of the apostles, we no longer need further apostles. They are preoccupied with the establishment of the canon of Scripture rather than the pragmatics of the apostolic work of church planting and world evangelisation. Commentators from the Reformation onwards have seen it as their responsibility to defend the Scriptures from the Roman Catholic teaching of apostolic succession and ex-cathedra statements that claimed apostolic authority. They were not preoccupied with the ongoing missionary work of an apostle.

The result was that local churches were seen as static and built on Scripture, while isolated individuals could leave those churches and become 'missionaries'. In contrast, our burning passion is to see apostolic churches focused on world mission together.

Challenge the traditional

Part of our responsibility is constantly to challenge the traditional view regarding apostles and their influence on local churches. We must start by making it clear that there are different kinds of apostle in the Bible. It is helpful to remember that there were different kinds of prophet in the Old Testament. Some wrote Scripture; some didn't. Jeremiah, Nathan and Elisha differ enormously but they are all called prophets.

So in the New Testament you will find categories of apostle.

- Jesus stands unique as the apostle of our confession (Hebrews 3:1).
- Then there are the Twelve
- Then there are others beyond the Twelve.
- The apostle Paul arguably stands in a category of his own but not necessarily so. Sometimes he was simply bracketed with another apostle, such as Barnabas (Acts 14:14).

There were also other apostles who were clearly recognised in the church but did not witness the resurrection. It says in Ephesians 4 that He, Jesus, has ascended on high and from His ascension He gives gifts to men. They were not witnesses of His resurrection but gifts of His ascension! Leon Morris says, "... 'apostle' does not apply solely to the Twelve. Paul frequently claimed the title for himself, and sometimes in such a way as to show that he saw it as important. But if it is clear that it does not refer solely to the original Twelve, it is not clear exactly who could claim the title nor how apostles were chosen.

Barnabas is called an apostle along with Paul (Acts 14:14), and reasoning from the 'we' of 1 Thessalonians 2:7 we probably should include Silvanus" (Leon Morris, *Ephesians*, Baker, 1994). Other evangelical scholars, such as Thomas Schreiner, argue for two categories of apostle, one of which was the authentic Twelve plus Paul. The other category he describes as 'missionaries' but of course the title 'missionary' sheds no light whatsoever, since it is an all-encompassing word used to describe modern overseas Christian workers. What is a missionary? He does not tell us what a missionary is. It is a word rooted in the Latin *missio* - to send, like the Greek *apostello* - to send. It sheds no light to say that some were apostles and some were missionaries. In Biblical terms, what is a missionary?

In establishing the role and identity of apostles in the church, we must acknowledge that the Twelve were undeniably unique. They constituted the foundations of the universal church. Revelation 21:14 calls them the twelve apostles of the Lamb. In Revelation 21:12 they are found alongside the twelve sons of Israel. Certainly the fact that Jesus appointed twelve was not coincidental. Jesus came inviting the nation of Israel into a new way of being Israel. He came as their promised Messiah to a backslidden nation, and charged the disciples to preach nowhere else. He only occasionally offered kingdom blessings to a Gentile. He was preoccupied with the Jews. He offered them a relationship with God that no longer depended on having the blood of Abraham in their veins. He was among Jews, offering them an opportunity to come to Him and be formed into a new people in relationship with Him, their Messiah.

The Twelve were therefore unique. They gave definition and identity to the newly formed people of God. They were the core of a new nation, the people who are in Christ, in the Messiah. On the day of Pentecost 3000 were added to a people whose foundations were the twelve who had been with Him for three years. One of the most important apostolic responsibilities, therefore, is to define who are the people of God. The new converts were added to the apostles. They devoted themselves to the apostles' doctrine day and night. Later, Peter described them as *"a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession"* (1 Peter 2:9). Part of apostolic responsibility was to tell new Christians who they were and what were their privileges and responsibilities. A new community was formed in Jerusalem that had never existed before. The universal church started with 3000 people who were filled with the Holy Spirit and built on an apostolic foundation.

Apostolic foundations around the world

But their commission was to go and take the gospel to all the world. There had to be transition from the original Jerusalem base. Acts 8 tells us that Philip the evangelist inaugurated an evangelistic breakthrough in Samaria before the apostles arrived there but that Peter and John quickly followed him in order to establish the work. When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they did not regard it simply as an evangelistic breakthrough; they recognised their own authority and responsibility to put in right foundations and build a dynamic community.

There was further growth when scattered believers went as far as Antioch, as persecution forced people to flee from Jerusalem. The Twelve in Jerusalem heard about this great breakthrough, so sent Barnabas who was not yet an apostle but was delegated by the apostles, as later Timothy would be by Paul. They were concerned that this new community being established in Antioch should be built upon an apostolic foundation. Subsequently, Paul's apostolic ministry emerged.

In Acts 13 we are told that Barnabas and Paul, having been in the church at Antioch, received their commission from the Spirit: *"Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them"* (Acts 13:2). From then on they were called 'apostles' and were released to go to do apostolic work, taking the gospel to far-off nations. Writing in 1 Corinthians 3:10, Paul claimed that he had 'laid a foundation' in the Corinthian church. This was an 'apostolic task'. He was now writing to a pagan church far away from Jerusalem, years after the day of Pentecost, and, reflecting on what he did at Corinth, he said, 'I laid a foundation'. That was a dynamic act performed in a local church that he could quantify, not just a philosophic concept for the universal church. It resulted in that church being properly

founded. Notice that Paul laid a foundation long after the original foundation had been laid in Jerusalem. Again, in Romans 15:20, Paul aspires to preach the gospel where Christ was not already named – ‘so that I would not build on another man's foundation’. Another man. Who is this other man? Can any man lay a foundation? What is he talking about? We do not know who this 'other man' was. Paul acknowledged the right of another man to lay a foundation, and presumably apostolic men were doing just that.

In 1 Corinthians 9:2 Paul claimed, “*You are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.*” How were they the seal (or proof)? Their very existence as a church was proof of his apostolic ministry. Apostolic work had to do with the establishment of churches on clear apostolic foundations. So surely we can see that apostles were not simply men who wrote Scripture. Certainly they were not men who were infallible, as Dr Lloyd-Jones insisted! We discover that Paul withstood Peter, who was '*clearly in the wrong*' (Galatians 2:11 NIV). So Peter was not infallible. Also, Paul and Barnabas had a strong contention – the Bible not even telling us who was right and who was wrong!

So we need to beware the danger of describing this ministry in such lofty terms that it becomes totally out of reach, resulting in the church effectively losing what the ascended Christ has given. World mission was inaugurated by evangelism and church planting. Today, newly formed local church foundations must be laid. This is apostolic work, whether the apostle initiates the breakthrough or whether he or his delegate arrives after the evangelist, as in Acts 8 and 13. If we consign apostles and apostolic ministry exclusively to the early church, we are left without one of the key factors in world mission, the vital role that apostles played.

For the sake of world mission

The word 'missionary' obscures rather than clarifies, since it does not honour Biblical definitions and categories. A modern missionary may be an agricultural worker, a nurse, a schoolteacher, a Bible translator, or a literature distributor (all very worthwhile and wonderful ministries). Some missionaries may in reality be evangelists or apostles. But the term is vague and unhelpful, since it has come to indicate anyone who works overseas. Historically, some have established 'mission stations' rather than churches.

We need Biblical definitions and Biblical practices. It is vital that these categories are clarified for the sake of world mission. It is not merely an academic matter. We are called to world evangelism. Church planting has not been seen as central to world mission, yet that is clearly the New Testament strategy.

The modern church has not acknowledged the key role of apostles in church planting. The missionary approach often consists of setting up schools or hospitals, which may be greatly commended, but if we do not rediscover and devote ourselves to international church planting we will not accomplish the work of mission. That is the Bible's blueprint, and we need to get to grips with it.

Thomas Schreiner wrote honestly in his magnificent book on the life of Paul, "Perhaps the missionary focus of the Pauline writings is not attractive because most scholars are not missionaries. We tend to see some things that interest us and most scholars are not inclined to mission. Paul, on the other hand, was first and foremost a missionary" (Thomas R Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ*, IVP, 2001). What he is saying is that Paul was essentially a man of action involved in world mission, but that most theologians who comment on the word 'apostle' and apostolic function in their commentaries are not. We must have a genuinely Biblical approach to the role of the apostle that rediscovers his dynamic place in church planting and world mission.

We need to plant the kind of churches that Paul built in Thessalonica. In his letter he celebrates the fact that he did not have to come into their area any more because the gospel was, from them, being broadcast all around the region. ***That is the kind of church we want. Not dead, boring churches, but exciting, mobile, outward-looking, church-planting, people-multiplying churches! We need more apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers!***