

Leadership & Logistics in the New Testament Church

Ephesians Chapter 4 describes the intended unity of Christ's Church. He gifted certain "offices" of leadership to establish & maintain this unity.

- Apostles & Prophets are foundational (Eph. 2:20).
- Evangelists can be "trail-blazers" like Philip (Acts 21:8) or "fixers" like Timothy (2 Tim. 4:5).
- Shepherd/Teachers are for local, long-term maintenance.
 - These leaders are also called "elders" or "overseers" ("bishops")
 - Paul designated these leaders in each congregation he established.
 - Paul taught that such men had to be very stable individuals, both spiritually & personally (1 Tim. 3:1-7 & Titus 1:5-9).

The chief responsibility of every spiritual leader is to "Preach/Teach the Word" (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

- The Gospel must be central to that preaching (1 Cor. 15:1-11).
- Paul established the principle of focusing the initial preaching of the Gospel upon those most ready to receive it - the Jews - and moving from there outward, into those communities next prepared to hear it - Gentiles (Rom. 1:16). Jesus taught that His disciples should move on from communities which had rejected the Gospel to those ready to listen (Matt. 10:14; cf. His proverb in 7:6).
- He also taught that at least some of them would be paid for working full time in this effort (1 Tim. 5:17-18; 1 Cor. 9:14).

Since spiritual leaders must attend to the Word of God and to prayer (Acts 6:1-6), certain men & women must be appointed within the Church to take the lead in seeing to the physical matters of each congregation. These "Servants" ("Deacons") are also expected to have very stable spiritual & physical lives (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

Christ expects all those in Church leadership to lead by humble example and not by forceful authoritarianism (Matt. 20:25-28).

The Church is made up of various sizes of assemblies which focus upon the "Apostles' Teaching, Fellowship & Prayer" (Acts 2:42).

- The early Jerusalem Church was huge (well over 10,000), meeting daily in Solomon's Portico of the Temple complex.
- Established Jewish synagogues became meeting places for believers.
- Sometimes believers met in private homes.
- Public forums were used or secular facilities rented.
- By the 2nd Century, buildings were specifically built by believers.

The need for financial resources has always been a reality in the assembling together of God's people. It was specifically needed for:

1. Establishment & maintenance of a gathering site
2. Support of those engaged in service to God's work
[NOTE: "Missionary" efforts toward those outside the community of faith resulted from the combination of these first two items.]
3. Assistance for those within the community of believers who, through no fault of their own, could not support themselves

In the Old Testament, God expected believers to give out of their income what was needed to meet these needs.

- Voluntary offerings were gathered from the believers in order to build the place(s) where they would worship.
- Each year, every Jewish man (20 years and older) was expected to give the equivalent of 1 day's average wage (something like \$100-150 today) to help cover annual costs of worship within the Temple.
- The "tithe" (10 % of one's income) was intended to support those working in the ministry & to build up a fund from which benevolent assistance could be drawn as needed. (Voluntary offerings were also taken to assist the needy in times of crisis. Cf. 1 Cor. 16:1-4.)

The New Testament focuses upon the attitude of giving (2 Cor. 8-9). However, the core of the N.T. Church started out Jewish & would most likely have used Jewish support methods.

We need to be realistic on this matter. Without some structured & regular means of financial support from the faithful members of its community, a local congregation of the Lord's New Testament Church will shrivel up and die. Typically, the damage presents in this fashion:

1. Benevolent assistance is curtailed.
2. Missionary support is scaled back.
3. Any multiple paid staff is decreased along the way.
4. Eventually, a full-time minister is replaced by a part-time minister.
5. By this point, a congregation has significantly shrunk in size.
6. Finally, the remaining members can no longer support a building.

Summary: To be faithful to the Lord, the modern N.T. Church needs to conduct itself in the manner seen within the pages of inspired Scripture. This is the only sure way to see His "Great Commission" (Matt. 28:18-20) successfully carried out. And without the regular financial support of everyone "saved by the blood of the Lamb" that simply will not happen.