

General Topics :: New Testament Church Leadership - the way it was meant to be**New Testament Church Leadership - the way it was meant to be - posted by CarlosBCG, on: 2012/8/21 16:43**

I am thinking of writing a PDF on this topic and making it freely available but I want to cover the subject matter in depth and don't want to miss anything that should be in the PDF.

To that end I would like to discuss this here if anyone has an interest in this subject or has valuable insight or input to give me before I write my PDF.

Am I a church leader? Nope.

But this is one of many different topics that the Lord has laid on my heart respecting the differences between the way things were done in the New Testament and today.

I want to write about these differences in the hope that the Lord might use what I write to bring about some measure of change to how church is done today or at least spur some to consider doing things differently even if they must do things outside established church circles.

If the PDF becomes viral and is shared freely it just might, just might have some impact in the way church is done. It might also allow me to make a living from my writing which would be ideal.

Anyway that is what I want to discuss.

I will post my first point in my next post.

Carlos

Re: New Testament Church Leadership - the way it was meant to be - posted by DHuff (), on: 2012/8/21 17:51

Hi Carlos - It's certainly a worthy goal to call the church back to God's way of leadership in a local assembly, and if you sense His call to write on that topic, I pray He will use your writing for His glory.

One passage that came to mind when I read your post was Ezra 7:10. The Lord used Ezra in a mighty way to teach the Word of God, but in this verse there is a Divine order: "Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments".

So Ezra began with a prepared heart (so important!), and then (1) sought God's law, (2) did it (i.e., lived it out), and then (3) taught it.

There's a wisdom from God that I believe particularly comes from experience. Not saying you necessarily need to be in church leadership before writing about it, but see whether the Lord may open a door for you to serve in that capacity, in some way, alongside your writing project. You may find that the Lord will open even more doors for you, while making you an even more able messenger.

God deepens His message in our own life, and then broadens our ministry. I pray He will bless you as you serve Him!

David

Re: New Testament Church Leadership - the way it was meant to be - posted by CarlosBCG, on: 2012/8/21 18:31

New Testament church leaders were not called Pastors. They were called Shepherds and most often just elders.

While that may seem like a nit picky matter of semantics it isn't.

In our minds words are associated with certain meanings. Those meanings define what the word is to us.

What do most people associate with the word "Pastor" today?

A professional church leader. One who is paid to be a church leader. A man uniquely gifted and called by God to be a church leader. A man especially chosen by a church to lead based on bible school training, preaching ability, and/or ministry experience.

Essentially the associated meaning of that word in the minds of most Christians is that of a man set apart from everyone else to be a church leader.

Exclusivity.

Biblically speaking, local church leaders were called elders in the New Testament.

The Pastors of today derive their authority from that given to elders in the New Testament so in that sense Pastors are just elders.

But nowhere in the qualifications given in Timothy and Titus is there any mention of gifting or calling as necessary to qualify as a church leader.

Here are the qualifications from Timothy...I've indented the qualifications to make it easier to follow...

Quote:

1 Timothy 3:1 (AKJV)

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be

- blameless,
- the husband of one wife,
- vigilant,
- sober,
- of good behavior,
- given to hospitality,
- apt to teach;
- Not given to wine,
- no striker,
- not greedy of filthy lucre;
- but patient,
- not a brawler,
- not covetous;
- One that rules well his own house,
having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For
if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he
take care of the church of God?)
- Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into
the condemnation of the devil.
- Moreover he must have a good report of them which are
without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the
devil.

No mention of calling or gifting at all.

"apt to teach" just means able to teach. No gifting necessary to be able to teach. Anyone who knows the Word and wha

t it says can teach it.

Here are the qualifications from Titus...

Quote:

Titus 1:5 (AKJV)

For this cause left I you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed you: If any be

- blameless,
- the husband of one wife,
- having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.

For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God;

- not self-willed,
- not soon angry,
- not given to wine,
- no striker,
- not given to filthy lucre;
- But a lover of hospitality,
- a lover of good men,
- sober,
- just,
- holy,
- temperate;
- Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the disputers.

Again no mention of gifting or calling.

Holding fast the faithful word just means holding on to it and not letting go of truth so that he can use it to exhort and convince others of what it says.

That's just common sense and not gifting as in being something that only an elder is uniquely able and gifted to do.

It's something we should all do and are capable of doing if we are students of the Word.

Notice also that things which we of today might deem to be very important in a prospective church leader are also not mentioned.

No bible school training is mentioned. Ministry experience is not mentioned. Letters of reference are not mentioned (the New Testament version of a resume I suppose).

Being a great or at least good public speaker is not mentioned.

Age is irrelevant though not being a novice in the faith is important.

It is ironic that the things which we seem to value the most in the modern idea of a Pastor are not mentioned.

What IS mentioned is character. Where a man has arrived at a certain degree of mature character and godliness in his life.

To be sure an elder is a gift to the church.

Quote:

Ephesians 4:11 (AKJV)

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

But to be a gift to the church is not the same as being a man who is gifted to be.

The problem with the whole idea of an elder being gifted and called by God to be an elder is that it sets them apart from and above their fellow Christians as being something other than just a mature believer who has the desire to shepherd the flock.

Biblically speaking an elder is no more and no less than a mature Christian man who has a desire to shepherd members of the Body to maturity in their own right.

That kind of church leader can be imitated in their maturity and desire.

A church leader who is gifted and uniquely called by God to be a church leader cannot be.

That lack of being able to be imitated has profound implications for the health of the Body.

A church leader whose life and desire cannot be imitated by other men within a flock sets up an artificial barrier between that leader and the men of the flock. A barrier that cannot be easily overcome by men who desire to shepherd the flock in their own right.

The lack of being able to be imitated by virtue of a special gifting and calling leads to a lack of multiplication.

The result is what we have today.

Churches that grow in members but where the men who are recognized as leaders to shepherd the flock are very few relative to the numbers of members a church may have.

There is little or no multiplication.

Men who are mature and who might otherwise desire and be able to join in shepherding the flock to maturity are lost to the flock as such when they go off to pursue other ventures.

There is no room for them at the top so to speak.

For though we give lip service to the priesthood of all believers we act as though there are only a very limited number of church leadership positions that can be filled by a very few, select individuals who are especially and uniquely gifted and called to be church leaders.

The old clergy / laity split by any other name!

Carlos

Re: - posted by CarlosBCG, on: 2012/8/21 18:43

Thanks for your wonderful encouragement David! Much appreciated.

It is rather difficult for me to even hope or imagine myself being recognized as a leader in most modern churches David.

Truth is that I don't fit modern day church practice.

Every single time I try to get involved in modern day churches I invariably end up butting heads against church traditions that run contrary to what is in the Word.

From what church leadership is about to head coverings, women being silent in church assembly, the free operation of the gifts of the Spirit, from being accepted as a prophet of God (which I believe is one of my gifts), and a number of other issues...I just don't fit.

It's like trying to put a round peg in a square hole.

God's ideals for how He wants things done are not followed today.

And to the degree that I fix my eyes on God's ideals and not modern day church tradition there will inevitably be conflict.

Of a kind that I always seem to end up on the short end of the stick with. In that I do not wish to cause division and so I leave.

On top of that David...my character does not yet qualify for church leadership.

The irony is that unless I write and give myself wholly to expounding on and passing along what God gives me for and to others that I will not grow in character.

So it's a bit of a catch 22. In that I must speak that which God lays on my heart to grow.

Yet if I speak I don't fit existing church traditions.

And if I don't speak I will remain immature in some areas by virtue of not exercising my gift or gifts.

The other problem David is that I don't as much desire to shepherd the flock like an elder should but rather my desire lies more in being a Prophet to speak on issues that God may want me to speak out about.

There is to be sure some overlap between speaking out as an elder and speaking out as a Prophet but there is also a subtle but definite difference too.

So I am not sure I qualify by virtue of desire either.

For these reasons David I don't think I could practice what I preach (so to speak) even if I wanted to.

Carlos

Re: - posted by CarlosBCG, on: 2012/8/21 20:30

I was praying about what I said and something just didn't sit right in my spirit about it.

That's why I need input and constructive critique so that I can get this just right and have it express the heart of God on this issue and not my own.

What I was trying to communicate, from a biblical standpoint, is the difference I see between the way elders in the New Testament were ordinary men who had a certain level of maturity and desire to shepherd the flock as a leader.

And how different that is from the way it is today with Pastors.

I correctly pointed out that no gifting or calling is present in the list of qualifications but what did not sit right in my spirit is the implication in what I said that an elder is not gifted to shepherd.

Just as a prophet has a gift and an apostle has a gift so too an elder has a gift to shepherd I think.

He is both a gift to the church AND gifted as an elder to shepherd.

But that gifting is NOT something that sets him apart from his brethren any more than any other gift.

That's the problem today.

Is that the gift of being a church leader is looked upon as being above other gifts in that hardly any other gifts are allowed to operate freely as God intended them to be.

I hesitate to use the term Pastor for in truth the word Pastor is a word that has come to be associated with being a religious leader today. When that word did not have such an association in New Testament times.

It simply meant shepherd.

Not a religious connotation in sight!

Pastor is a religiously associated word that was used by the translators of our bible's to indicate a church leader when it never should have been used in that sense.

Today a Pastor exercises his gift with great freedom while virtually all other gifts that may be present in the Body are suppressed, discouraged, or outright denied.

That is not the way God intended church leadership to operate.

Church leaders (i.e. elders) were meant by God to serve the flock and to encourage them to maturity as the FLOCK did the work of ministry.

NOT to do the work of ministry while the FLOCK sits around and watches.

Big difference.

That's a difference I was trying to convey but I didn't get it quite right. I'll have to pray about how to convey that better.

If anyone has any insight or input on how I might be able to convey things better and in a way that accurately reflects what is on God's heart about this I would appreciate hearing it.

Carlos

Re: - posted by DHuff (), on: 2012/8/21 20:33

And thanks also to you for sharing your heart a bit. It may well not be God's plan for you, right now, to be in a larger, "institutional" church setting. But I'm convinced from Scripture that He has an appointed place in the body for each of us. For you, that might be a small fellowship of believers meeting in a home. He will be faithful to show you His plan. And He can give us opportunities to lead, and learn, even in a small group setting.

I do know that close, Biblical fellowship with other believers also gives us a degree of accountability in the Lord, which is important. And I appreciated the transparency with which you refer to your character. Truly the Lord is building His character in all of us, as a part of conforming us to His image. It's a lifelong process for disciples of Jesus.

He will be faithful to nurture the gift that He's given you, and I believe He'll plant you in just the right place in the body, for this season of your life, both to minister and be ministered to. The days we live in make it difficult sometimes for a remnant, who truly want to follow the Lord wholeheartedly, to find their place in the body. There is indeed much apostasy out there. But His heart in the New Covenant is for His church, and I know He'll answer the cry of your heart. Remember, many in Scripture whom He chose as leaders would've seemed to the world to be the most unlikely.

God bless,
David

Re: CarlosBCG - posted by proudpapa, on: 2012/8/21 20:36

Hi CarlosBCG,

RE: CarlosBCG wrote ///New Testament church leaders were not called Pastors. They were called Shepherds and most often just elders.

While that may seem like a nit picky matter of semantics it isn't.///

Hi Carlos I know what you are saying and I agree but as far as semantics goes I do not believe That Church Leaders wh ere ever even called Shepherds in the New Testament.

I agree that the entire modern pastoral system is dangeours both for the congregation and most specificaly for the Pasto r.

Pagan Christianity by George Barna and Frank Viola is an excelant book on the subject

Re: - posted by DHuff (), on: 2012/8/21 20:54

Yes. Carlos, there is definitely a lot of "lording it over the flock" that goes on, and it shouldn't. I understand what you're saying, also.

I was just pointing out, earlier, that if you have a desire to write about leadership,for instance, ask the Lord also to open a place of service for you in leadership. Yes, it'll build character :-), but also strengthen your testimony and credibility as a writer.

By way of analogy, if I wanted to learn to fly a small plane, I would certainly benefit from someone who'd written about it, no question. But I'd also want to know if they'd flown some, as well :-).

Thanks for sharing about these things that concern us all.

Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2012/8/21 22:45

Quote:

I was just pointing out, earlier, that if you have a desire to write about leadership,for instance, ask the Lord also to open a place of service for you in lea dership. Yes, it'll build character :-), but also strengthen your testimony and credibility as a writer.

I agree with you Brother, I got this point in your very first post in this thread. For example an unmarried man cannot write a book on how to live a married life. He might have all the knowledge but lacks experience. That is why it is important for us to believe that Jesus came in likeness of human flesh and tempted in all ways like me, a person who was not tempte d like me cannot have compassion on me to save me from my Sins.

Brother Carlos, please pray that God will give you an opportunity to put to practice what you are about to write so that yo u can understand the difficulties in implementing it.

I would also encourage you to listen to Brother Zac Poonen on this subject and also study the way CFC Bangalore (Indi a) Church is run and how its finances are handled etc. This Church is a living Testimony that a Church can be run with 100% Faith in God alone in this money loving World.

Re: - posted by CarlosBCG, on: 2012/8/22 16:48

I appreciate any and all input and advice you all. For sure.

But...between the choice to say nothing at all due to not being in leadership and saying that which must be said in line with things God has laid on my heart...I think I have no choice but to speak.

It is not as if I have never led members of the Body by the way. I have.

At one point in my life the Lord spoke to me specifically to initiate with a Christian couple who were living next to me to go and see about getting together to eat meals together.

I listened and one thing led to another and soon we had a small fellowship start up in the apartment complex we lived in. It was the most incredible fellowship I have EVER experienced in my life up to that point and since. Bar none.

Unbelievable fellowship. Of the kind where we gave ourselves to each other in love. Vulnerable. Available. Centered on God.

Correcting each other in love. Encouraging each other in love. Emotionally supporting each other. And whatever else fellowship was meant to be as we sought to reach out to others with the Gospel.

Not a Sunday service in sight!

Yet...due to my immaturity this wonderful fellowship came to nothing after about three months. I got it into my head that God wanted us to go door to door witnessing and pushed that on people as what God wanted...period. So much so that I came across as saying that if anyone was not willing that they were resistant to God!

I did not give the Holy Spirit time to work to bring others to where I was in wanting to reach out with the Gospel. I did not lead by example. I blasted what I felt God wanted over my fellow believers.

And they chafed against me. Not God. Against me.

It fell apart.

So yes...I have been involved in leadership of a kind where the Lord Himself saw fit to place me in such a position but certainly not compared to many of you.

I do not however believe for one minute the commonly held belief on the part of so many Christians that one must have experience in something before being able to speak into something out of the Word.

Do we all have to have been druggies in our past lives to speak into the life of those on drugs?

Do we all have had to have been involved in sexual immorality to speak into the lives of those that are?

Do we all have to be married to speak into how best to love one's spouse (note that neither Jesus or Paul were married!)

.

It is my belief, based on what I see in the Word, that ANY one of us can speak into whatever it says whether or not we have experience in it or not.

The need is great. And if others, around me at least, are NOT speaking into this...who will?

If some of you leaders do not have this issue on your heart and it does not burden your heart and you do not speak into it who will?

Church leadership is crucial at least with respect to having it done God's way if all the other things that God might will for us as a Body to do are to be done.

My eye is not only on church leadership but on how that leadership or the lack of having leadership of the kind God wills

is preventing and hindering so many, including me...big time, from being all that God would will us to be.

It has to change! It just HAS to.

I do not mean to say that organized churches will change necessarily. I mean I hope they do but experience in trying to bring about change has taught me that there is a palpable hardness in the hearts of many present day church leaders that will resist change. Even if God wills it so.

When I say things have to change I mean overall and in the Body.

Some of us must latch on to truth in these areas and DO something about it.

If not us...who?

That's where I am coming from.

So yeah...I am determined to speak even if I have little of any experience. And I am committed before God to get things right in my speaking. To form a foundation of truth that the Lord can use to help bring about the needed change.

I feel incredibly unworthy to speak for God about this or anything else.

I mean incredibly so.

Just yesterday the fact that something did not sit right about what I first posted in this thread...broke my heart before the Lord.

I want so much to say things just right by Him. To speak only what He would want to say through me.

I find that sometimes, thankfully not all too often but sometimes, some of me crowds out what God might want to say. That grieves me deeply.

But the choice for me is to keep quiet OR to humble myself before Him and before others and admit that there is something not right in what I am saying but to still speak and continue speaking.

Until I get it right.

Speaking out is the choice I have made and continue to make.

As Luther is purported to have said..."I can do no other". At least not by Him.

Carlos

Re: - posted by CarlosBCG, on: 2012/8/22 17:00

I just thought of another excellent example of speaking even when one is not experienced in what one is sharing.

I have been reading and responding a little on another thread here about modesty in dress on the part of women. Great thread by the way.

Within that thread different women have talked about how blessed they have been to read this or that book, audio, or otherwise most of whom were written by MEN!

Now if that is not a contradiction to the usual held belief that one should not speak into that which they have no experience with...I don't know what is.

Men speaking about the modesty of women.

MEN speaking about what women should or should not do about modesty!

These men are not...well...women. They have absolutely no experience being women. At all.

Yet here they are speaking about something that is applicable on the whole if not entirely to women.

Go figure.

But would any of us seriously and before God say that such is inappropriate? That men, godly men, can never speak into such with any kind of authority because they are...well...not women?

That would be a far stretch to say such a thing indeed.

I am not presently in church leadership but that should not detract from this whatsoever if what I am saying is of God.

Carlos

Re: - posted by SonsofLevi (), on: 2012/8/22 21:57

A simple way to see if you may perhaps be an authority on church leadership may be to go back through your posts and count how many times "I, me, my, or mine" is mentioned and put those in one column, and then in another column how many times the Lord Jesus Christ and His glory in His people is mentioned. That will give you your own answer on qualification on church leadership and who you want that leader to be.

May you be blessed.

Re: - posted by CarlosBCG, on: 2012/8/23 15:44

I completely disagree with the implication that I want myself to be a leader or some such simply because I use the word "I" more often than mention the Lord Jesus or His glory.

Let's see I used the word "I" 4 times in that sentence.

Hmm...

So if I say...

The Lord Jesus disagrees with the implication that Carlos wants to be a leader or some such simply because he used the word "I" as often as he does.

Is that better?

Does that prove anything other than that the whole notion of determining one's heart by how many "I"s are used is ridiculous?

I wonder how many times Paul referred to himself in some of his writings compared to how many times he referred to Jesus? Hmm...that would be an interesting study but I suspect that dear brother Paul was as guilty of selfish ambition by the standard you seem to be using as you imply that I am.

How exactly do I repent from any such thing? I mean if all my I's (there I go using I again) prove that I have selfish ambition and otherwise how exactly do I repent of that?

Start using we as the Pope does to refer to me and Jesus whenever I talk of I?

Carlos

Re: - posted by CarlosBCG, on: 2012/8/23 16:26

Sorry for how I responded to you in my last post SonsOfLevi.

I really do think your evaluation of me based on how often I use the word "I" is very superficial but I responded as I did because I am getting so sick and tired of the way Christians seem to step on me and the things that God has laid on my heart.

It seems like every time I rise up to start exercising whatever gift I have and to express what God lays on my heart...that the Christians start throwing cold water on me or otherwise stepping on me.

I took what you said in that light SonsOfLevi and I am sorry that I did.

I must learn to respond in love and not let such things get the best of me.

Following Christ is going to involve a lot of flak coming my way. The closer I get to Jesus the more flak I will receive.

That's just the way it is and I need to learn to respond with grace and love and not start attacking others through my words.

Please forgive me if in any way I came across as attacking you.

Carlos

Re: - posted by CarlosBCG, on: 2012/8/23 19:34

Out of a desire to get more engagement on the topic of church leadership and not so much dealing with me personally (though certainly that has to be taken into account) I would like to continue by sharing this...

Imagine if you will if I came up to any number of your average church goers and quoted the following verse to them..

Quote:

Luke 2:8 (AKJV)

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country pastors abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

They would invariably tell me that I misquoted the bible for it wasn't Pastors who were watching the sheep at night but shepherds!

Yet would I really be misquoting the bible by rendering that verse in that way?

The underlying Greek word used in Luke 2:8, and which I rendered as "pastors" is the same word as that which underlies the English word "pastors" in Ephesians 4:11 where it says...

Quote:

Ephesians 4:11 (AKJV)

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

The Greek word is ποιμαίνω

So it would be perfectly acceptable for me to use the word pastors instead of shepherds in Luke 2:8 for the word pastors is just another way of saying shepherds in English.

Now I grant you that substituting the English translation of a Greek word in one place for another at will is not always accurate as context does alter the meaning at times such that different English words may more accurately reflect the intended Greek meaning.

But in this case...I think such a substitution is perfectly acceptable and accurate to the underlying Greek.

For the word "pastors" in Ephesians 4:11 means nothing more or less than "shepherds" in the English.

There is nothing in the context that would justify translating this Greek word as shepherds in Luke 2:8 but as pastors in Ephesians 4:11.

The problem is that many of our English bible's decided to render ποιμήν as "pastors" in Ephesians 4:11 and as shepherds in Luke 2:8 for no real reason that I can see other than that the word "Pastor" had come to be associated with a professional class of church leader at the time of translation, which seemed to fit the context in Ephesians 4:11 more than "shepherd" did.

And so we ended up with our English bible's making a distinction between professional church leaders called Pastors and persons who tend to a flock of sheep in the field otherwise known as shepherds.

A distinction that is extra-biblical and that has robbed the church of what God intended respecting the perception of what a church leader is.

The irony is that this distinction is simply man-made since in truth there is NO biblical distinction between describing the work that church leaders do as shepherding the flock and describing the work of shepherds who shepherd a flock of sheep in the field as likewise shepherding the sheep.

By this man-made distinction and difference superimposed into our English bible's we have come to associate much more with the English word "Pastor" than is biblical.

A church leader is a shepherd of the flock.

An elder is simply a man who shepherds the flock.

Elder referring to his maturity and shepherd referring to what he does in his work as an elder.

I'll write more later but hopefully there will be some here who will engage me on the issue at hand so that I might be able to arrive at a more perfect understanding of what God's heart is on this.

I need constructive criticism, correction, or insight from anyone who might care to give it to me regarding the issue itself.

Thanks.

Carlos