

10 Reasons the Apostolic Movement Is Essential to Gospel Expansion

The global apostolic movement is the most significant expression of Christianity today.

This is the view expressed by historian Philip Jenkins. He talks about the rapid expansion of the church in the global south, much of which is reminiscent of the first-century apostolic movement. In his writings he claims that in North America, the fastest expression of the church today is the apostolic movement. (See *The Next Christendom* by Jenkins and *The Rise of Network Christianity* by Christerson and Flory.)

This expansion based upon apostolicity is not a coincidence or a result of some manufactured institutional global conspiracy. It is because God is supernaturally restoring apostolic function in His church. It takes an apostolic wineskin to expand, multiply churches and produce disciples in every aspect of culture. Unfortunately, many denominations are dying because they replaced apostolic visionary leadership with hierarchical titular leadership.

Often in the historic, evangelical, and Pentecostal churches, their bishops and superintendents primarily operate in the ministry function of administration and management. In contrast, in 1 Corinthians 12:28, God puts apostles first and administrative gifts further down the list of importance for church foundations. Every major denomination started with an apostolic visionary that made it a movement in its initial generations. However, they fell into institutional routinization when in subsequent generations they replaced the apostolic visionary with administrators and managers.

The only way to have permanent movement and multiplication is

to always appoint apostolic visionaries as the leaders of denominations, networks and movements after the initial visionary leader passes away.

There is a reason why Jesus chose 12 apostles instead of 12 prophets, teachers, pastors and/or evangelists to start His church. This eventually blossomed to become the greatest movement in the history of the world over the past 2,000 years.

The apostles are the entrepreneurs, multipliers, pioneers, church planters, movement catalysts and generals called to possess territory for God. (The word *apostle* is from the Greek word *apostolos*, which means “he that is sent.” The Latin word is *missio*, which is where we get our words *mission* and *missionary*.) While the global apostolic movement is not uniform, there are some similarities no matter what context or culture the church is in.

Here are 10 essential traits of the global apostolic movement:

1. The apostolic embraces the five expressions of Jesus’ ministry DNA, which we can call APEST, as found in Ephesians 4:11. APEST stands for Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, and Shepherds/Teachers.

2. The apostolic empowers people in the workplace, not just the church place. Ephesians 4:10, and the context of Ephesians 4:11-12, show that Jesus ascended to fill all things. Consequently, He fills all things when disciples are equipped by APEST and go into every sphere of life with the gospel. Hence, believers are called to fill every space, not just church-owned buildings on Sundays for two hours.

3. The apostolic believes the cultural mandate is still in effect. The church is called to serve and influence every aspect of culture. (See Genesis 1:28 and its New Testament counterpart, Ephesians 1:9-10.)

4. The apostolic advances church planting as one of the most effective ways to win new converts. In my estimation most churches plateau after reaching 100 to 200 people, and the only way they will continue to win new people is by planting new churches. Also, the power of the Spirit is connected to planting the gospel in cities, not merely speaking in tongues (Acts 1:8).

5. Many in the apostolic movement focus on making disciples, not merely planting churches. If you plant a church, you may or may not have disciples, but if you plant a community of disciples, you will have strong churches.

6. Many in the apostolic movement operate in the Charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit and have faith in miracles. This often includes believing God for financial resources for kingdom expansion.

7. An increasing number of apostolic leaders embrace the idea that the APEST ministry gifts are for everybody in the church, not just for a few elite leaders. The context of Ephesians 4:7-12 illustrates that everyone in the church receives the grace of Christ to function in one of the APEST ministry gifts in the workplace or a church place.

8. Apostolic visionary leaders usually bring unity and cohesion in regions by catalyzing movement based upon a common, gospel-focused mission. Ephesians 4:11-13 (ESV) says, "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood ..."

Unfortunately, the historic Protestant reformation rejected the office of bishop. Bishops were the ones considered the ecclesial successors of the apostles, and historically, they helped keep the church together in place of the original

apostles. Since the episcopal office was rejected and the church only embraced pastors and teachers, the Protestant church immediately began to splinter, resulting in about 40,000 denominations today.

9. Many apostolic movements pivot through strong mother churches that influence their city and resource many churches in their community and beyond. See, for example, the Jerusalem church model, the Antioch model and the Ephesians church model as modeled in the Acts narrative.

10. Many in the global apostolic movement believe the only hope for a nation is spiritual renewal, revival and awakening. In their view, it doesn't matter who wins in a political election. Without a Holy Spirit-empowered renewal in their nation, there will be great moral decay that can devastate their communities and cities!

In conclusion, if you want to learn more about the apostolic, you can purchase my book *Essays on Apostolic Leadership* and go to the website of our national apostolic coalition, . {eo}

Dr. Joseph Mattera is an internationally known author, consultant and theologian whose mission is to influence leaders who influence culture. He is the founding pastor of Resurrection Church and leads several organizations, including The U.S. Coalition of Apostolic Leaders and Christ Covenant Coalition. Dr. Mattera is the author of 13 bestselling books, including his latest, The Purpose, Power, and Process of Prophetic Ministry, and is renowned for applying Scripture to contemporary culture. To order his books or to join the many thousands who subscribe to his newsletter, go to .

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