

12 Characteristics of the New Apostolic Leaders

The so-called Apostolic Reformation since the mid-1990s signaled the end of identifying Christian movements merely by denominations. With that, there was a new emphasis on visionary leaders in the body of Christ known to function with the five-fold ministry gift of the apostle (Eph. 4:11).

These apostolic leaders have had a demand upon them to evolve and improve in regard to best practices, emotional maturity and leadership style.

The following are 12 of the characteristics of the new apostolic profile:

1. They integrate the message of integrity with the message of kingdom influence. These new apostolic leaders celebrate the Christ-like characteristics of simplicity, humility and personal transformation—not merely cultural engagement and societal transformation. In light of the leadership scandals of the past three decades, they realize that we cannot have the latter without the former.

2. They are ecumenical and collaborate with the church. They do not espouse the old-world Protestant or Catholic divide. The cultural wars against religious freedom have forced the body of Christ to come together, and these leaders are among those advocating for greater collaboration between different expressions of the church without compromising their distinctive theological beliefs. This collaboration also includes forging new partnerships with intentional ethnic diversity.

3. They do not focus on ecclesial titles. Unlike many of the leaders in the past, these new apostolic leaders do not depend upon the title of “apostle” or any other ecclesial title to

validate or identify their ministry. They believe the fruit of their ministry and influence speaks louder than mere titles.

4. They espouse apostolic government with an egalitarian spirit. The book of Acts and the epistles clearly give models of local churches that are under the oversight of apostolic leadership. However, a closer reading of these narratives reveals that New Testament apostles urged church leaders to adopt an egalitarian approach replete with a servant's heart, humility and self-sacrifice. A top-down autocratic leadership approach in which apostles impose their will on the congregations was not the biblical norm. Even in a crisis, Paul pleaded with the leaders to do the right thing and remove the immoral person among them (1 Cor. 5).

Jesus said that the Roman leadership approach of lording it over their subjects was not the way of the kingdom (Mark 10:42-45). He said that the greatest leaders are the ones who serve. The new apostolic leaders are going to move more away from the heavy-handed style of past generations to more of an egalitarian approach with a bottom-up strategy that employs teams to accomplish kingdom purposes.

5. They identify with both church and marketplace leaders. The new apostolic leader understands that the kingdom of God engages both marketplace and ecclesial leadership. Consequently, they partner with marketplace leaders with an apostolic call to society who are committed to seeing kingdom influence. (In general, these marketplace leaders do not need any ecclesial titles to be effective.)

For example, the early church leadership of Antioch (Acts 13:1-2) involved a businessman with real estate (Barnabas, refer also to Acts 4:36-37) and a politician (Manaen), not just a career religious leader (Paul).

Contemporary apostolic leadership has to be sophisticated enough to understand that ecclesial leadership alone is not

enough to bring lasting change to both church and culture.

6. They are committed to developing kingdom relationships. The new apostolic leader understands that the Kingdom of God is built upon relationships and not only ministry. Hence, they focus much of their time building into key kingdom relationships through informal settings that encourage the development of friendships.

7. They are not event-driven but process-driven. Apostolic leaders by and large are weary of conferences. They realize that big events take a lot of money, time and effort but often do not produce lasting fruit. They are more prone to investing their time in smaller but more strategic gatherings that create space for dialogue, fellowship, prayer and strategy instead of monologues that come with the typical conference format.

8. They are statesmen who can collaborate with those who disagree with them. The new apostolic leaders are rooted enough in their calling that they are able to integrate on a high level with those of other faiths, ideological and political persuasions, from both the left and the right. They are not stuck in a Christian ghetto where everyone thinks and talks the same. They realize that the world needs their influence and leadership if it will have a chance to experience the kingdom. These leaders function as the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

9. They are comfortable with both secular and sacred vernacular. The new apostolic leader is just as conversant with the *lingua franca* of the secular world as they are the church world. They not only study the Bible but news sources such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, the *Economist*, etc. so they can understand the secular world that most influential people live in. The apostolic leader of the present and future will be just as comfortable speaking with

the CEO of a Fortune 500 company as he would be speaking with an ecclesial leader.

10. They are entrepreneurs with a kingdom agenda rather than a consumerist agenda. The new apostolic leader will be creative enough to be financially prosperous but holy enough to steward their resources for the sake of the kingdom. Instead of leveraging their wealth for opulent lifestyles, they live reasonably and responsibly in the fear of the Lord.

11. They have a broader view of cultural engagement than the previous generation. The early 20th century saw the shift from the fundamentalist movement of non-cultural engagement to the evangelical movement of the Christian right with political engagement. The new apostolic leader will have broad interests involving the proper stewardship of creation, human rights, empowering the poor, creating NGOs that serve communities, educational strategies, global initiatives to aid developing nations, micro-financing, sustainable economic policies for nations, and efforts at reconciliation between warring factions. These will not trump, but be in addition to, their engagement regarding religious liberty, marriage and the sanctity of life.

12. They are focused on equipping the next generation. The new apostolic leader will have a multi-generational approach that equips younger leaders to be more effective than the previous generation. This includes intentionally integrating young leaders into their decision-making process, as well as major ministry initiatives. This also involves creating opportunity for them to be creative, to make mistakes, and grow as well as preparing them to lead in the marketplace and/or to develop their own networks or organizations.

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